

“Africa’s Business Heroes” (ABH) prize competition unveils Top 20 for 2021

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ACCRA, Ghana, August 17, 2021/APO Group/ -- Top 20 will proceed to Semi-finals for a chance to become a Top 10 hero; Top 20 represent 11 countries from across Africa and a wide spectrum of key business sectors

The Africa’s Business Heroes (ABH) (<https://bit.ly/37MiCwK> (<https://bit.ly/37MiCwK>)) prize competition, a flagship philanthropic program established by the Jack Ma Foundation, just announced its top 20 semi-finalists for 2021 (<https://bit.ly/3xOjJXf> (<https://bit.ly/3xOjJXf>)). These 20 entrepreneurs are one step closer to becoming a Top 10 hero with a chance to pitch at the grand finale and gain a share of the US\$1.5 million prize pool.

Of the Top 20, 45% of the entrepreneurs are female and the average age of the group is 34. They represent key sectors and industries of the African economy such as agriculture, beauty, education, energy, financial services, healthcare, logistics, manufacturing, media & entertainment, and retail. They represent 11 countries from Africa - Botswana, Cote d’Ivoire, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, and Uganda. 10% are from Francophone countries and 55% operate in rural areas.

The semi-final stage of the competition will comprise of a thorough due diligence process and a pitch before a prestigious panel of judges. The panel will test each entrepreneur’s motivation and vision, business plan, and ability to clearly articulate how their businesses can generate positive impact for their communities.

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The 2021 semi-final judges include leading entrepreneurs, VCs and start-up accelerators, and distinguished public figures in Africa such as:

- Fatoumata Ba – Founder of Janngo
- Marième Diop – Investment Manager at Orange Digital Ventures
- Hasan Haider – Managing Partner of 500 StartUps, MENA Region
- Rene Parker – Director at R Labs
- Nicolas Pompigne-Mognard – Founder and Chairman of APO Group
- Fred Swaniker – Founder of ALU

12,000 applicants from across Africa applied to the ABH competition this year. From there, 50 outstanding entrepreneurs were chosen to progress to the next stage of competition for further judging. The top 50 engaged in virtual boot camps to learn from business leaders as well as previous ABH winners in preparation for their second-round interviews. The Round 2 interviews consisted of more than 75 hours of interviews with 48 judges from Africa and around the world representing 21 different industry sectors.

The Top 10 heroes will be announced in October and the competition will culminate in a grand finale show later this year where the Top 10 will take the stage to pitch live to global business legends. To see the final pitches of the Top 10 from 2020, tune into CNBC Africa and StarTimes where a four-episode series (<https://bit.ly/3xUt3sT> (<https://bit.ly/3xUt3sT>)) on the journey of the 2020 Africa’s Business Heroes competition is airing

For more information on the 2021 Top 20, please visit the ABH official website (<https://bit.ly/3CTtdo1> (<https://bit.ly/3CTtdo1>)). Follow ABH on Twitter (<https://bit.ly/3yU2RQp> (<https://bit.ly/3yU2RQp>)), LinkedIn (<https://bit.ly/3ANuCKR> (<https://bit.ly/3ANuCKR>)), Instagram (<https://bit.ly/2XoWSol> (<https://bit.ly/2XoWSol>)) or

Facebook (<https://bit.ly/3xOjOKx> (<https://bit.ly/3xOjOKx>)) to join these dynamic and inspiring entrepreneurs as they get ready for the next round of judging and the Grand Finale.

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About Africa's Business Heroes:

The Africa's Business Heroes prize competition is the flagship philanthropic initiative spearheaded by the Jack Ma Foundation, aimed at supporting and inspiring the next generation of African entrepreneurs across all sectors, building a more sustainable and inclusive economy for the future of the continent. Over a ten-year period, ABH will recognize 100 African entrepreneurs and commit to allocating grant funding, training programs, and support for the development of an entrepreneurial ecosystem. Each year, the ABH prize competition and show will feature ten finalists as they pitch their business to win a share of \$1.5 million in grant money. Jack Ma, Founder of Alibaba Group and the Jack Ma Foundation, created the prize after he made his first trip to Africa in 2017 and was inspired by the energy and entrepreneurial potential of the young people he met.