

The programme is run by RAN and Makerere University's School of Public Health

Nabisunsa, Lira University shine at innovation contest

By Vivien Agaba

Early 2015, there was a video where Jolly Tumuhirwe, a 22-year-old housewife, was filmed mercilessly beating a toddler under her care, leaving many parents worried about the onsets their children suffer when left under the care of nannies.

A team of four girls from Nabisunsa Girls' Secondary School were touched by the video and came up with an application called Momager. In this app, the Nabisunsa Girls want to train maids on how to treat babies. Once the training is done, busy working parents can subscribe to the app to engage the team and get access to trained maids.

With this app Nabisunsa Girls' Secondary School emerged the best in the 2017 National Technology entrepreneurship programme and competition for young women in science, technology and innovation.

The programme is run by Resilient Africa Network (RAN) and Makerere University's School of Public Health. It aims at teaching women how to build applications for mobile services to solve community challenges.

This year, 200 innovators from eight secondary schools and two universities participated in the challenge. The schools included Nabisunsa Girls, Gayaza High School, Gulu High School and Nyaka Vocational School. Others were Mengo Secondary School, Trinity College Nabbingo, Bweranyangi Girls' Secondary School and Lira Town College.

Innovators from Lira University and Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST) also participated in the challenge. I took place at Makerere University's College of Engineering, Design, Art and Technology (CEDAT).

Former ethics and integrity minister, Miria Matembe, who was the chief guest at the function, hailed the young female innovators for coming up with apps aimed at addressing the country's socio-economic challenges.

The programme, which is free for the participants, equips them with technical and entrepreneurial skills. The students are expected to create mobile phone applications that they take to the market.

Meanwhile, Nabisunsa Girls' co-ordinator, Faith Anne



The winning team of Nabisunsa Girls who innovated the Momager app



Matembe (centre) with winners from Lira University

A total of 200 innovators from eight secondary schools and two universities participated in this year's challenge

a nanny is taking care of the baby, a mother is expected to pay the nanny sh2,500.

She explains that Momager is a community-based app

mind for busy mothers who cannot be with their children while at work.

"This app is aimed at providing reliable and well-

supervision," explained Agaba. This means a mother can concentrate on work as opposed to being worried all the time when she has left her baby at home.

University category

In the university category, Lira won the challenge. Two 21-year-olds, Scovia Ajok and Justice Gutu, came up with an app known as Mobile Eduapp to help resolve the challenge of school dropouts.

Ajok says they developed the app after realising a number of students were dropping out of school.

It works in a way that schools subscribe to the app developers, who keep updating teachers on the whereabouts of a student in case he or she is not at school. The teachers are also allowed to interface with parents. However, it requires the school to first subscribe to the app.

Completing school

"This app is meant to address the challenge of school dropouts countrywide. We hope that other schools can embrace the app to solve the problem," she says.

According to a UNESCO report released in 2012, more than two in five children who start school in Africa do not complete. According to the same report, school dropout rates in Africa were highest

Uganda at 68% in the same report.

Harriet Adong, the communications manager for RAN, says the winners will undergo an incubation programme for 13 weeks for further capacity building and skills enhancement. The programme expects the students to come up with tangible solutions.

Nathan Tumuhirwe, RAN's Eastern Africa laboratory

director, says the programme started in 2014 in Uganda and only existed in four schools. Currently, it has been rolled out to 20 schools in 13 districts.

He said the organisation plans to engage the Government to ensure the programme is rolled out to all schools in the country. Since most of these innovations are still in incubation, the innovators also appealed to the Government to support their projects.

WHAT THEY SAY



Miria Matembe, former ethics minister
I applaud the young female innovators for coming up with apps aimed at addressing the country's socio-economic challenges.

More young girls should embrace innovation and technology because young people have a lot of potential to make a great contribution to the country's development.

Prof. Henry Alinaitwe, principal CEDAT

In the past, not many women were joining the engineering class. The times have changed now and we have many girls in the engineering class. Thirty percent of electrical engineering students, at the engineering college are females. This is the reason why we need to support the girls in doing sciences.

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