

PRESS RELEASE

King Baudouin Foundation awards 2018-19 African Development Prize to Wecyclers, a start-up leveraging the power of communities and generating impact by redistributing the benefits from recycled waste

LAGOS, 21 March 2019 – *The King Baudouin Foundation awards the African Development Prize to Wecyclers, a Lagos based waste management start-up. The Prize will allow Wecyclers to develop further their business and increase their impact at national and international levels.*

By 2100, Africa will hold 5 out of the 10 biggest cities in the world, and Lagos could be the biggest city in the world. Today, Lagos residents generate 15,000 tons of waste per day, of which only 40% is collected by the municipal government. Wecyclers' model is designed to help fill this gap and reduce solid waste in the streets of Lagos, improving both the environment and the well-being of populations.

The organisation utilises low and high technology solutions that comprise SMS technology and a mobile application, as well as low-cost collection vehicles, which collect recyclable waste directly from households to sell to recycling plants before being made into new products.

"We are proud to recognise Wecyclers for their very effective model," said Hervé Lisoir from the King Baudouin Foundation. *"The independent Selection committee selected the enterprise out of 244 applications for its innovative approach to engaging the community, turning recycling into an economic driver for communities and turning citizens into agents of change."*

The company has also been selected for its economic impact. By rewarding citizens with "points," it allows low-income communities to capture value from their waste. Today, Wecyclers already benefits from the engagement of more than 17,000 subscribers in 7 localities in Lagos. It registers around 200 new members each month. The Nigerian start-up has also created 200 jobs in 7 years, with a focus on women, who currently account for 60% of their workforce.

"Giving back to the community is in the DNA of Wecyclers. We want to expand our business to other neighbourhoods. In the midterm, we want to be big enough to build our own recycling plant. Growing more for Wecyclers, means being able to give back even more to the community," said Olawale Adebisi, CEO of Wecyclers.

From the beginning, Wecyclers could count on the support of key partners such as the Tony Elumelu Foundation. Recently, Wecyclers have also partnered with major corporations, such as Unilever, to launch "kiosks" in places where there are no collection routes.

Through its financial support of €200,000, the African Development Prize will allow Wecyclers to upscale their model and increase their footprint, with plans to expand in Lagos, other Nigerian cities and neighbouring countries. The Prize also provides access to a wide network of stakeholders in Europe and the US, who may support them as they grow. With current growth projections, Wecyclers aim to collect 5,000 tons of recyclables by 2020 and could be serving 500,000 households by 2023.

Since Wecyclers launched its initiative, awareness around the issue has risen among the general public, spurring several other companies to develop new solutions to recycling.

“We have seen the impressive contribution of Wecyclers over the years. Their success and solution is changing the perception of waste management in the state. As primary regulatory agency, we are particularly happy about the expansion of Wecyclers through innovative partnerships which will help them reach new locations and help drive the Lagos State Government’s waste management aspirations. I’m without doubt that this award will go a long way in its ongoing expansion to new localities,” said Ola Oresnaya, CEO, Lagos State Waste Management Authority.

The official announcement was made this Wednesday, March 20 in Lagos, in the offices of Wecyclers on the occasion of the first day of the Silicon Lagoon Mission organized by Close the Gap and Startups.be.

The award ceremony in the presence of King Philippe and Queen Mathilde of Belgium at the Royal Palace in Brussels, Belgium, will take place June 12, 2019.

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Media Contacts

For further information on opportunities for briefings and interviews with the winners, spokespeople and former laureates, please contact:

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For images: Please find here images from the official KBF Africa Prize [Flickr account](#).

Further information

The King Baudouin Foundation (KBF)

The King Baudouin Foundation is an independent, pluralistic foundation working in Belgium and at the European and international level. We are seeking to change society for the better, so we invest in inspiring projects and individuals. In 2018 we provided a total of €44.8 million in support to 2,350 organizations and individuals. The Foundation was set up in 1976, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of King Baudouin's reign. For more information, visit www.kbs-frb.be

About the King Baudouin African Development Prize

The aim of the King Baudouin African Development Prize is to acknowledge the work of African individuals or organisations which have made an exemplary contribution to development in Africa. It also seeks to draw public attention to the many inspirational stories of hope, struggle and success which emanate from the development field in Africa. For more information, visit www.africa-kbf.org

Previous Prize winners include:

- **Dr Denis Mukwege, Nobel Peace Prize Winner 2018**, for his contribution to founding the Panzi Hospital in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, where tens of thousands of sexual violence victims were treated.
- **BarefootLaw Ltd** for its work providing free-of-charge online legal service in East Africa to those most vulnerable to understand and defend their basic rights.
- **Farmerline Ltd** for its work connecting over 200,000 farmers and enabling them to share information, helping some smallholder farmers grow their profits by 50 percent.
- **Kytabu Inc.** for its work in developing an innovative textbook content-leasing app for students, making school reading accessible to 11-million students in Kenya.