

TOPIC

Empowering African Health Tech Startups: Innovations in Supply Chain Solutions

AUTHORS

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CONTEXT

In Sub-Saharan Africa, patients heavily rely on private sector health product distribution. However, this distribution is often fragmented and multi-layered, significantly impacting access to essential products. To address these challenges, an emerging ecosystem of commercial innovators is developing, aiming to sustainably scale disruptive, technology-driven models. This rapidly evolving ecosystem presents a challenge for investors, governments, donors, and agencies to understand and support these innovators effectively. Figorr, a Nigerian startup established in 2017, exemplifies this innovation with its low-cost device that enables remote monitoring of temperature, humidity, and location of health products. Figorr's platform offers advanced analytics, enhancing supply chain visibility for both public and private users. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Figorr partnered with the National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA) to successfully track 4.2 million vaccine doses, demonstrating its impact and leading to expanded collaboration. Figorr is part of a growing pipeline of African-led health tech innovations. However, these innovators often struggle to connect and partner with large-scale public health purchasers, limiting their potential to drive impact at scale.

FIGORR - A YOUNG NIGERIAN STARTUP - HAS GROWN RAPIDLY TO TRACK NEARLY 200M HEALTH PRODUCTS WITH AN INNOVATIVE, LOW-COST DEVICE – AND IS EXPANDING ACROSS AFRICA AND THE WORLD. GLOBAL DONORS, GHIS & INDUSTRY WERE UNAWARE.



Oghenetega Iortim, Founder



Innovative, low-cost tracking device launched in Q4

- MOTE innovates by tracking temperature, motion, humidity & location

Expanded work w/ NPHCDA to track 98M EPI vaccines nationally

Expanded to Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Ghana, RSA

Expanded to 100M other health & non-health products

Expanded globally to Netherlands, Kuwait, Saudi
Launched Insurance Offer

- 6 insurers onboarded in Nigeria, 3 in Kenya

Tracked 4.2M Covid-19 vaccines nationally

- Partnered with NPHCDA to help save millions of COVID-19 vaccines from wastage



- Figorr is solving & important problem and gaining traction with major governments with very little outside funding.
- Before joining i3, global donors, industry & global health institutions were largely unaware of their work – or potential for scale.

INTERVENTION

Recognizing the disconnect between African innovators and large health purchasers, the i3 program was launched in June 2022, with major sponsors including the Gates Foundation and leading pharma companies. I3 aimed to provide systematic support to 60 supply chain start-ups focusing on early- and growth-stage start-ups. The goal was to support them to scale their data-driven innovations in health product distribution through a value-creation network that co-deployed grant funding to the tune of 50,000 USD, market access and development support, with a focus on women-led and Francophone companies.

Moving forward, drawing from our accumulated insights, our aim is to improve our support for growth-stage innovations to tangibly improve patient access. Key insights from phase 1 include the importance of expanding equitable ecosystems beyond just the supply chain, concentrating on growth-stage innovations while establishing fundamental growth principles, and prioritizing an increase in product access alongside targeted advocacy to instigate systemic change. Specifically for growth-stage companies, we plan to intensify support for a select group of innovators (e.g., 5 per year) to facilitate impactful partnerships capable of driving substantial increases in product access. The selection of these cohorts will be guided by specific "jobs to be done," potentially centered around areas like the Future of Pharmacy and Universal Health Coverage (UHC). Our support will aim to ensure that innovators progress in six critical areas necessary for them to become market leaders, namely, connecting them with mass production, mass marketing, mass financing or credit, mass distribution and logistics, and management for scale and standardization. Grants will be utilized to directly catalyze partnerships by reducing risk, measuring impact, and more. Success will be measured by significant increases in product access and the creation of a diverse pipeline of innovators.

IMPACT

In phase one, i3 facilitated partnerships and provided investment readiness support and grants to 60 startups, resulting in substantial achievements. These include 122 partnerships signed, \$50 million in funding raised by innovators, and the creation of ~950 jobs, with 45% of these roles filled by women. Through these efforts, approximately 198 million patients have been reached annually.³

THE STARTUPS HAVE GAINED SIGNIFICANT TRACTION & ARE IMPROVING ACCESS FOR AN ESTIMATED 150M PATIENT VISITS ANNUALLY

Results to date...



*Providers reached and products protected are directly reported by innovators. Patient visits enabled are estimates based on the providers reached and will be revised over time.

i3's success has also inspired collaborations with key global health stakeholders. Notably, as a result of i3's work, an innovation program with the Global Fund has been launched. Helping a major global health institution engage with local innovators was a key goal for phase one, and we are thrilled to see such rapid traction.

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