

**Frank Tumwebaze, Minister/politician**

# Domestically innovated ICT applications hit the market

On April 12, the Ministry of ICT held an award ceremony of ICT Innovators at the Ministry of ICT and National Guidance. The launch was officiated by the Prime Minister. Below is an abridged speech of Minister of Informations Communications Technology and National Guidance, Frank Tumwebaze.

**T**oday is a very important day in our work as a ministry because it is the day when we deliver and give birth to an idea we conceived one and half

years ago.

We are witnessing the domestically innovated ICT Solutions taken to the Market with support of the Government through the National ICT Initiatives Support Programme (NIISP) conceived and implemented by the Ministry of ICT and National Guidance.

When I was appointed Minister of ICT and National Guidance by the President in 2016, I asked myself what am going to do in the new sector other than spearheading programmes that were already in motion.

I looked at the heavy investment the country has put in the ICT infrastructure and also the huge expenditure we have been incurring on imported IT systems and applications and realised that if we supported our own ICT talents, we can leverage our ICT investments. That is how our journey started.

Together with my colleagues and staff of the sector, we did consultations with stakeholders and conceived National ICT Initiatives Support Programme (NIISP). NIISP has two major objectives:

- Construction of ICT hubs (national and regional) that would offer free work spaces to young innovators in their primary stages of the innovation ecosystem and;
- Give direct financial support to individual innovators and private hubs that have solutions ready to go the market.

The construction of the ICT hub is ongoing at Nakawa (UICT) and is being executed by the UPDF engineering brigade.

I would like to thank the judges committee led by Prof Anabella Habinka for doing good professional work of evaluating the over 350 applications that came in through the open call for concepts that we issued.

I thank all of you that responded. To those of you that didn't make it to the final stage please don't give up. You have already won by doing the most difficult task of taking the first step of conceiving the idea.

Innovation starts with an idea. What remains now is for you to polish it up further, demonstrate more clearly the problem your solution intends to solve and the market that will consume your solutions. The call for concepts will continue every year.

To those of you that finally managed to make it to list of best evaluated innovations, congratulations! Today, we are not just giving you financial awards as just a token of appreciation (*kasimo*). No. We are recognising and commissioning you to go to the market to sell your intellectual outputs. The Government will be the first client of your products. The judges have both been convinced that your solutions can solve problems and can indeed sustain themselves in the market. I can now proudly report to the whole country that Ugandans have solutions of their own on the domestic market.

If we can take these to the regional and international markets, then we shall have fully liberated our country from being a net importer of IT systems and solutions. Our IT rankings on the global IT index will automatically go high. The President and Cabinet gave us only sh13b



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from the science innovation fund for both constructing the ICT hub and for this direct support.

It was a small allocation, but it was to try and see the potential of our ICT innovations. Therefore, you the grantees of today, your performance will either unlock or lock out more allocations for this programme.

When the President says that one of the other sectors for job creation is ICT, he literally means and talks of innovation. If you do not innovate and trade in your own intellectual capital, then you will not create jobs. You will be depending on other people's intellectual work. You will consume their solutions and their content.

So today, I am happy to say that as a sector, we are answering the President's call on Job creation through ICT.

The following are some of the ICT innovations that the judgement panel found relevant and ready to go to the market;

- **AIMS:** The Academic Information Management System (AIMS) is designed for computerisation of student information, fees, financial and all other university functions.

- **KiCare:** KiCare is a non-invasive solution that tests for kidney functionality. The difference is that a blood sample is not required to perform this kidney functionality test.

- **Protecting Infants remotely by SMS (PRISMS)** is an SMS based system which assists health workers to provide new-born care clinical management through provision of instant clinical care decisions based on routine assessment findings.

- **Wulira app:** Is a hearing assessment mobile application that is used to assess hearing loss in patients.

- **Sysimo technologies:** Blood Donation System (BDS) is a mobile based application which facilitates communication between blood donors and blood donation centres so that the appropriate donor can be reached just on time.

- **Dero energy services limited:** This supports the acquisition of localised solar power which is cheaper than grid power to support renewable energy.

- **Energrow:** aims to catalyse socio-economic development through sustainable electricity demand growth, by means of digital financial inclusion, business training and increased energy literacy.

- **Intel world international:** Xente is an online payment platform that enables businesses to reach and transact with their customers.

- **OCULAR:** enables diagnosis for microscopically diagnosed diseases. This application is at prototype level and has been successfully tested.

- **6th SENSE:** is a mobile application which translates sign language to speech. It is applicable in service delivery facilities to support persons with disability.

- **Munu technologies:** is an IT company offering business processing outsourcing (BPO) services to organisations.

- **M-Farmer:** is designed to extend technology services to farmers. This application enables farmers to keep better records, increase efficiency of operations and make informed decisions.

I thank the President, Cabinet and Parliament and particularly the ICT Committee of Parliament for having supported this programme. I congratulate all the innovators that participated in this first round once again.

I want to emphasise that Innovations are key game changers in an economy and ICT's promotion serves as a strategic tool that will foster greater innovation. ICTs and ICT-enabled activities will enable institutions to design more innovative, effective, efficient and responsive services for clients and businesses.

**The writer is the Minister of ICT and National Guidance**

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