Women entrepreneurs win at 2018 Anzisha Prize Awards

A 22-year-old healthcare entrepreneur, Melissa Bime, has won the US$25,000 Grand Prize at the 8th annual Anzisha Prize awards gala. She is the founder of INFIUSS, an online blood bank and digital supply chain platform that ensures patients in 23 hospitals in Cameroon have life-saving blood when and where they need it.



Healthcare entrepreneur, Melissa Bime, wins 2018 Anzisha Prize.

The Anzisha Prize is delivered by the African Leadership Academy in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation. Through the Anzisha Prize, the organisers seek to fundamentally and significantly increase the number of job generative entrepreneurs in Africa. They believe that a key to doing so is to test, implement and then share models for identifying, training and connecting high potential, very young entrepreneurs (15 to 22 year-olds) so that many more organisations have better collective success in creating a pipeline of entrepreneurs with the capabilities for scale.

Bime is only the second woman to win the grand prize since Best Ayiorworth took it home in 2013. “Today, I stand here to represent every young girl out there that just has her dreams,” said Bime during her acceptance speech. “I stand here to represent this amazing group of entrepreneurs that I am a part of. With these people, the future of Africa is very bright. We are going to change this continent.”

Bime was selected from among 20 finalists during a ceremony that was live streamed to over 3,000 viewers and created a social media buzz across the continent.

The first runner up, 18-year-old Alhaji Siraj Bah will receive US$15,000 in prize money. He is the founder of Rugsal Trading in Sierra Leone, a company that produces handcrafted paper bags as well as briquettes for cooking fuel.

Bah hopes that the funds will boost the impact his business is already having and will enable him to hire more youth from his community. “I had only US$20 dollars when I started and I have created an impact already,” said Bah. “With US$15,000, I am going to impact 7.5 million Sierra Leonians’ lives in less than five years. It will happen.”

Fight against malaria

Joan Nalubega, 21, was the second-runner up. She is the co-founder of Uganics, which produces mosquito-repellent soap to combat malaria in Uganda. With the US$12,500, she will conduct a certification study for the company’s products and prepare Uganics for export to neighbouring countries which will help to widen her impact in the fight against malaria.

The keynote speaker, renowned entrepreneur Sim Shagaya, spoke plainly about the challenges faced by the continent but was confident that young entrepreneurs are best placed to solve them. He concluded his inspiring remarks with a simple message to the finalists: “You must lead!”

“We are proud of all 20 finalists and are excited to see two young and dynamic women taking home top prizes,” said Koffi Assouan, program manager, Mastercard Foundation. “Their contributions will continue to impact their countries and they are role models for other young women across the continent. They are demonstrating how to turn obstacles into opportunities that create value and jobs for others.”

The Anzisha Prize, the premier award for Africa’s youngest entrepreneurs, is a partnership between African Leadership Academy and the Mastercard Foundation. The 20 finalists spent 10 days in a business accelerator camp strengthening their business fundamentals before presenting their ventures to a panel of judges that included Ntuthuko Shezi, Bita Diamomande, Saran Kaba Jones, and Polo Leteka. They join a pool of more than 85 Anzisha Fellows and a network of support that includes access to mentors, experts, and networking. Each returns home with a US$2,500.

“This year was exciting in that we announced our new efforts to support the parents of very young entrepreneurs in Africa,” said Josh Adler, vice president of growth and entrepreneurship at African Leadership Academy. “Our new book, *Raising the Boss*, uncovers the critical role they play and how we must invest in them if we are to see more young people confidently choosing an entrepreneurship career path post school.”

Applications for the next cycle of the Anzisha Prize will open on 15 February in 2019. Nominations for promising youth entrepreneurs are welcome all year round.

To relive the exciting Anzisha Prize experience, watch the 2018 Pitch Competition.

For more, visit: https://www.bizcommunity.com