

5 startups addressing Africa's healthcare gap

The developed world has harvested African abundant resources and its youthful population for centuries without much benefit to the citizens of the continent. Now, in the digital age, Africa has been identified as a key growth market and is an attractive region for strategic investments. One sector that presents particularly promising opportunities is health tech.



Health tech is changing Africa. Source: ArtemPodrez/Pexels

Investing in African health tech companies not only offers entrepreneurs the potential for high returns, but also contributes to addressing critical healthcare challenges and improving the lives of millions.

Africa faces a significant healthcare gap, with fewer than two healthcare professionals (HCPs) servicing every 1,000 people. Health tech companies are playing a pivotal role in bridging this gap by leveraging innovative solutions to improve access to healthcare services, telemedicine, and health information.

Investing in African health tech enables investors to support initiatives that directly tackle the pressing issue of a shortage of HCPs.



Stellenbosch medical students use tech to turn the tide on organ donor shortage

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The African health tech market is still in its early stages, offering vast untapped potential. By investing in this emerging market, investors can capitalise on the rapid growth, and influence the direction of the industry. Early engagement in African health tech positions investors at the forefront of a transformative movement in healthcare delivery.

The African health-tech ecosystem is vibrant and continues to attract attention from global investors and organisations. Renowned accelerators and investors, such as Y Combinator, Techstars, and Google for Startups, have recognised the potential of African health-tech companies

Five African health tech startups that are making a difference:

LocumBase

A South African-born startup offering software as a service (SaaS) to empower and connect medical practices and medical practitioners wanting to take control of their skilled hours, in order to fulfil LocumBase's working assignments. The focus is on nurses, pharmacists, general practitioners and allied healthcare specialists, and through their proprietary source code they have simplified the locum booking process that used to rely on traditional recruitment agencies to fulfil any staffing needs.

Kangpe

A Nigerian telehealth platform that connects patients with qualified doctors for online consultations, providing convenient and accessible healthcare services. The Y Combinator-backed startup now operates in Ghana and Kenya too, potentially serving a combined population of roughly 245 million people. According to co-founder Femi Kuti, the startup has so far on-boarded 60,000 users.

AxessHealth

A networking platform that connects healthcare practitioners (HCPs) with valuable healthcare information, and fosters collaboration among healthcare stakeholders. In association with organisations that include Amref, Africa Health Business, and Rwanda Health Federation, AxessHealth acts as a bridge linking HCPs, medical bodies, government health departments, industry partners, and NGOs. Through personal profiles and company pages, HCPs and the medical industry can seamlessly establish connections, exchange knowledge, and engage in collaborative discussions.

Vimbo

The Vimbo app combines the vast technology packed in your phone with scientifically proven Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)-based techniques, to help users feel better as they follow self-guided and individually tailored programmes. In research conducted with the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG), Vimbo was found to treat 53% of moderate cases of anxiety and depression.

According to Tafi Mazikana, co-founder and CEO of Vimbo Health, "Africa is rife with need, and therefore opportunity in the area of health tech. Health is personal, and so there is great advantage in investing in home-grown solutions that understand the local nuances and needs."

mPharma

A Ghana-based health tech company that aims to improve access to affordable medications in Africa. The company partners with pharmacies and healthcare providers to streamline supply chains and reduce medication costs. By leveraging technology, mPharma enhances the efficiency of pharmaceutical operations and ensures reliable availability of essential medications. Their innovative approach helps address the challenges of medication affordability and accessibility, ultimately improving healthcare outcomes for patients in Africa.

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