

# Five Google Africa Connected winners announced

The five winners of [Google's Africa Connected competition](#), which called entrepreneurs, creatives, innovators and web-lovers to share stories of how the web has transformed their lives and work, was announced at an event held in Nairobi.



The winners were selected from over 2,200 entries from 35 countries, by a panel of judges as well as public voters. The winners will receive US\$25,000 (ZAR 260,000) each, and will also have the opportunity to work with a Google sponsor over a six-month period to further their online success.

"There are over 1 billion people living in sub-Saharan Africa and currently 16% of them are online. With Africa Connected, we wanted to celebrate how the web is changing lives in Africa, and show how it is contributing to the socio-economic development of the continent. Selecting the shortlist was no easy task: each winner shares a unique perspective of how they have used the internet to solve a problem, earn a living, or create opportunities, not just for themselves, but also for others around them", says Affiong Osuchukwu, Google Lead for the Africa Connected initiative.

## Winners:

- **Sitawa Wafula (Kenya)**

Wafula used [Google Blogger](#) to establish an [award winning blog](#) on mental health in East Africa. Wafula wants to build a physical resource centre where people can access information online and get much-needed help to manage their conditions.

- **Eseoghene Odiete (Nigeria)**

After graduating from university, [Odiete](#) learned how to create handbags using [Google Search](#) and [YouTube](#). With the help of contacts found via Search, over 100 blogs have featured her designs. She dreams of building an international brand that promotes African designs. She also runs training classes for other women who want to start businesses.

- **Christopher Panford (Ghana)**

Panford runs a transport company helping Ghanaian drivers access vehicle loans, which they use to earn a living. He uses [Google Maps](#) to constantly monitor the location of vehicles under bank loans. This assures banks that their loans are protected, while Panford empowers more drivers.

- **Eric Obuh (Nigeria)**

Obuh ([aka Vocal Slender](#)) used to be a dump site scavenger, in order to pay for studio time to record his music. After being discovered by the BBC in 'Welcome to Lagos', he became known around the world. Since then, he has recorded songs which he shares with new audiences on [YouTube](#). He also uses [Google+](#) and YouTube to raise awareness about underprivileged youngsters in the slums of Lagos, helping to raise scholarship money, and

encouraging kids to stay in school.

- **Eunice Namirembe (Uganda)**

Namirembe runs [The Medical Concierge Group](#) which helps Ugandan communities access quality healthcare and information. Physician Namirembe has built a 24-hour ambulance call centre by using the [Google Cloud console](#) and Google Maps to record patient information and track patient locations. With these tools, Eunice and her team are able to help connect more Ugandans to medical services, thus saving lives in the process.

Namirembe says "The web has helped me and the other Africa Connected winners to solve pressing problems as well as earn a living. I'm so excited to be making a contribution to my community and I'm looking forward to doing more online!"

Wafula says, "Right now I feel humbled and honoured that mental health and epilepsy - which are considered taboo topics - have been put on the same platform as some very innovative projects. I can't believe that doing what comes so naturally to me, to help raise awareness about mental health, would be recognised by a company like Google, and be such an inspiration to others."

## **"Many more powerful, inspiring stories"**

Google's Affiong Oschukwu adds, "Even though there are only five winners of the contest, there are many more powerful and inspiring stories out there. To start, there are 21 other inspiring success stories already hosted on the Africa Connected website; [www.africaconnected.com](http://www.africaconnected.com). We encourage you to watch and learn from them".

In an effort to invest in the future success of all the finalists, Google also surprised the remaining five success stories by awarding them US\$10,000 each to help grow their ventures and initiatives for greater social and economic impact. Recipients included; [Tim McGuire](#) (South Africa), [Nqobizitha Mlilo](#) (Zimbabwe), [Mayowa Adegbile](#) (Nigeria), [Lamine Mbengue](#) (Senegal) and [Steve Kyenze](#) (Kenya).

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