

SA finalists in Chivas Venture global competition announced

The South African top five in Chivas Regal's The Venture IV have been selected. The global social entrepreneur competition aims to find and support promising entrepreneurs from across the world who want to change the world for the better.



The South African finalists stand a chance to represent the country in the international version of The Venture, and win their share of \$1m.

“We were blown away by the volume and quality of the applications we received, which made choosing the top five not easy,” says Shelley Reeves, marketing manager at Chivas Regal South Africa. “These are all business-savvy entrepreneurs who have a real heart for the communities in which they are working. I’m confident that whoever wins will do us proud in the international leg of the competition.”

The top five finalists are, in no particular order:

Hands of Honour, a company started seven years ago by social entrepreneur Paul Taliaard who was inspired to make a difference when he was unemployed and standing in a queue in a soup kitchen. “Many of the men standing alongside me had skills, and I wanted to do something that would give back their dignity,” says Taliaard.

Hands of Honour upcycles obsolete stock into furniture for under-resourced schools, and has transformed 70 negative spaces into productive places.

Hear X Group is the world's first smartphone-based hearing test, and has the potential to reach millions of people across the world who have undiagnosed and treatable hearing loss. Professor De Wet Swanepoel, who devised the system, calls this an invisible epidemic. His app uses low-cost Android technology and is designed to be accessible to people who may not be able to read.

Solar Turtle was devised in response to the high level of cable theft as well as increasing unemployment in rural communities. Lungelwa Tyali, COO and co-founder of Solar Turtle, says it is essentially a business in a box which allows small kiosks to be set up to provide electricity to communities. During the day, the solar panels open out and at night, like a turtle, they retract into a secure, automatically locking 'box'.

SpazApp solves the problem experienced by many spaza shop owners: wholesalers do not deliver small orders and going to purchase stock is time consuming and costly. The app, devised by Tim Strang and Byron Verreyne connects the formal and informal markets, grouping shops in the same area and making it possible for small shop owners to benefit from bulk buying and deliveries.

Vehicle Energy Harvesting Systems is a concept that was sparked when Clement Mokoene watched an aeroplane landing, and started thinking about the pressure and heat that was generated. He realised that any energy generated could be harvested, and converted into electricity. His system does just that, and has the potential to generate low-cost electricity which could be accessible in even the most rural communities.

The finalists will now pitch their businesses to an expert panel of local judges, who will offer advice and decide which finalist has the most promise to be the local winner and continue to the global final.

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