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WASTE MANAGEMENT STARTUP, WECYCLERS, AWARDED €200,000 PRIZE BY

THE KING BAUDOIN FOUNDATION



STAFF WRITER — MARCH 23, 2019

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Nigerian waste management startup, WeCyclers, has been awarded the African Development Prize of €200,000 by The King Baudouin Foundation.

The Prize will allow WeCyclers to develop further their business and increase their impact at national and international level.

By 2100 Africa will account for 5 out of 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 municipal government. WeCyclers' model is designed to help fill this gap and reduce solid waste in the street of Lagos, improving both the environment and the wellbeing of populations.

The organisation utilises low and high technology solutions that comprise of a mobile application and SMS technology, as well as innovative low-cost bicycle-powered collection vehicles, which collect recyclable waste directly from households, to sell it on to recycling plants before it is made into new products. Households are

sent an SMS by WeCyclers informing them of any “points” earned, which may be redeemed for food, household items and other goods.



“We are proud to grant WeCyclers for their unique model”, said Hervé Lisoir from the King Baudouin Foundation. *“We selected the enterprise out of 200 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, and redeem points for household goods, food items or cash aiding daily life. Today, the company already benefits from the engagement of over 17k 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 mid-term, 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,” declared Olawale Adebisi, CEO of WeCyclers.

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. WeCyclers have also recently partnered with major corporations, such as Unilever and Nigerian Bottling Company, to launch “kiosks” in places where there are no collection routes.

Through its financial support of €200,000, the 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 will support them as they grow. With current growth projections, WeCyclers aim to collect 5k tons of recyclables by 2020 and could be serving 500k households by 2023.

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

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

STAFF WRITER

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