

Four African innovators in final race for global energy awards



Kakuma Ventures, Kenya provides clean energy, internet connections and new jobs for refugees. Photo Credit: Kakuma Ventures

By Reuben Kyama

Four African social enterprises are among the six finalists in the competition of the 2022 Ashden Awards, which recognises innovations tackling challenges related to energy, food security and refugees around the world.

Kenya's SokoFresh has been nominated for Ashden Award for Energising Agriculture for developing a sustainable cold storage for smallholders, matched with help getting products to market.

Kakuma Ventures, another Kenyan organisation, made it to the finals for creating clean energy, internet connections and new jobs for refugee camp residents.

Zimbabwe's Zonful Energy, and Togo's Energy Generation will battle it out for Energy Access Skills prize, which is supported by LinkedIn.

Zonful Energy was nominated for its training programme in the solar sector for rural young people, through collaboration with colleges and NGOs, alongside connections to jobs while Energy Generation is in the race for its ground-breaking entrepreneurial training centre empowering entrepreneurs to create solutions for Africans by Africans – sparking opportunities for women.

The winners of the Ashden Awards will be announced in Nairobi in October 2022 in the run-up to COP27 in Egypt in November.

Winners of the award organised by UK-based climate solutions charity Ashden will receive a cash prize, development support, and the chance to connect with investors and leading figures in the energy and climate sectors.



SokoFresh, Kenya operates sustainable cold storage for smallholders, matched with help getting products to market. Photo Credit: SokoFresh



Energy Generation, Togo - a ground-breaking entrepreneurial training centre empowering entrepreneurs to create solutions for Africans by Africans – sparking opportunities for women. Photo Credit: Zonful Energy

Ashden promotes and supports climate and energy innovators – including businesses, non-profits and public sector organisations.

The finalists were announced on July 1 at the end of the international London Climate Action Week (#LCAW2022) conference.

“With the crucial COP27 climate talks taking place in Africa in November, it’s great to see the continent’s dynamic innovators proving how climate solutions can lower emissions and also create work and reach the most disadvantaged too.

“These innovators are seizing the youth population’s enormous potential. For instance, in Togo and Zimbabwe, Energy Generation and Zonful are helping young people get the skills and opportunities to find a future in the clean power sector. Both organisations are targeting support to

women, building a more diverse and inclusive industry. The bright sparks at Kakuma Ventures – creating solar-powered internet connectivity in the Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya also have an inspiring model for

others in Africa to follow,” said Ashden CEO Harriet Lamb.

Finalists from other continents are Imece Initiative, which is training refugees as solar engineers in Turkey, and Collectives for Integrated Livelihoods Initiatives (CINI) which creates community-led production hubs in India’s tribal areas. An extra award for Natural Climate Solutions is calling for entries specifically from the Congo Basin and the Amazon and there is also a UK-specific set of Awards.

“We call on governments and investors to get behind these solutions, and for the wider climate community to put them centre-stage at COP27. Our rigorous awards research confirms that more support for green jobs, skills and livelihoods is urgently needed. That’s why the work of our skills-focused finalists, creating opportunities including for more marginalised communities, is so inspirational,” said Ms Lamb.



Ashden Award for Natural Climate Solutions, supported by UK Government – Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. Photo Credit: Energy Generation