

TOP 10 FINALISTS OF “AFRICA’S BUSINESS HEROES” GRAND FINALE ANNOUNCED

- Ten finalists, 50% female and from eight African countries, gear up for grand finale pitch in November
- Confirmed finale judges include Jack Ma, Ibukun Awosika, Strive Masiyiwa and Joe Tsai
- ABH televised show featuring this year’s competition will air in November and December

Hangzhou, 12th October, 2020 – The 2020 [Africa’s Business Heroes \(ABH\)](#) prize, a flagship philanthropic program created by the Jack Ma Foundation’s Africa Netpreneur Prize Initiative (ANPI), **has selected the top 10 finalists**, who will pitch at the competition’s grand finale in November, for a chance to win a share of a US\$1.5 million prize pool.

[The ten outstanding entrepreneurs](#) – **half of whom are female** – have been selected from over 22,000 applications across all 54 African nations, following several rounds of rigorous evaluation. With an average age of 34 years, the top ten represent **eight African countries**: Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, and their businesses span key industries such as agriculture, fashion, education, healthcare, renewable energy, and financial services.

“I continue to be amazed by the passion, resilience, and vision of Africa’s entrepreneurs, and I look forward to meeting these ten extraordinary businesswomen and businessmen at the finale. I am excited to learn more about how they are driving positive change and progress across the continent,” said **Jack Ma, Founder of the Jack Ma Foundation and Alibaba Group.**

The passion, excellence, and diversity of the finalists reflects the DNA of the competition. The ABH program will recognize 100 African entrepreneurs and allocate US\$100 million, over a ten-year period, in grant funding, training, mentoring and learning initiatives, access to key networks, and to develop a vibrant entrepreneur community to support Africa’s future business leaders. This is a testament to the Jack Ma Foundation’s long-term commitment to support Africa’s entrepreneurial ecosystem.

“The 2020 Africa’s Business Heroes competition has been incredible. The quality of the entrepreneurs and their ideas has been exceptional and this is a testament to the talent that exists across the continent. I am extremely excited to follow the rest of the competition and see who will come on top as the 2020 African Business Hero!” said **Bethlehem Tilahun Alemu, ABH semi-finale judge and Founder of soleRebels, Garden of Coffee and Tefftastic.**

“It’s been fascinating to be part of this unique initiative. From the start, I was struck by the diversity of people and projects involved, with the finalists providing almost even split of talented men and women from all over Africa. This competition has shone a light on our continent, and helped to showcase African solutions to African problems. As someone who knows how challenging it is to boot-strap their own business, I was heartened to see that many of the entrants are entirely self-funded, and have shown great determination, ingenuity and spirit to get this far. All the finalists are truly deserving of the opportunity they have been given. Jack Ma represents the very best in global entrepreneurship, so I am delighted to have been involved in such a fantastic project.” commented **Nicolas Pompigne-Mognard, ABH semi-finale judge and Founder and Chairman of APO Group.**

On November 13th and 14th, Africa’s Business Heroes will host its Grand Finale, and winners of the 2020 ABH prize will be announced on November 14th, 2020.

During the online Grand Finale pitch, the top ten Heroes will present their business ventures, as well as their vision and leadership profile, to the finale judging panel that includes: **Jack Ma**, Founder of

the Jack Ma Foundation and the Alibaba Group; **Ibukun Awosika**, Chairman of First Bank of Nigeria and Founder/CEO of The Chair Centre Group; **Strive Masiyiwa**, Founder and Executive Chairman of Econet Group; and **Joe Tsai**, Executive Vice Chairman of the Alibaba Group.

The next few weeks will be crucial for the finalists to finesse their pitches and leverage the in-depth training, learnings and insights that they have gathered along their ABH journey, culminating in the finale. All of this will be part of ABH brand-new business entertainment televised show, due to air in five episodes from November 21st to December 19th across Africa. The show will give the audience exclusive access to the real-world stories of the entrepreneurs of this edition, following them as they go head to head in the finale, and unveiling the key insights and advice shared by the finale judges, alongside the best moments and experience of the competition. By showcasing the huge talent of the contestants, ABH hopes to talk to the entrepreneurial spirit of startups and small businesses in Africa and around the world, inspiring them to pursue their aspiration and turn their ideas and solutions into concrete business ventures.

More details on how to tune in to the program will be released in the coming weeks.

Please visit africabusinessheroes.org and follow [@africa_heroes](https://twitter.com/africa_heroes) on Twitter to receive the latest updates on the Prize. Watch the "Looking for Africa's Business Heroes" documentary, which features the inspiring stories of the 2019 ABH finalists [here](#). For all press materials on ABH and other initiatives by the Jack Ma Foundation in Africa, visit [Alizila](#).

Meet the Top 10 finalists:

Abdulai A Dasana, CEO & COO, [Amaati Company Limited](#) (Ghana)

"We nourish the world" - Amaati is a social enterprise whose mission is to build sustainable communities through the use of an extinct and neglected crop called Fonio. The company is led by Abdulai A. Dasana, an agricultural technologist with a decade of experience in finance, banking and SMEs, and with a vision to revolutionize the agriculture sector to benefit the most vulnerable.

Aboubakar Karim, CEO & Founder, [INVESTIV](#) (Côte d'Ivoire)

"Technology and passion for agriculture" - INVESTIV is an Ivorian company whose mission is to help build the future of African agriculture by leveraging innovative technologies to support smallholder farmers throughout Côte d'Ivoire and West Africa. The company is led by Aboubakar Karim, a 25 years old agro-economist.

Axel Emmanuel Gbaou, CEO & Founder, [Le Chocolatier Ivoirien](#) (Côte d'Ivoire)

"Cocoa revolution in progress" – Le Chocolatier Ivoirien manufactures and offers Africa-made, handcrafted and quality chocolate, promoting sustainable cultivation techniques and a fairer distribution of income in the cocoa chain through a direct partnership with female growers. The founder Axel, who started his career as a banker and established the company in his mother's kitchen, holds a degree in International Public Law, and a Master's in Taxation.

Chebet Lesan, Founder & CEO, [Bright Green R. Energy](#) (Kenya)

"Revolutionizing Africa's kitchens" - BrightGreen Energy produces life-saving fuel bricks that reduce the cost of cooking for underserved communities across Africa and save forests. The company is led by Chebet Lesan who has a background in Leadership from The University of Cambridge, Product Design from The University of Nairobi, Supply Chain Management from Rutgers School of Business and a Business-Design Fellowship from Massachusetts Institute of Technology D-lab.

Cyrille Nkontchou, Founder & Chairman, [Enko Education](#) (Cameroon)

"Your launchpad to the best universities" - Enko Education operates the largest single network of private schools in Africa that teaches the International Baccalaureate curriculum to democratize access to quality international education for African youth. The company was founded by Cyrille Nkontchou, an economist by training with extensive experience as a fund manager, a banker and a consultant.

Ethel Mupambwa, Co-Founder and Executive Director, [Moneymart](#) (Zimbabwe)

"Creating wealth; changing lives" - Moneymart is a Zimbabwean based microfinance institution that offers tailor-made business loans to MSMEs and individuals who live off the power grid to access quality solar-lighting-kits. The company is co-led by Ethel Mupambwa, who has nine years of experience in finance and is a Level 2 Chartered Financial Analyst Candidate.

Dr. Emma Naluyima Mugerwa, Founder, [MST Junior School](#) (Uganda)

"Little seeds, big dreams" – MST Junior School is a Primary School with a unique approach and learning model. It aims to equip the pupils with unique skills to solve agriculture issues such as food insecurity, waste mismanagement and malnutrition. The school was established by Dr. Emma Naluyima, a vet, farmer and educator with a desire to train young people and change their lives through Modern and Purposeful Farming.

Joan Rukundo Nalubega, CEO & Founder, [Uganics](#) (Uganda)

"Buy a soap - save lives" - Uganics is a social business that manufactures life-saving organic anti-malaria soap to address malaria, which kills millions of people every year, and sells around the world at a high profit margin to subsidize sales to poor populations at the same price as regular soap. The company is led by Joan Rukundo Nalubega, a Malaria survivor and a social entrepreneur with a vision to fight Malaria.

Mame Diarra Bousso Gueye, CEO & Founder, [Diarrablu](#) (Senegal)

"Artisans & algorithms for a conscious lifestyle" - Diarrablu is a Senegalese fashion tech company merging African artisan traditions with technology to empower African artisans and build an ethical and sustainable fashion future centered around ancestral African craftsmanship. The company is led by Diarra Gueye who has experience in finance, mathematics, and design and recently completed her Master's at Stanford University with a focus on creative mathematics.

Oluwasoga Oni, CEO & Co-Founder, [Mdaas Global](#) (Nigeria)

"Unlocking diagnostics for Africa's next billion" - MDaaS Global builds and operates modern, tech-enabled diagnostic centers in clinically-underserved communities starting in Nigeria to provide a world-class patient experience at highly-affordable prices. The company is led by Oluwasoga Oni, an MIT-trained system engineer.

About ANPI

The ANPI 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, who are building a more sustainable and inclusive economy for the future of the continent. Over a ten-year period, ANPI will recognize 100 African entrepreneurs and commit to allocating US\$100 million in grant funding, training programs, and support for the development of an entrepreneurial ecosystem. The ANPI organizes the "Africa's Business Heroes" prize competition and show, in which ten finalists have the opportunity to 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, first created the prize after he made his first trip to Africa in July 2017 and was inspired by the energy and entrepreneurial potential of the young people he met with.

About Jack Ma Foundation

Established by Jack Ma, the founder of Alibaba Group, the Jack Ma Foundation was founded on 15 December 2014 and has been focusing on education, entrepreneurship, women's leadership, and the environment. The Foundation aspires to be a reliable, participative, and sustainable philanthropic organisation. The Jack Ma Foundation has so far supported projects worldwide including the Jack Ma Rural Education Program, the Africa Netpreneur Prize Initiative, the Ma & Morley Scholarship Program, and Jordan's Queen Rania Foundation. Additionally, the Foundation has also funded a number of projects in its priority areas. The Jack Ma Foundation is committed to empowering rural educators, entrepreneurs, rural children, young start-ups, and women to equip them for the future and to help build a happier, healthier, more sustainable and more inclusive society.

Press Contacts

ABH / Jack Ma Foundation
Miriam Forte
(+44)75 34247780
m.forte@alibaba-inc.com

APO Group
Fathima Ebrahim
(+27) 82 801 8997
fathima.ebrahim@apo-opa.com