



Innovate Now
Unlocking Human Potential



Case study





Founded by Sylvia Nyaga, Syna Consultancy Limited is a social enterprise dedicated to enhancing public health by facilitating the availability of clean water, essential sanitation facilities, and promoting good hygienic practices. Their efforts contribute to improved well-being and developmental outcomes for the communities they serve. Their product UtuLav is a portable toilet commode for the elderly, sick and persons with disabilities.



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According to the World Health Organization (WHO), **more than 1.7 billion people still lack access to basic sanitation services**, such as private toilets or latrines. Among those most affected are individuals with physical disabilities who face difficulties in reaching toilets or require assistance from family members.

inspiration

Sylvia's inspiration to address this issue arose from a conversation with a parent of a disabled child, which opened her mind to the challenges faced by people with disabilities in accessing proper sanitation facilities. She later discovered that her own grandfather, who lived with them, faced similar difficulties. Through extensive research, Sylvia realized that this problem affected people in various settings, including both rural and urban areas, and across middle and upper-income households. The lack of accessible toilet facilities not only impacted the disabled but also the elderly.

With a background in water and

environmental engineering and a strong passion for creating impactful solutions to community challenges, Sylvia joined Amani Institute, where she studied social innovation management. There, she had the opportunity to work on hydraulic designs, solar-powered borehole projects, and employ

human-centered design principles to develop Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene solutions.

In 2017, the idea to develop an inclusive toilet was conceived, and the first prototype was developed in 2019. The initial prototype which was 3D printed and small in size and served as a tangible model to aid local fabricators in understanding the prototype concept better. Subsequent versions of stainless steel were developed, but manufacturing costs proved prohibitive. Eventually, a fourth prototype made of fiberglass was created, but the Kenyan manufacturer was unable to complete the toilet assembly. As a result, Sylvia and the team decided to import necessary parts and assemble them locally.

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Participation in the Innovate Now Program

At a juncture where Syna Technology was poised to leverage its technical innovations for social good, the accelerator stepped in as a catalyst for their journey. Syna Consultancy took part in the inaugural Innovate Now Accelerator program, specifically in Cohort 1. Innovate Now accelerator program is Africa's pioneering Assistive Technology Accelerator, powered by the Global Disability Innovation Hub. Syna Consultancy' participation aimed to achieve a variety of strategic objectives. The company had a strong interest in receiving mentorship to optimize their production expenses and mitigate the challenges posed by high production costs.



Additionally, they were eager to validate their products among individuals with disabilities as a crucial step towards product launch. This validation process would not only confirm the viability of their business model but also expedite their entry into the market.

Syna Consultancy was equally keen to receive support and secure essential financial backing to ensure a successful and scalable product launch. Another important aspect of their participation was to establish and nurture connections within the disability community, reflecting their dedication to fostering relationships and a strong presence within this demographic. Syna Consultancy completed an extensive and engaging Innovate Now program that emphasized the user, product, market, and business aspects. The company also took an active role in practical live lab sessions aimed at validating and enhancing their innovative solution. These live labs offered a valuable opportunity for clinical partners, including individuals with disabilities and the elderly, to

30 customers



Fundraising

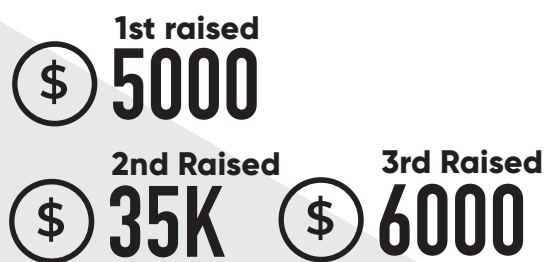
Additionally, Syna Consultancy received valuable investor readiness support through the Innovate Now program, which equipped them with the necessary knowledge and tools to approach fundraising with confidence. This support was instrumental in preparing them for their fundraising journey. To kickstart their fundraising journey, the company secured its initial grant of 5000 euros from Young Water Solutions which facilitated completion of their product and launch into the market marking a significant milestone in their mission. Building on this progress, Syna Consultancy successfully raised 35,000 USD through a government program named "Mbele na Biz." This financial boost further strengthened their capabilities and resources to advance their reach to their target market. Moreover, through Innovate Now support the company received an additional grant worth 6,000 USD from Villgro Africa. With these funding opportunities and support, Syna Consultancy has been empowered to continue their impactful work, creating inclusive and innovative sanitation solutions. Their efforts not only benefit individuals with disabilities but also promote better hygiene practices, contributing to the overall well-being and development of the communities they serve.

assess and experiment with their assistive technology offerings. The insights gathered were instrumental in improving their accessible toilet design and ultimately culminated in the creation and launch of an enhanced Utulav toilet.

The accelerator program proved instrumental in providing Syna Consultancy with a comprehensive ecosystem of mentorship, resources, and networking opportunities. With its tailored guidance and strategic support, the program enabled Syna Technology to refine their product offerings and business model, addressing the unique needs of persons with disabilities and the elderly. This alignment of mission and resources allowed Syna Technology to accelerate their development process and expedite market entry.

Market entry

Syna Consultancy's success in the industry can be attributed to their distinctive value proposition. Their Utulav toilet offers users a superior experience in terms of dignity, comfort, and mobility compared to competitors in the market. Syna's customer outreach approach combines field visits and referrals, including hospitals, industry-related events, and the strategic utilization of digital platforms. These channels serve as effective means for potential customers to learn more about their products and easily connect with the company. Syna Consultancy has successfully secured 30 customers, a testament to the product's market acceptance and relevance.



Notable awards received by Syna Consultancy

Kenya National Innovation Agency Award 2021 – In the Assistive Technology Category, the company was recognized and honored for their outstanding contribution to the field of assistive technology in Kenya.

Zuri Awards 2021 – In the Innovation Category, Syna Consultancy's innovative approach and impactful solutions earned them recognition at the prestigious Zuri Awards.

Iko-Safi Innovation Award 2019 – The Kenyan Ministry of Water, Sanitation, and Irrigation bestowed the Iko-Safi Innovation Award on Syna Consultancy in 2019, acknowledging their exceptional work in the water and sanitation sector.

Key traits contributing to Syna's success



Leveraging academic expertise to address social challenges: In a landscape marked by high unemployment rates, the story of Syna stands as a compelling case study of utilizing one's academic qualifications to tackle pressing societal issues. Syna, an accomplished engineer, recognized an opportune moment to apply her specialized skills and address a profound problem. Amidst a scarcity of employment opportunities, she embarked on a mission to effect positive change by focusing her technical proficiency on a larger societal dilemma.



Syna's iterative journey: Syna engaged in over four iterative cycles of product refinement, diligently responding to the genuine user requirements beneath the surface. This experience serves as a valuable lesson in the intricate art of product development, highlighting the significance of persistent iteration to truly meet users' core needs.



Navigating production challenges: Syna demonstrated resilience during the local production of the Utulav toilet by creatively addressing challenges. They adeptly managed material sourcing hurdles by importing and skillfully assembling diverse product components within the local framework, showcasing their resourcefulness and commitment to delivering a high-quality solution.



Collaborative access initiative: Syna Technology's business model extends beyond the Utulav toilet commode, encompassing a comprehensive sanitation solution designed for individuals with disabilities and the elderly. This unwavering commitment has led Syna to establish strategic collaborations with financial institutions, ensuring that the product remains accessible through flexible payment options.



Assistive technology ecosystem: Sylvia recognizes the importance of integrating her company's success with the wider assistive technology ecosystem. She places great value on connecting with the community and network of assistive technology innovators and accelerators. Through participation in the Innovate Now accelerator program, Sylvia has had the privilege to engage and communicate with like-minded individuals who share her passion for creating groundbreaking solutions for people with disabilities. This collaborative environment has provided a platform for sharing ideas, supporting one another, and fostering innovation along their entrepreneurial journey.



A supportive network: The company has benefited greatly from a strong and supportive network of individuals who have contributed to their development journey, offering financial assistance, valuable advice, and dedicating their time. Sylvia emphasizes the significance of this collective effort by quoting the popular saying, "it takes a village to raise a child." This supportive network has been instrumental in the company's substantial growth and success.

In conclusion, the Innovate Now Accelerator's role in accelerating Syna Technology exemplifies the transformative power of targeted support and strategic guidance. This case study serves as a testament to how accelerators can drive innovation, impact, and market success for ventures with a commitment to addressing critical societal challenges.