

SA innovation entrepreneurs win big at GCIP-SA

Innovative entrepreneurs took centre stage when the winners of the 2018 Technology Innovation Agency's Global Cleantech Innovation Programme of South Africa (GCIP-SA) were announced at a recent gala event in Cape Town.

Twenty-one finalists in the fields of clean technology, bioprocessing and medical devices had one final chance to showcase their innovations as part of the GCIP-SA – a global initiative that aims to identify and support SMEs and startups with innovative solutions – before the winners were announced. Nine finalists competed for top honours in the clean-technology sector, while six innovators competed in the bioprocessing and six in the medical-device sectors.

Winners

In the bioprocessing sector, the overall winner was Afrobodies, with Lactease and Get2Natural as the runners-up. The most promising youth-led team was Lactease and Afrobodies was named as the best women-led team. The prize for the innovation with the highest social impact also went to Lactease.



L to R: Dr Phil Mwara (director general: Department of Science and Technology), Benedicta Mahlangu of Afrobodies (overall winner and best woman-led team in the biotechnology sector), and TIA CEO Barlow Manilal

In the clean-technology sector, the overall winner was Inseco, with iWater and Cane Trash Burner as the runners-up. The most promising youth-led team was Inseco and the best women-led team was iWater. The social impact award went to Lusec Sanitation Solutions.



L to R: Dr Phil Mwara (director general: Department of Science and Technology), Simon Hazell and Jack Chennells from Inseco (cleantech overall winner and most promising youth-led team), TIA CEO Barlow Manilal and Vusi Skosana, TIA acting executive and technology stations programme head

In the medical devices sector, the overall winner was Impulse Biomedical for the Easy Squeezy. Impulse Biomedical was also announced as one of the two runner-up teams for the Zibipen, with Genetic Research & Innovative Diagnostics as the other runner-up. Impulse Biomedical also picked up the award for the most promising youth-led team for the Easy Squeezy, and the best women-led team was SA Rebuilders. The social impact award went to PRD Logical Solutions.



L to R: Dr Phil Mwara (director general: Department of Science and Technology), Giancarlo Beukes of Impulse Biomedical Easy Squeezy (medical-devices category: overall winner and most promising youth-led team), Sarusha Pillay (head of the technology innovation cluster programme) and Barlow Manilal (CEO of Technology Innovation Agency)

Each of the three overall winners received a cash prize of R120,000, as well as an overseas trip to explore markets for their products. The runners-up each received R60,000 in cash and an overseas trip. The special-category winners (best women-led team, most promising youth-led team, and innovation for social impact) received R30,000 each. The finalists who did not receive any of these awards received R20,000 each. The business accelerator programme ran over four months with a total of 44 participants being coached and mentored to fine-tune their products and services and get them investment-ready. The value of the investment in each participant is estimated at R140,000.

For many of the participants, the programme was just what they needed to push their innovations in the right direction.

Barlow Manilal, CEO at TIA explains that the TIA GCIP-SA is part of a global initiative aimed at promoting clean technology innovation and supporting entrepreneurs in growing their SMMEs and startups into viable, investment-ready businesses. 'In South Africa, the programme was incorporated into the TIA on 1 January 2018, after four years as a donor-funded project,' he said.

Founding partners were the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO – project developer and international implementer), the Global Environment Facility (GEF – funder) and TIA (national implementer and country host). The main knowledge partner of the global programme is the USA-based Cleantech Open.

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