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Vodafone Institut: Empowering women worldwide with technology - The F-LANE social ventures accelerator kicks-off its 2020 programme with 10 high-potential teams

Berlin (ots) -

- **A record number of 455 start-ups from 84 countries worldwide applied for the Vodafone Institute's global F-LANE accelerator programme**
- **Social business models range from services for financially excluded rural women, women's health, mobility services up to programs for fair wages**
- **Founder teams will embark on a five-week intense virtual acceleration programme led by Yunus Social Business and supported by Impact Hub Berlin, Social Entrepreneurship Academy and WLOUNGE**

F-LANE is Europe's first accelerator with a focus on early-stage social impact start-ups that utilise technology to empower women worldwide. The F-LANE expert jury selected the ten most convincing young companies out of 455 applicants. The finalists are start-ups and social ventures from UAE, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, Chile, Brazil, United Kingdom, Pakistan, Sweden and Denmark. Their business models range from healthcare platforms, trusted mobility services and financial services for women up to services for children with special needs. The accelerator programme will kick-off on 7th September.

The Vodafone Institute launched F-LANE in 2016 and has since committed to supporting social ventures that empower women through technology. Due to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, the accelerator program will be running virtually for the first time. The Vodafone Institute took this as a chance to double the number of participating start-ups from five to 10 teams. This allows the diversity and regional scope of the startups to be even greater than in the previous years.

The accelerator will start with a five-week programme which includes personalised support, mentorship, training, networking and access to an impact investor network. The grand finale will be the virtual Demo Day on 5th November 2020 with investors and decision-makers from business, media and politics. Inger Paus, Managing Director of the Vodafone Institute for Society and Communications: "We want to support the scaling of social business models which have the potential to change the economic opportunities, wellbeing and future prospects of girls and women worldwide. Technology solutions as well as the collaboration of social business and thought leaders with companies such as Vodafone play a key role to foster social progress. The fact that the number of applicants for F-LANE has doubled in 2020 underscores the importance of social accelerator programmes."

The F-LANE 2020 teams:

1.Hive Online (Sweden, Denmark, Rwanda)

Hive Online is a distributed community finance platform that enables financially excluded entrepreneurs (rural women in Africa) to gain access to credit and new markets. Built with blockchain technology, their solution provides a financial trust history based on facts and business actions. This reputation-based platform builds confidence for businesses, NGOs, merchants and financial institutions to support small business ecosystems and offer them an alternative to the exorbitant prices of local lenders.

2.Nabta Health (United Arab Emirates)

Nabta Health is a hybrid healthcare company combining digital and traditional methods to improve the health outcomes for women in the identification and management of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). Nabta's first care pathway supports women in identifying and managing Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (a hormonal disorder responsible for 70% of female fertility issues) through fertility tracking and monitoring, at-home testing, virtual consultations and a machine-learning driven personal assistant named Aya.

3.Bidhaa Sasa (Kenya)

Bidhaa Sasa is a finance and last-mile distribution company offering a range of household goods that improve the quality of life of rural families - especially women. The products including solar lamps, efficient stoves and water tanks, are chosen to save users time, money and physical effort. To make these products more affordable, Bidhaa Sasa offers a credit system backed on group liability so that clients can pay in installments and goods are delivered directly to the customer's door. They increase the accessibility of their products by harnessing the local networks of the women's lending groups to commercialise their products and spread the word.

4.Zoora (Uganda)

Zoora is a digital platform for members of VSLAs (Village Savings and Loan Association) to access both training, a safe record keeping tool and access to agricultural inputs. They educate these women on how to self-tutor using mobile phones. Equipping these women with skills as well as helping them store their data is the premise to them getting loans from financial institutions and being able to build up their livelihoods. They offer agricultural inputs as a form of credit as well which is another way in which

these women can start building up wealth.

5.Akojo Market (United Kingdom)

Akojo Market is an e-commerce platform and marketplace championing independent brands (mostly female-founded) operating sustainable and ethical manufacturing processes and business models. By giving their brands a route to market in the UK, they give opportunities and a dignified income for artisans and their families. They work alongside their brands by providing resources and guidance to help them grow their business, for example by improving their working conditions and financial viability.

6.ProyectoMoms (Chile)

ProyectoMoms is an online platform and community that connects professional women to companies that are hiring. They are helping companies create a flexible work culture within their companies to be able to hire women that do not want to choose between their families and their careers. With the help of their algorithm, they can identify the best talent for each position in seconds - helping corporates hire the right candidate and increase their diversity. ProyectoMoms empower women to return to their careers after becoming a mother, to combine their family life with developing their skills and achieving economic independence.

7.SheKab (Pakistan)

SheKab is a monthly carpooling app especially and carefully designed for professional women in Pakistan to travel freely on fixed schedules. Harassment on public transport is a major issue in Pakistan and limits women's mobility and freedom. This subscription-based service is a safe, reliable and affordable way for women to move freely while the cab drivers earn a stable monthly income with just a few hours of driving a day. The drivers are trained and interviewed to ensure safety.

8.Autsera (UK)

Autsera leverages the power of Virtual Reality to deliver social and communication training to autistic children hindered by social communication barriers. Their interactive games and apps combines evidence-based intervention techniques, gamification and human-centered design. By learning these social skills, children can better integrate and communicate, become more independent and less vulnerable. This solution relieves a lot of stress and difficulty for the individuals as well as their families - especially mothers who are often responsible for a bigger share of the care responsibilities.

9.Mete a Colher (Brazil)

Mete a Colher supports Brazilian women who are victims of domestic violence. Their Tina platform is a service bought by corporates who want to provide their female employees a way of accessing guidance and professional support when they experience any kind of violence at home. Through an anonymous chat, an employee can have a conversation with a social worker and psychologist. When necessary, they forward it to the relevant support centers or police departments. Tina professionals oversee the evolution of the case with the victim as well as the support networks.

10. LuluLab (Denmark)

Lulu Lab develops engaging and educational games to change traditional education and lift the taboo on topics such as reproductive health, menstrual hygiene and sexual rights. They provide the games as a service to international organizations and NGOs who deploy them for their beneficiaries. The games are developed in co-creation with the users, partners and experts following a human-centered design methodology and with the objective of making it as simple and fun as possible. This ensures engaging and localized games that meet the user's educational needs while also embracing cultural sensitivities and national policies.

About F-LANE

The Vodafone Institute runs F-LANE with its new implementation partner Yunus Social Business. The F-LANE founding partners Social Entrepreneurship Academy in Munich will continue to support F-LANE with their excellent impact entrepreneurship competencies, while the Impact Hub Berlin remains on board as Community Partner providing participating start-ups with access to the global impact community and investors. Furthermore, WLOUNGE, as a new partner to the F-LANE network, will contribute its expertise in gender lens investing and it's local and global investors and mentors network to support the cohort.

Dedicated F-LANE jury members are Andy Goldstein (Co-Founder & Executive Director of the LMU Entrepreneurship Center), Hedda Pahlson-Moller (Business Angel focused on impact investing), Lisa Witter (award-winning executive, serial entrepreneur, author and public speaker), Paresh Modi (Global Head of Business Development & Innovation at Vodafone) and Saskia Bruysten (co-founder of Yunus Social Business).

Further information can be found at:

www.f-lane.com

www.facebook.com/flaneaccelerator/

www.twitter.com/vf_institute

www.instagram.com/flaneaccelerator/

Cooperation partner of the Vodafone Institute:

Yunus Social Business <https://www.yunussb.com/>

Impact Hub Berlin <https://berlin.impacthub.net/>

Social Entrepreneurship Akademie <https://seakademie.org/en/>

WLOUNGE <https://www.wlounge.de/>

About the Vodafone Institute for Society and Communication

The institute is Vodafone's European think tank. We analyze the potential of digital technologies and their responsible use for innovation, growth and sustainable social impact. With the help of studies and events, we offer a platform for dialogue between progressive thinkers from science, business and politics.

It is our aim to facilitate better access to technology for all sectors of society. That is why we develop and support projects to empower women in the digital economy.

Press contact :

Julia Ebert
Senior Research Manager

Mobile: +49 172 5620012
julia.ebert@vodafone.com

Vodafone Institute for Society and Communications GmbH
Berlin Office
Behrenstraße 18
10117 Berlin

www.vodafone-institut.de

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