

Leading African Social Entrepreneurs Awarded at World Economic Forum on Africa

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Abigail Noble, Head, Africa, Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship, Tel.: + 251 (0)930 09 88 97, E-mail: abigail.noble@weforum.org

- The Schwab Foundation announces the winners of the Social Entrepreneur of the Year Africa award at the World Economic Forum on Africa in Ethiopia
- Winners working across Africa are among [19 Schwab Foundation Social Entrepreneurs](#) from around the world taking part in the meeting, providing their perspectives on sustainability and social innovation
- Learn more about the Schwab Foundation at www.schwabfound.org

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 10 May 2012 – Five leading innovators were named the Social Entrepreneurs of the Year 2012 Africa by the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship at the World Economic Forum on Africa in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The awards were presented to the winners by Klaus Schwab, Founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum, on the opening day of the meeting in the presence of President Ali Bongo Ondimba of Gabon, President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan of Nigeria, President Jakaya M. Kikwete of Tanzania, and Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia.

“Africa has seen tremendous growth over the past decade,” said Hilde Schwab, Chairperson and Co-Founder of the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship. “Social entrepreneurs use innovative approaches to extend access to healthcare, education, energy and housing to marginalized populations that may not otherwise be included in the traditional markets. They ensure that growth, such as that experienced in Africa, is and will be inclusive.”

The five winners who have been selected as the 2012 Social Entrepreneurs of the Year Africa are:

Bethlehem Tilahun Alemu, Co-Founder and Managing Director, soleRebels, Ethiopia

SoleRebels taps into Ethiopia’s rich artisan heritage to create durable, stylish and eco-friendly footwear for international markets. The company offers training and employment to hundreds of underprivileged workers in Ethiopia, creating a new employment model for local enterprises. By using recycled automobile tires for the rubber soles and other environmentally friendly practices, soleRebels is committed to a zero carbon footprint.

Sameer Hajee, Chief Executive Officer, Nuru Energy Group, Rwanda

With many homes in sub-Saharan Africa not connected to electricity grids, Nuru Energy works with micro-entrepreneurs to disseminate its Nuru LED light, which can be recharged using an off-grid, pedal-powered platform. The LED light gives up to 26 hours of light and costs one-sixth of kerosene to recharge. To date, Nuru Energy has set up 70 village-level entrepreneurs who have sold 10,000 Nuru lights.

Paul Scott Matthew, Director Africa, North Star Alliance, South Africa

In the 1990s, Paul Matthew saw the alarming impacts of HIV/AIDS on mobile workers such as truck drivers and realized these workers lacked access to basic healthcare. North Star Alliance provides mobile workers and related communities with continual access to high-quality health and safety services through a network of interlinked clinics known as “Roadside Wellness Centres”. Since opening its first centre in 2005 in Malawi, North Star has grown to 22 centres in 10 countries.

Andrew Muir, Executive Director, Wilderness Foundation, South Africa

The Wilderness Foundation, founded in 1972, integrates conservation programmes with social and educational programmes. It has trained thousands of youth to be community leaders and national park rangers. Under the stewardship of the Wilderness Foundation, over 200 000 hectares of African wilderness have been rehabilitated and expanded in the interests of conservation and environmental protection. More than 100 000 disadvantaged/vulnerable youth have benefitted from the Wilderness Foundation through its social intervention and environmental education programmes.

Seri Youlou and Thomas Granier, Co-Founders, Association la Voute Nubienne, Burkina Faso

More than a decade ago, Seri Youlou, a farmer from Burkina Faso, and Thomas Granier, a French mason, built a Nubian vault home in Burkina Faso, Association la Voute Nubienne. By training farmers in the construction of homes with vaulted earth-brick roofs, provides an affordable, ecologically sustainable housing alternative and source of income to farmers during the off-seasons. Today, more than 200 masons have built over 1,300 Nubian vault homes in West Africa.

The Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship was founded by Klaus Schwab, Founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum, and his wife, Hilde. Since its inception in 2000, the Foundation has been identifying the world’s leading social entrepreneurs in over 40 countries around the globe. Social entrepreneurs implement innovative and pragmatic solutions to social problems by tackling the root causes and creating social transformation. Selected social entrepreneurs of the Schwab Foundation network participate in World Economic Forum events, thus providing unique opportunities for them to connect with business, political and media leaders.

Notes to Editors

- More information about the Schwab Foundation at www.schwabfound.org
- Schwab Foundation on **Twitter** at www.twitter.com/schwabfound
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World Economic Forum, 91-93 route de la Capite, CH-1223 Cologny/Geneva
Tel. +41 (0)22 869 1212, Fax +41 (0)22 786 2744, <http://www.weforum.org>