

USAID ANNOUNCES \$18.4 MILLION IN SUPPORT OF CUTTING EDGE INNOVATIONS

The U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) Development Innovation Ventures (DIV) program recently announced eighteen new grantees. The grantee organizations -- the majority of which are new to USAID -- span seven sectors and nine different countries, from Brazil to Zambia.

Since 2010, USAID-supported DIV innovations have collectively impacted 25 million people living in poverty and resulted in \$4 in funding from outside investors, lenders and philanthropies for every U.S. taxpayer dollar spent.

About the grantees:

Brazil

- **Rainforest Connection (RFCx)** has designed and manufactured a device that enables preventative measures to stop deforestation by providing continuous, real-time monitoring of forested areas in Brazil using a simple listening technology and sound identification software that alerts local community members of sounds associated with the threat of deforestation, such as chainsaws and cars.



Rainforest Connection hardware being installed for display purposes.

Photo: Rainforest Connection

India

- **Vaathum Biotech**, an Indian biotech company, has developed a point-of-care diagnostic assay that can quickly identify drug-resistant Tuberculosis and provide information on susceptibility to antimicrobials, thereby preventing further acquired resistance in the patient and limiting direct transmission.

Kenya

- **Apollo Agriculture** uses satellite imaging and agronomic machine learning to deliver input loans and customized agronomic advice to smallholder farmers in Kenya, which can help reduce rural poverty, improve food security, and drive financial inclusion among smallholders.
- **FarmDrive** uses machine learning to develop a credit assessment model - incorporating alternative data sources, such as agronomic (soil, weather, and crop), satellite (imagery of farms and crops), and market data (crop and input prices) - to help financial institutions understand the risk profiles of smallholder farmers in Kenya.
- **Keheala** is a feature-phone and Internet-based digital platform in Kenya that uses Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD) technology to deliver behavioral interventions and disease management tools to increase tuberculosis drug adherence.
- **PayGo Energy** is an integrated fuel-stove distribution company that leverages mobile money and smart meter technology to sell liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) on a pay-as-you-go basis in East Africa.
- **Powerhive**, a provider of solar microgrids in Western Kenya, is developing a Productive Use Program to provide its customers with low-cost appliance leases and business loans combined with enterprise development support.
- **PowerGen**, a small power distributor (SPD), targets high-density population areas in Kenya that are concentrated under or in very close proximity to the grid and builds the last-mile distribution network from the main grid with a solar micro-grid, working the majority of the connection costs into tariffs so that upfront connection costs are not prohibitively high.
- **Sanivation** provides clean, affordable sanitation services and byproducts to the urban and peri-urban poor in Kenya by collecting and treating fecal sludge and transforming it into charcoal briquettes.
- **Tulaa** is a mobile money product that allows smallholder farmers in Kenya to layaway and borrow money for the purchase of quality inputs, helping them set savings goals and receive reminders and incentives as they work toward reaching their target.

Kenya/Uganda

- **BURN Manufacturing** is expanding its reach to additional consumer segments within Kenya and Uganda with a low-cost charcoal cookstove, as well as its DIV Stage 1-supported wood-fuel cookstove.
- **Instiglio**, a results-based financing intermediary, in partnership with Village Enterprise, is designing and implementing a Development Impact Bond (DIB) to test Village Enterprise's "Graduation Model" in Kenya and Uganda, a highly evidence-based integrated program designed to "graduate" participating households out of extreme poverty by addressing several dimensions of need simultaneously.

Malawi/Uganda

- **One Acre Fund** (1AF) is scaling delivery of a bundle of agricultural services, including distribution of seed and fertilizer, crop insurance, and weekly training on agricultural techniques, to smallholder farmers to improve livelihoods and agricultural productivity in Uganda and Malawi.

Rwanda

- **Pivot Works** is a city-scale treatment solution that turns human waste into renewable "Pivot Fuel" with a demonstration-scale facility in Kigali, Rwanda, that can convert about 100 cubic meters of fecal sludge per day into up to one ton of Pivot Fuel.
- **VLabs** designs and evaluates innovations in adolescent HIV service delivery and is helping to develop an integrated national adolescent HIV and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) strategy in Rwanda, including the use of Cybergirl/Cyberboy: a digital education program that aims to improve the quality and accessibility of SRH information and services for Rwandan youth, and the development of Cybernurse: a program that trains providers how to counsel youth.

South Africa

- **Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator** has built a large "inclusion" dataset (the largest on unemployed youth in South Africa) to understand the current rules employers use, typically school results and prior work experience, that often exclude young people with potential from getting their first job.

Tanzania

- **Devergy** is a social energy services company that is commercializing an affordable solar PV-based micro-grid approach to electrifying off-grid communities in Tanzania, and it operates in an emerging solutions gap observed between standalone off-grid solar products and conventionally designed mini-grids.

Zambia

- **J-PAL Africa**, Pratham and UNICEF/Zambia will work hand in hand with the Zambian Ministry of General Education in a nationwide rollout of the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) Program, which assesses students' literacy and numeracy levels and groups them accordingly to help them acquire foundational skills to catch up to grade level.

About Development Innovation Ventures (DIV): DIV supports innovative ideas, pilots and tests them using cutting-edge analytical methods, and scales solutions that demonstrate widespread impact and cost-effectiveness. DIV's tiered-funding model, inspired by the venture capital experience, invests comparatively small amounts in relatively unproven concepts, and continues to support only those that prove they work. Visit the DIV [portfolio](#) to see the evidence-gathering and scale-up activities of DIV winners around the world.

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