INNOVATION IN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND MANUFACTURING | MILKEN-MOTSEPE PRIZE PITCHES

Announcer 00:09

Ladies and gentlemen, we are about to start the Milken-Motsepe Prize pitches in AI and manufacturing. Please turn your attention to the screens for a brief overview video.

Voiceover Intro 00:27

In 2025, global spending on goods and services is expected to exceed $5 trillion, making manufacturing one of the fastest growing sectors. As digital advancements continue to reshape industries, manufacturing is entering a new era of innovation, driven by AI and other emerging technologies. This program inspires not only new businesses, but also bold, optimistic action. The winning team will demonstrate a scalable innovation across manufacturing value chains that leverages AI to deliver measurable impact in efficiency and waste loss. This innovation award offers $2 million in unrestricted funding. The grand prize winner will be awarded $1 million to scale their business and will gain access to a global platform to showcase their innovation to investors. Since its launch in 2021 the Milken-Motsepe innovation prize program has awarded over 6 million US dollars in funding to over 50 innovators around the world. Visit Milkenmotsepeprize.org to learn more.

Announcer 01:50

Please welcome to stage, Emily Musil, managing director, Social Innovation, Milken Institute.

Emily Musil 02:03

Thank you so much, and welcome everyone here today, everyone watching on the livestream around the globe. We are so thrilled to have you join us today for this most exciting pitch session. This is an integral milestone as part of the Milken-Motsepe Prize program. Launched in 2021, the Milken-Motsepe Innovation Prize Program is a series of multimillion dollar innovation prizes, designed to accelerate technological change, technological innovation, to address our urgent global challenges. Today, you will be hearing from our semifinalists, 10 amazing companies who have made it out of our community of over 12,000 entrepreneurs from 136 countries around the world—made it to this point. The Milken-Motsepe Prize in Artificial Intelligence and Manufacturing is the fourth in the Milken-Motsepe Innovation Prize Program. We are so excited today to be joined with our program principals who have made this whole program possible. I am delighted to welcome to the stage, Dr. Precious Moloi-Motsepe and Michael Milken. Please join us on stage.

Emily Musil 03:29

I like this walk on music—dance on music. Thank you so much for joining us—we'll be hearing from them in just a moment. To ground you on what you're going to be doing today—so you will be hearing from these 10 semifinalist teams as part of the AI and manufacturing prize. This is a $2 million prize that was designed to catalyze AI innovation across the manufacturing value chain in Africa. This prize was designed to highlight innovations that deliver efficiency, reduce waste and support the workforce of the future. These 10 companies have proven themselves to be strong, future focused innovators in Africa's burgeoning manufacturing sector. Essential throughout the prize process is our rigorous judging panel and process. Our judges have been hard at work throughout the year evaluating and scoring each of the companies throughout all the milestones in this prize. They're being evaluated for their commercial viability, the depth of their technological integration, the quality of their operational economics, the potential for market scalability and workforce development. The finalists have been evaluated from all the data that they have submitted throughout the round, and this is the final stage of the process—for semifinalists. After today, at the end of this session, we will be announcing the five—out of the 10 companies you'll be hearing from today—we will be announcing the five who will advance to the finalist round. Those five will be joining us on stage at our Milken Institute Global Conference in Los Angeles in May 2026. Today we are joined by three of our judges, who I would like to welcome to the stage at this point. We have Guy Diedrich, senior vice president and global innovation officer at Cisco. We have Kweilin Ellingrud, Global Institute director and senior partner at McKinsey and Company. And John Kamara, founder and CEO of AI Center of Excellence. Thank you so much for joining us today. We would also like to thank our judges who are not able to make it here today. Christina Shim, chief sustainability officer at IBM, Fran Katsoudas, EVP at Cisco, and Meg Whitman, former US ambassador to Kenya and the CEO of HP.

Emily Musil 06:28

Okay, so now we're going to get to the part that you're all here for. Each of our 10 semifinalists are going to have 90 seconds to present on their innovation and their impact. We're going to be strict in the timing so that it can be fair for all. The judges will have a combined two minutes to ask questions to each of our

innovators, and we will, after we hear five, we'll hear from our principals, we'll hear from the second five, and then we will announce the winners. So without further ado, I'm very pleased to welcome to the stage our first semifinalist, Digitech Oasis.

Ayaan Mohamed 07:24

Every year, manufacturers across the world lose billions from inefficiency. Warehouses lose 3,000 hours annually, and supply chains bleed a whopping $390 billion in operational waste. For context, that's enough to buy everyone on the planet a fancy new smartphone and still have change left over for a round of lattes. At Digitech Oasis, we're redefining industrial automation. By seamlessly integrating into existing warehouse ecosystems, our autonomous robots navigate with a 97.7 percent accuracy, operate with zero downtime thanks to autocharging capabilities, and cut energy costs by up to 57 percent. We've transformed over 5,000 businesses across 68 countries, saving clients 28 million in inefficiency, time on repetitive tasks, and helping them scale revenues by 250 percent. The trusted partner for businesses seeking operational excellence. Our big, hairy, audacious goal is to be the world class hub of AI-driven automation products. So join us on the quest to find out what we will automate next, because predicting the future isn't magic, it's artificial intelligence. And my name is Ayaan Mohamed, the girl who wrote lines of code in her bedroom in Nairobi, Kenya and dared to take it to the world. Ladies and gentlemen, all protocols observed. Thank you for your time. Dr. Precious Motsepe, Sir Michael Milken and the entire Milken Institute team. Thank you for creating this amazing platform and for the incredible opportunity. I would have led with that, but 90 seconds is such a long time. So judges, over to you.

Guy Diedrich 09:22

So, I'll start if that's okay? How does your technology solution compare with competitors like E80?

Ayaan Mohamed 09:30

Sure. So, happy to go back on this slide. Are we able to go back?—No, okay—so we are eligible for 27 patents. Our algorithms have actually been built in house, and we have three differentiating factors. One is that we have the highest machine-learning algorithm, and we've managed to get that to a 97.7 percent. That eliminates costly misfits in warehouses. —Unlike other solutions that are on the market that require up to eight hours of charge time, our solutions possess a autocharging capability—meaning there's zero—downtime and continuous operations in the warehouse. And additionally to that, we have a sustainability element that helps cut energy costs in the warehouse. So our solution very much differentiates from every other robotic solution on the market.

Guy Diedrich 10:18

Very good. Thank you.

John Kamara 10:23

From an enterprise perspective, we've got integrated into existing infrastructure. What has been the most difficult part of your enterprise architecture? From what you have to—you know, the different systems that you meet in different—

Ayaan Mohamed 10:35

Sure, so we integrate, of course, with the WMS, the warehouse management systems, etc. What we have experienced over the years is there may be challenges to do with path planning, but this has been mitigated—of course, we have Google as one of our biggest strategic partners—we've managed to leverage their tech team. We've also managed to, of course, develop our solution—to sort of mitigate the risk management in deployment. So we have essentially mitigated that whole challenge that we had in the first instance, but in the beginning it was definitely path planning.

Emily Musil 11:07

Thank you so much—thank you. Alright, Digitech Oasis. From our second semifinalist team—please welcome BleagLee.

Derick Nwumfor Chunga 11:20

We are a waste management company. Africa generates over 200 million tons of waste annually—less than 20 percent of this recycled. If you visit any African major city, you obviously see lots and lots of heaps of waste that are informally cropping up from various cities unmanaged. This uncycled waste is over $222 billion market opportunity that is untapped. So our solution, is to create opportunities for collecting, recycling, and marketing, these opportunities that are generally not tapped. So far, we've processed over 230,000 tons of waste and created over 500 jobs, both formally and informally. In 2024, our income was $1.8 million, and currently we have 16 enterprise clients. Our processes, which are end to end, are integrated with our AI system, trained with over 120,000 images. 70 percent of the model is proprietary. We strive as much as possible for our processes to be energy efficient, not only because it is great for the environment, but it is also a good cost-saving mechanism for us. Currently, we operate in Cameroon and Senegal, and we have a great team that we work with—our ask is $1 million to be used to scale to new cities across Africa. Thank you so much.

Emily Musil 13:24

Judges.

Kweilin Ellingrud 13:26

Thank you. I'm interested in sort of sorting accuracy and the outputs of where you actually sell what's recycled.

Derick Nwumfor Chunga 13:34

Our sorting accuracy at the moment stands at 64 percent, which means more waste is diverted from landfills. Currently, we have business to business partners, especially government municipalities, but we also have households. And we have enterprises like Dangote in Senegal, Coca Cola in Cameroon, and Unilever and other enterprise that we work with, but generally business to business, governments and enterprise and households.

John Kamara 14:08

You said you build proprietary models. So do you build foundational proprietary models, or you do a secondary layer models for—when you say proprietary, what does that really mean?

Derick Nwumfor Chunga 14:21

Yes, we have an IT expert—an AI expert who is actually a PhD in machine learning and is an ex-Google researcher, who is in charge of our AI developing model, who really is at the forefront of this—collecting and building a model for us that we are really proud of, which is 70 percent proprietary.

Emily Musil 14:50

Any other final questions? Judge—Alright. Thank you so much. Our third company we will be welcoming to the stage—DataProphet.

Frans Cronje 15:01

So—I'm Frans. I'm the founder of DataProphet. We are a company based down in South Africa, Cape Town, and for 10 years, DataProphet has been committed to improving the quality of the machines that build the world. On average, when we deploy our AI solution, we reduce production waste by 40 percent. When we implement our solution at a foundry in or just outside of Cape Town, we managed to reduce their defects right down to zero. This saved them 4,000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions per year, and further to that, they became the best-performing asset in their group, attracting significant international

funding. This animation that you see in front of us is the internal thinking of the proprietary AI algorithm that we've developed. It learns a world model, from our customers data, and then we interrogate it to produce prescriptions that we feed back to the plant operators. They then take action upon that and we find that prescriptions enable them to avoid defects ever occurring in the first place. This is a step change from predictive modeling. In order to build good AI, you need good data, and we've built a world class IT infrastructure system that we've deployed across hundreds of manufacturers, and today collects about half a billion data points every day. If we're successful in deploying our AI across all of those sites, will be able to eliminate 100,000 tons of carbon emissions, and that is the mission. Thank you.

Guy Diedrich 16:56

So, why would a customer buy from you rather than Microsoft, SAP, or maybe a more direct competitor, like a Haber?

Frans Cronje 17:05

It's a great question. I think the—key things that we have in our favor is that we've built our system with manufacturing in mind. That means all of our infrastructure is built to facilitate all of the challenges that manufacturers find, like downtime in the internet, machines not sharing the same time, right? And further to that, when we build and implement, we're implementing with the end on site, and that end is that waste reduction, and so we've got that view to carry them right through, across the line.

Guy Diedrich 17:34

Very good. Thank you.

John Kamara 17:35

When you say you build world models—so I'm assuming there's a lot of reinforcement learning in that—but my question is, is it a simple self learning or supervised learning when you actually use the world model in your propriety software?

Frans Cronje 17:50

I love the question. We could talk for days on it—we actually used an unsupervised model, because you've got to be very efficient in the training of the data, and then we layer a level of supervision upon it, because your quality data is typically a lot more sparse than your production data. And so kind of we, you know, we're fundamentalists in the algorithmic development, and we built it from the ground up specifically to

solve for the manufacturing problems. You know, we don't have the whole internet's data to train a model on—we've got to be very efficient in our work.

John Kamara 18:18

So you do drop offs in your training processes?

Frans Cronje 18:21

Yeah—So in terms of drop offs?

John Kamara 18:22

Yeah.

Frans Cronje 18:22

It's—I mean, drop offs is an architectural decision. Sometimes we've employed it, sometimes we don't.

Emily Musil 18:29

Thank you. Alright, our fourth company—please welcome to the stage, Freshpack Technologies.

Editha Mshiu 18:57

What if the vegetables paid today could have paid the school fees tomorrow. In Africa, we lose 4 billion USD every year of fresh produce—but not because we did not work hard, but because the journey from farm to market has no protection, no cooling, no storage, no data. And who pay the price? Woman vendor, who buy the fresh produce hope to earn their living but end up losing 40 percent of their income. And that is where—exactly Freshpack started. My name is Editha Mshiu, I'm the proud CEO of Freshpack Technologies. We are enabling cooling without electricity by using solar powered and smart fabric, but our really secret sauce is a Fresh View AI. It monitors temperature, optimize the route, and it sends alerts now to the vendor. And its work in just 18 months, we already placed 21,400 units across four country, and 74,800 tons of fresh produce. And the impact has been fueling our rapid growth; we are on the track of reaching 1.25 million USD by the end of 2025 and 1.8 by the end of 2026. With winning this money will help us to scale to nine countries, turning spoilage into opportunity. We are not just to reduce spoilage, we are creating an intellectual infrastructure that the Africa needs. Thank you.

Kweilin Ellingrud 20:27

Thank you. Can you tell us, from a vendor's—like a vendor in the market's perspective, what is the break even for this refrigerated fresh pack?

Editha Mshiu 20:37

What is the break even for them—at first, they did not believe that this AI will work for them, because they did not see the technology that understand the vegetable the way they were—after it is to the market, they already saw that the vegetables stay up to 10 extra days and it sends the SMS alerts to them. They started to shift from this AI to how can I get these boxes? So for them, they are losing the money. By using our boxes, they reduce the spoilage and recover the money they were using—they are losing.

Kweilin Ellingrud 21:10

Can you tell us, what is the price? How much does it cost?

Editha Mshiu 21:13

We have three products. We have Freshpack Box, which we sell at $21 USD per one boxes. We have Solar Powered Displayed Box, which we rent per month. We get $10 USD, and we have called the Cold Carrier. We charge per trip from one region to another, which is $14 USD.

Guy Diedrich 21:35

You're obviously filling a real need here. And I think it's very creative. The question is, beyond capital, what do you need to be successful?

Editha Mshiu 21:45

Beyond capital? What we need as an innovator, when you started the solution, we don't have this knowledge of entrepreneurship, the network, the mentorship on how to guide us to scale our business. My partner—

Emily Musil 22:09

That buzzer, is very strange. Alright, now, please welcome to the stage GreenBDG Africa.

Songo Didiza 22:28

Across Africa, less than 5 percent of manufacturers are reported on ESG—ESG is environmental social governance. What this means is that they're losing out on access to global supply chains because they're not positioned themselves well to compete. So what we're doing at GreenBDG—we're changing that. We are helping them put together, collate the ESG reports in a very quick time. What used to take them months and sometimes years to collect—particularly in the manufacturing context, it's now taking them seconds. What they have to do—upload their invoices, upload the ESG data, that they normally collect on Excel sheets, and then we generate an ESG report in real time. But we don't stop there. We provide advanced analytics. We help them with predictive analytics, and then also, most importantly, we help them plan for savings. And what does it cost them? Nothing. It's free to subscribe on our platform Africaesg.ai. Where we recoup our investments through the shared savings—we employ a shared savings model. That's where we get our recoup. What's the next plan? Integration. First phase is to do light integration with IoT sensors, smart metering companies around the globe and then has to do extreme integration with telecoms companies—we're already in phase two, actually, so we're quite excited about this. Thank you.

Kweilin Ellingrud 24:06

How long does it take you with a customer to integrate and get up and running?

Songo Didiza 24:12

How long is a piece of string? So that's the thing that takes the time really—is just to engage the customers, sit with the teams, really explain the value add, but once that's done, then the rest of the process is pretty much seamless.

Guy Diedrich 24:26

Has the 3.2 years payback period—has that been an obstacle, in you trying to get out and expand?

Songo Didiza 24:35

Initially. Initially it was. But now we're finding that once we've actually adjusted our model, particularly around the shared savings, then it actually makes it makes it easier to integrate into the business offerings.

Guy Diedrich 24:50

So has that 3.2 years been reduced?

Songo Didiza 24:53

It has been reduced significantly since then.

Guy Diedrich 24:55

Ok, good.

John Kamara 24:56

How much data do you collect and what do you see as the value of the data you collect going forward?

Songo Didiza 25:03

As I mentioned earlier, the real—also the value first—is the savings. So we—that's why we say, subscribe on the platform. It's free, it's not going to cost you anything, but we guarantee you is the savings. And up until now, we have gone at about 100 megawatt of savings from the energy usage, and a lot of it is largely set on energy. Fifty percent of ESG reporting is largely made up of energy information.

John Kamara 25:29

Have you thought about the value of the secondary data to you? That's what I mean.

Songo Didiza 25:32

Well, the value is the fact that we can collate the data, we can then generate our, you know, revenue from that. Thank you.

Emily Musil 25:48

Thank you for our first five companies that we heard from. Thank you, judges. I'm gonna take a moment to hear from one of the visionary founders of Milken-Motsepe prize, Dr. Precious Moloi-Motsepe, CEO and cofounder of the Motsepe Foundation, CEO of Africa Fashion International. So many—so many things. We're so pleased that you're here with us today. Now that we've been doing this program for four and a half years. Just wanted to hear from you a little bit about what you think about the value of Milken-Motsepe Prize Program—and particularly for this one. This current prize talks about workforce development and job creation as part of its criteria. Why is workforce development important for community development across Africa?

Dr. Precious Moloi-Motsepe 26:37

Well, thank you, Emily, and I'm really excited to see the diverse group that we have this year. It's really been amazing to see the growth, Mike, of this program. It's really incredible. I am also excited to see the areas in which the various entrepreneurs are working. I think for us, the biggest issue has always been Africa has so many challenges, and to see how they have—how they are contributing towards the sustainable development goals and the challenges that face Africa, I'm talking about food security—it's exciting to hear that you're working in those areas. You know, waste reduction and ensuring sustainability issues on the continent. ESG, that's really, really exciting. One of the of my responsibilities, of course, is in as a chancellor of the University of Cape Town in South Africa. And of course, jobs for young people are really, really critical. As much as AI has been touted and has done a lot in terms of improvements in productivity, which every one of you talks about so well, and it's really exciting to see—where I see another opportunity, of course, in job creation, especially for young people, is in the skills that relate to AI and the work that you do. I think Africa, with its youthful population, can be a great resource for the world in terms of young people that are skilled in AI and can work on the continent and outside of Africa as that skill that we export people who are savvy in AI and can take on the jobs that come out of this new technological era. And I'm excited to see how our young entrepreneurs are actually doing that. So thank you.

Emily Musil 28:55

Thank you, we'll hear from the next five companies, then we will turn to Michael Milken for additional comments. So thank you so much. We'll continue with our pitches. So, our next company was actually, unfortunately, not able to join us in person. This is Thola, but they have gone ahead and created a video, prerecorded a video and answers to questions. So we'll turn to that video now from Thola.

Nneile Nkholise 29:25

Hi. I'm Nneile Nkholise, founder and CEO of Thola. In South Africa, your large manufacturing plants are losing at minimum a quarter million dollars or more per site per annum due to energy demand penalties—this despite all their efforts and investment in increasing energy efficiency and sustainability across their sites. These factories continue being the biggest stressors on our fragile grid, causing rolling blackouts, grid instability and high operational costs. And Thola is changing that. We have built an AI energy intelligence

platform, that coordinates with multiple industrial bodies across industrial clusters, making them allies of grid stability. We do this via installing some of our energy sensors and gateways across multiple sites, and through that, we are able to forecast when energy is going to peak before it happens, and are able to do load shifting across multiple sites. Beyond just load shifting, our solution has been transformational in providing well timed condition monitoring, helping companies be able to get maintenance alerts before critical issues happen on their critical equipment. Thola has been transformational on currently on the 25 sites that we are operating in, and as we scale, we are definitely going to be the catalyst of energy stability across industrial zones in Africa as the continent increases their manufacturing capacity. Thank you.

Judge 31:06

What problem does your company solve and what makes your approach fundamentally different from competitors?

Nneile Nkholise 31:12

So the problem that our company is solving is that we are doing—we are helping the problem of peak demand penalties that are affecting a lot of your large manufacturing companies, increasing the high price of their energy. So we do this via doing coordinated peak demand forecasting on an hour to 24 hours time period when we can be able to predict at an industrial corridor, when they are up—when buildings coincident buildings are going to create some coincident peak demand, and are able to orchestrate, load shifting or load shaving.

Nneile Nkholise 31:48

We monitor some machines in the buildings that are using excess energy, but are not critical machines and are idling, and we are able to communicate with buildings to turn those machines off—so that allows us to be able to manage stability of energy across entire industrial corridors and reduce the pressure that they put on our fragile energy grid.

Judge 32:09

Great. And how do you plan to scale your business? You know what levers, technology, partnerships, capital are you pulling currently to scale?

Nneile Nkholise 32:18

There's three ways that we are increasing our scalability. The first one is partnerships with utility companies and also insurance companies. With utility companies is using our platform and our data

intelligence to provide behind the meta intelligence, which is something that a lot of utility companies, especially on the African continent, they don't have that granular data or insights that allows them to be able to increase more intelligence in load generation, load distribution and also peak demand forecasting and scheduling. For insurance companies, they don't have real time insights on the performance of industrial buildings that helps them be able to manage their risk in providing insurance premiums, so we are able to provide those via provide energy performance of buildings and also some of the performance of the critical machinery that influence the operational efficiency of those buildings.

Emily Musil 33:22

Thank you. Okay, we are now going to our next live semifinalist company. Please welcome to the stage INDOS (Garment IO).

Mostafa El-Ghorab 33:43

Okay, so every morning, 15 million—sorry, 15 million workers step into their factories, discrete manufacturing, hoping for a better future, basically with limited tools to unlock such full potential. A market worth of $320 billion, with a silent leakage of operational waste of about 50 billion. 120,000 factories only capable of export. At INDOS, we believe that machines won't replace workers, but uplift them and enable them. Actually with offering productive- based incentive and development—open the way for digital adoption, as well as unlocking business potential and eventually business competitiveness on the global side, we believe our mission in INDOS is about alignment of interest, between the worker and the business. When in the beginning, when we were factories, operated with no strategy, no tactics, basically running around, juggling similar to a football team without a coach. So we built an AI platform to transform such chaos into a guided, data-driven operations and decisions. We had to start with a series of steps in order to—

Kweilin Ellingrud 35:25

Can you tell us how the economics work in a given manufacturing?

Mostafa El-Ghorab 35:30

Okay, so basically, we are based on RFID-based modules that tracks the signals of the workers production and workflow of products. So basically we work in kind of a SaaS model, so it's a recurring subscription that actually provides a very attractive return on investment and rapid deployment and basically scale growth. So with 40 factories, three countries at the moment, is the install base that we are having.

John Kamara 36:06

What parameters does your RFID track to actually create this efficiency that you're talking about?

Mostafa El-Ghorab 36:12

Basically we have card that is along, that's attached to the product, and another card with the worker. Our unique proposition here is about capturing the time of the product flow along with the worker action, and correlate that together through our AI machine learning and help management to take decision like client balancing allocation of optimized workers on the machines and also effective incentive systems. So that's how the time is checked by that RFID card on our smart devices.

Guy Diedrich 36:45

I understand that this is related to the garment industry, but is it also potentially a platform software that can be applied to multiple different industries?

Mostafa El-Ghorab 36:56

Yes, we are currently in the furniture industry as well. We are piloting with the metal reforming—Okay, we're getting into other things as well.

Emily Musil 37:04

Thank you. Okay, please welcome to the stage our next company, Spiro.

Kaushik Burman 37:27

Good afternoon. My name is Kaushik Burman. I'm the CEO of Spiro. What started with a vision and a deeper purpose—that in Africa, with 1.5 billion population, there's just 25 million gasoline bikes—expensive fossil fuel imports. So Spiro's vision was, can we bring affordable motorbikes—electric motorbikes, that can provide convenience to the commercial driver so that he doesn't have to worry about range anxiety? We innovated and brought battery swapping technology in Africa, and we are the only vertically integrated company in Africa, with four factories, products which are high quality. Motorbikes are built in Africa. We are building out the batteries in Africa and the battery swap infrastructure. Thus far, we have deployed over 70,000 electric motorbikes, saving two tons of CO2 annually—each bike and every single day, the driver who drives 100 kilometers or more is able to save $2 a day. Which catalyzes the economy, because affordable and cleaner mobility leads to inclusion—deeper integration. We have deployed AI across the

value chain, but two key areas—AI and manufacturing, where we have reduced costs, improved uptime, and reduced defects. AI in energy network—thank you.

Kweilin Ellingrud 39:06

How does the Spiro EV bike compare to competitors, and specifically on the battery, where China and others are so advanced?

Kaushik Burman 39:14

So through our product innovation, we have built this electric motorbike which is 150 CC equivalent gasoline motorbike, but 40 percent cheaper. And through batteries, through the battery swap network, the consumer, which is the commercial driver, basically needs to just come, swap in, swap out, and pays an energy bill which is about 30 percent cheaper than gasoline bike. We are sourcing the cells from China, but we've built our own BMS and own hardware, so we are producing and manufacturing the batteries in Africa.

Guy Diedrich 39:51

I think the battery swapping model is brilliant, because you do address that huge concern of how far people can go. Are you building out a charging network as well? Is that a future plan?

Kaushik Burman 40:06

The charging network, fast charging network, would be very relevant for other form factors, like three wheelers and cars and trucks. But my experience is from Southeast Asia, India—where I come from—I see common pattern that for light commercial vehicles, especially motorbikes, battery swap is the way to go, because in three minutes, less than three minutes, he's able to get a fully charged battery. We have developed a battery network, swap network, which is every three kilometers, so there's no range anxiety issue. Plus we get a lot of data, which we are training through our models to optimize the energy flow. Thank you.

Emily Musil 40:40

Thank you. All right, we have two more semifinalist companies. Please welcome Torchit.

Hunny Bhagchandani 41:15

So this last few seconds was unusual, right? Think about this is a lifetime for our users. Today, the world loses every year a $2 trillion by just not including 1 billion persons with disability. They are excluded from the getting higher education, employability, and everyday participation. This is not just a economical loss, but this is the loss of humanity and the dignity. And the solutions available from the west are not available and they are not affordable, as 80 percent of the population are coming from developing countries or the low income groups. Today, at Torchit, we make innovative and affordable AI-powered accessory solutions like AI readers, which help a print impaired or blind person to read any document, in any language or AI glass help them to work independently in anywhere with dignity, or like AI communication devices which help them, which gives a voice to them who cannot speak. And this is just starting. We have impacted a million lives, and we our mission is to impact 10 million lives by 2030. Which is not just create the opportunities, but also create the billions in gross domestic product. We are doing with—local manufacturing, inclusive education, and strategic partnerships. So this is not just for charity, this is for economic inclusion. Have a colorful day.

John Kamara 42:43

So, have you thought about adaptive learning as part of the scale, especially with you know you talked about learning through voice and your own voice control algorithm so you can create awareness concepts inside what you're currently doing.

Hunny Bhagchandani 43:05

Yeah, so again, we have partnership with Google, and of course, we are training. Once a user sign up, it got trained through our application, and our app will recognize, recognize their voice.

John Kamara 43:18

So it's a personalized learning?

Hunny Bhagchandani 43:19

Yeah. Learning and personalized data, personalized reading. We are doing lot of elements. We are transforming the education system, because if they get a get a proper education, they can become an employment. Yeah.

Kweilin Ellingrud 43:32

Can you talk about how you generate jobs?

Hunny Bhagchandani 43:36

Simple, ma'am, like if you talk about blind, they are depending on the Braille. But after [inaudible], there is no Braille, because Braille is super bulky, super unaccessible. After [inaudible], AI audio is the game changer for visually impaired. And if they can get an inclusive education from the childhood, they can become a higher—today in India, like we have impacted almost 600,000 people, and almost 20,000 people got indirectly job. So this is what, it gives a dignity and independence to them, and this is how AI changing their lives. So for we AI for AI, artificial intelligence for accessibility and the inclusion.

Emily Musil 44:17

Thank you. Right, our final, semifinalist company we'll be hearing from today, Toto Safi.

Francis Kariuki 44:42

This changed Amina's life. Amina, a hardworking tailor and mother from Uganda, faced an impossible choice—to buy diapers or a meal for her baby. No parent should ever have to make that choice. These reusable diapers reduce the cost of diapering by up to 70 percent and Amina can now afford both. I am Franc Kariuki, CEO of Toto Safi. We turn Africa [innaudible] cooperatives into smart, micro factories producing world class, affordable, reusable hygiene products. We train them and equip them and bring their products to market. We use AI to connect production, optimize cutting efficiency, and reduce fabric waste. The results 94 percetn cutting accuracy, 52 percent reduction in fabric waste, and 42 percent fewer defects. We have produced and sold over 48,000 units, creating 1,600 local manufacturing jobs in four countries. Tailors like Amina, have tripled their income. We are growing at 172 percent annually, with 92 percent customer retention rate. This prize, will accelerate us to 100,000 customers, creating 4,800 jobs. Toto Safi is building locally owned cottage factories across Africa. One cooperative at a time. And the Milken-Motsepe Prize will help us scale these homegrown transformations. Thank you.

Kweilin Ellingrud 46:20

How much do you sell the reusable diapers for?

Francis Kariuki 46:24

One usable diaper goes for around $6.9 US dollars.

John Kamara 46:30

Is that your real voice? [Laughter]

Francis Kariuki 46:34

Yeah, it is.

John Kamara 46:35

That's your real voice? Love it.

Francis Kariuki 46:37

Thank you. [Laughter]

Guy Diedrich 46:40

What is the what's the total addressable market here? Because I assume you were concentrating in continent itself, but the same problem exists all over the world. So what is the addressable market, do you believe?

Francis Kariuki 46:57

Our eyesight right now is on Africa, and even though the reuse of diapers are the main flagship product, we're also looking at potty training pads and period wear. And looking at this market segment alone, we are looking at $1.2 billion for the African market.

John Kamara 47:20

Also, have you thought about using artificial intelligence to do advanced fabric manufacturing, so you can actually combine different types of materials to create specific type of fabrics. Which could be a very interesting opportunity for you.

Francis Kariuki 47:34

Thank you very much, John for that question. Yes, we—given where we are, we are realistic and have to tackle the problem we are able to deal with at the point. And for one of the fabrics that we use is the PU wear fabric, and it can only come from China for now, but the rest part—like 100 percent cotton we are [inaudible] locally. Yes, so that's what we're dealing with now. Thank you very much.

Emily Musil 47:56

Thank you. Thank you to all of our semi-finalist teams, to our judges, so that everyone knows all of these extraordinary teams have been carefully vetted. We've also already awarded $50,000 to each of these companies. They are all investment ready—so although we are going to have five that are advancing, I hope you've enjoyed hearing from these 10 incredible, world changing companies who are so innovative, we're grateful for the work you do. We are so proud of each and every one of you. So thank you so much to our semifinalists. I'd like to turn now—because I know our chairman has to run—so I would like to turn to our chairman and founder, Mike Milken. One of our principals, along with the Motsepe family, in starting the Milken-Motsepe prize. This prize also was just named the number one innovation prize across Africa, where last—two weeks ago, looking across 25 different competitions. This was an independent—we were not expecting this, and we were really pleased to see that—so we're so proud of the program. Thank you for your vision in starting it and all the wraparound services that the companies get. Given the rise of AI, Mike, right now, this particular prize is on AI and manufacturing. When you look at AI and manufacturing globally, what guidance would you offer to entrepreneurs that are leveraging this advanced technology? How is that important for economic growth across Africa?

Michael Milken 49:34

The future of the world is so dependent on opportunities in Africa, parts of the world are going to lose hundreds of millions of people, and Africa is going to add hundreds of millions of people in this century. What are their jobs? Where are those hundreds of millions of jobs coming from? And I'd say, Emily, when I looked—many years ago, we did a study with the Gates Foundation and looked that—you grew grain in United States and Iowa. You got it all the way to Africa. It was delivered on a ship, and the cost to the village doubled, growing it shipping it halfway around the world, getting it from the port to the village, cost twice as much. It's not viable, unless we can find these. AI is going to change and disintermediate every industry. We saw a diverse group here today. It's going to make Africa competitive for products, not only products to sell within the continent, but products to sell around the world. And so people think it's all about labor costs, but I think what we saw today in these 10 companies, is you have to figure out how to manufacture something, and whether it's the cost of energy, the cost of raw materials, etc. What's so exciting about this prize, to me is it isn't just the 10 finalists, it's the thousands that have competed. And it isn't just the five winners today or the winners— is it's going to introduce this with these cameras. They're going to broadcast it to the world. That anyone in the world who sees these ideas might want to support them. So, it is so invigorating many years ago, they always reminded me, there's more entrepreneurs in Africa than the United States, and this morning and this afternoon is a great example of those entrepreneurs that are going to change the world, change the continent and change using technology. A young girl writing code, can change the world, from that standpoint. So to me, it started like a little pebble

in the water that's spreading and will continue to spread. And that's why thousands of people have attempted to compete, and even if they don't win, doesn't mean they've stopped going.

Emily Musil 52:25

Thank you so much, Mike. Yes, for our over 12,000 entrepreneurs that we have as part of the Milken-Motsepe Prize community, we try to continue to offer services and benefits. So people, please join us. You can go to milkenmotsepeprize.org And for our semifinalists, our winners, I've already told them, you're in the family now, so we are with you on your journey. Alright, so judges, have you conferred and you have your final—okay. Thank you so much. Alright, the moment you have all been waiting for. We are going to announce the five companies that are now going to be named finalists in the Milken-Motsepe Prize in AI and Manufacturing. Please welcome to the stage our finalists. Number one, BleagLee. Two, Digitech Oasis. Third, we have FreshPack Technologies. The fourth company, Spiro. And fifth, Toto Safi. Congratulations to our finalists.

Emily Musil 53:58

Each of these finalists will be receiving an additional $30,000, joining us in Los Angeles to compete for the grand prize of $1 million. Thank you so much. We are so proud of all of our finalists. We have our last medal being—Yes. Get a photo of our finalists please. Thank you all so much for your energy, your innovations, for inspiring the world with your bold ideas. Thank you. If you'd like to learn more about the prize program, please feel free to connect with any of us after this session. To our finalists, we will see you in Los Angeles. Congratulations.

Announcer 55:23

Congratulations to our finalists for the Milken-Motsepe prize in AI and manufacturing.

Disclaimer: This transcript was generated by AI and has been reviewed by individuals for accuracy. However, it may still contain errors or omissions. Please verify any critical information independently.