

Ten of Africa's brightest start-ups changing lives

 By [Zubair Timol](#), issued by [Meltwater](#)

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In 2001, entrepreneur Jorn Lyseggen founded Meltwater with only US \$15,000. Operating from an old shipping container in Norway, offered to him by a friend as a free workspace, Jorn brought a team together and built the company. Meltwater is now a global leader in online intelligence, with 50 offices on six continents and 25,000 corporate clients.

As a serial entrepreneur, I can say with authority that being one isn't easy. As well as working alongside Jorn, I have been involved in setting up various businesses endeavours from design, event management and now with my brothers, I also run a luxury fashion brand.

From coming up with a groundbreaking idea, then finding ways to make it happen and learning from mistakes along the way, entrepreneurs are constantly working towards success. This sense of achievement is even greater when it also changes or saves the lives of real people. Here are 10 African start-ups that are leveraging technology and combining it with entrepreneurial spirit for the good of the people:

1. dotLearn - Nigeria

Online education makes it possible for those living in remote locations to improve their skills and brighten their future. But connectivity and technology challenges make this almost impossible for many students in Africa. The solution comes in the form of [dotLearn](#), an open-source file format for digital education that enables edX style online courses to work 100% offline on mobile devices enabling students to download full online courses in less than 1 MB and view them offline on any mobile device.

2. WeFarm - Kenya

African farmers, especially those in remote areas, are vulnerable to the effects of climate change and face many challenges when growing food for their community. In an effort to survive, they develop a diverse range of innovative, low-cost solutions to overcome problems.

[WeFarm](#) is a knowledge sharing platform for farmers in rural communities, allowing them to ask questions via SMS shortcodes and receive answers from other registered users. The platform is open to anyone, including experts and those wishing to do business with farmers. With almost 90,000 questions asked on the platform it is a mine of information.

3. CardiopadZang - Cameroon

The [Cardiopad](#) is a touch screen medical tablet that facilitates heart examinations such as the electrocardiogram (ECG) to be performed in rural locations while the results of the test are transferred wirelessly to specialists who can interpret them. This life saving device means that patients living far away from medical facilities can get the care they need.

4. Funda - South Africa

[Funda](#) is an online training platform that has been partnering up with South African universities to enable learners to access short e-courses online. This helps students to learn more and achieve better results. Ultimately empowering them to achieve their goals and reach their full potential.

5. Soko - Kenya

Looking for the perfect unique gift? Look no further than [Soko](#), an online platform where global shoppers can buy handcrafted accessories direct from artisans in Kenya. With Soko's mobile tools, artisans have access to a whole world of consumers, expanding their business horizons and entrepreneurial prospects. On average, within two months of joining Soko, artisans boost their income four fold.

6. Giraffe - South Africa

[Giraffe](#) helps low and medium skilled workers to find work using mobile technology. Jobseekers sign up to Giraffe by sending a shortcode via SMS or visiting the Giraffe website. The platform asks a series of questions to formulate a brief digital CV, similarly employers post job listings. Giraffe's algorithm automatically contacts all suitable candidates via SMS to ask if they would like to have an interview. Once their interest is confirmed, it automatically forwards their digital CVs to the employer and works with them to setup the interview process.

7. Vula Mobile - South Africa

Health workers in remote areas are often faced with tough cases and very little in the way of resources. [Vula Mobile](#) is a mobile app that connects general health workers with specialists in hospitals. Vula Mobile allows health workers to capture patient information, take photographs, do basic tests and record a brief medical history before sending it directly to a specialist. They can ask for advice over a dedicated messaging platform and then help their patients get the care they need.

8. SafeMotos - Rwanda

Since 80% of accidents in Kigali, Rwanda involve motorbikes [SafeMotos](#) encourages its customers not to become part of the statistics. Working much like Uber, drivers are equipped with smartphones that send data on how they drive. The system then works unsafe drivers out of their system by only connecting customers with drivers who meet their high safety standards.

9. Gifted Mom - Cameroon

The high death rate of newborn babies and pregnant women in outlying communities inspired [Gifted Mom](#)'s creator to develop an app that helps teenage mothers and health workers calculate due dates. It also collects and sends information to women in the community. It has more than 500 downloads offering women's health advice. New mothers can also access information on infant care and vaccinations.

10. CladLight - Kenya

[CladLight](#) jackets ensure bikes are visible to other motorists. The jackets are equipped with signal transmitters displaying the direction in which a driver intends to turn when the bike's indicators are used. It also has a GPS tracker so that owners can track the riders. This helps to reduce the number of bike casualties.

ABOUT ZUBAIR TIMOL

Zubair Timol is the Partner and Area Director of India, Middle East & Africa at Meltwater. He joined the company during its startup phase, being trained in Oslo, Norway, under the tutelage of the CEO.

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