

# Africa Storytelling Challenge— Notable Submissions: In Adiodun Adereni's Words

*Committed to championing scientific innovations and advancements, Adiodun is affecting change in his community and throughout Africa—and this year's judges of the Africa Storytelling Challenge lauded these impressive efforts. Recognized as a runner-up in this year's contest, Adiodun shares his essay submission below.*

I founded HelpMum with my team on a mission to reduce maternal and infant mortality in Nigeria through preventive measures. While on a visit to my paternal uncle in my hometown I discovered that not only was there an absence of a health care center in the community but also a predisposition of the pregnant women to a disease called zoonosis as most of them kept pets around them even during the stage of pregnancy.

As a veterinary student, this was highly disturbing to me as a particular type of Zoonosis called Toxoplasmosis is responsible for congenital infections in children. After doing more research with some of my medical friends on the state of maternal and infant health in Nigeria, we discovered that everyday in Africa, hundreds of mothers and babies die at childbirth. A big part of the problem is the lack of access to clean and affordable birth kits in disconnected communities where over 54 million women live and work as well as the broken healthcare chain affecting those areas. Furthermore, the unavailability of water has been an hindrance in promoting good hand hygiene, thereby leading to the high rate of diarrhea, we tackle diarrhea a major killer of children aged 0 - 5 years.

So we decided to start our maternal and infant health innovation called HelpMum, which uses low cost innovations like our HelpMum Clean birth kits containing sterilized ultra-essential supplies required at childbirth to ensure a clean, safe and hygienic delivery, and a Saniband a portable hand sanitizer wrist band (Patent owned by us) that offers a broad antimicrobial spectrum and a rapid antimicrobial protection that is easily available at the point of need for mothers. Our Saniband 17-a Portable hand sanitizer helps to curb cases of diarrhea which is the major killer of children aged 0 -5 years.

With our inexpensive clean birth kits, traditional birth attendants will use scalpel blades instead of rusty blades and glass to sever umbilical cords, a woman in labor will no longer lay on the bare floor or use a plastic bag sterilized with salt- instead, she will lay on our sterilized absorbent delivery mat and her baby received with our sterilized

infant receiver Our SaniBand17 is a hand sanitizer in the form of a wrist band that is easily accessible whenever pregnant women and nursing mothers want to sanitize their hands, refillable for routine usage, comes at affordable prices for various economic class, very aesthetic and fashionable as it comes in different colours and sizes, convenient to wear on the wrist, and effective in keeping pregnant women and nursing mothers free from germs transmitted through touch.

Our product model comprises a pre-packed 10ml SaniBand17 and 500ml sanitizer filled depot hand sanitizer container that is used for filling the band on routine basis, and a 20 litre container filled with hand sanitizer that is supplied to health facilities like community pharmacies, hospitals, clinics, and super markets. Whenever 500ml gets exhausted they can easily access the nearest health facility or super market for refill purposes. SaniBand17 model does not support disposing finished 500ml sanitizer depot container hence highly environmental friendly

The SaniBand17 is incorporated into the HelpMum clean birth kit bag which we give out to pregnant women in rural and disconnected areas: Our HelpMum clean birth helps to ensure clean, safe and hygienic delivery for pregnant women in rural/disconnected areas and our Saniband a portable hand sanitizer wrist band (Patent owned by us and incorporated in the clean birth kits) helps to offer a broad antimicrobial spectrum and a rapid antimicrobial protection that is easily available at the point of need for mothers.

Our work ensures that every baby gets an opportunity to live and every mother is able to watch her baby grow. Global Health is geared towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 3 on Health and well-being through innovation, making our solution HelpMum solution supporting this goal.

It is important to tell stories of science so as to inspire the next extraordinary youth to work and team together to proffer lasting health solutions to health challenges in Africa.

*The content and views presented here are those of the individual Challenge participant.*

### **About the Africa Storytelling Challenge**

The inaugural [Champions of Science—Africa Storytelling Challenge](#) took place between May and August 2018. Open to all scientists doing innovative work in Africa, the contest drew more than 100 submissions. An independent selection committee of scientists, policymakers and science journalists reviewed the applications and selected the winners. Each winner will be awarded \$5,000 and will have the opportunity to share their stories at the 2019 American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) annual meeting in Washington, D.C.