

Ethiopia's Meda Messenger combining chat with payments

By [Tom Jackson](#)

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Ethiopian startup Meda Messenger is hoping for swift uptake after rolling out its cross-platform social app that allows users to chat and make payments.



Launched as a side project in 2015 but only just launched to the public, [Meda Messenger](#) aims to help Ethiopians to connect, buy and sell goods, and transfer money from a single chat screen.

"It is a localised chat app for users with their own language and cultural context," chief executive officer (CEO) Biruk Hailu told *Disrupt Africa*.

Upon registration, a virtual bank account is automatically created for each user. Users can top up their Meda Wallet or make withdrawals by going to any agent or bank, and spend their money on the platform.

"Meda has strong appeal to users since it offers 100 percent localised technology that merges social media and money transfer into a single messaging app," Hailu said.

He said the various existing channels of communication and banking are unintegrated, non-localised and require some level

of know-how.

“Our mission is to become the touchpoint of all walks of life, improving and enhancing African lives from farmer to scientist, the intended impact being fostering a connected, informed and vibrant society,” Hailu said. “Meda is built with locally contextualised design and content, encouraging users to not only exploit instant messaging in their own language and culture, but to do business at the same time.”

The startup believes it is combatting slow adoption of technology due to language barriers, allowing any mobile owner to become a bank account owner without the need to go to any financial institution.

“Meda Chat brings together instant messaging, social media, business, financial institutions and government into a single platform, becoming a tool for every point of users daily contact with the world,” Hailu said.

The self-funded startup charges users commission of 1.5% per transaction, and also offers tools that allow business owners to reach users in a personalised and geographically targeted manner.

“Ethiopia, being our home country, is our primary market, however the same problems exist in neighbouring countries and other parts of Africa. We have expansion plans in the next five years once the home market matures,” Hailu said.

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