

# Five tech startup ideas that Kenya can export

By [Ken Macharia](#) 25 Aug 2015

Having pioneered mobile money solutions like MPesa and crowd-sourcing platform Ushahidi, Kenya's innovative, resilient and global-looking tech community is working on the next big thing. It's no wonder Kenya's ICT sector has been the most consistent and one of the key drivers of Kenya's economic growth in the last decade, contributing 12.1 per cent to the GDP in 2014. It's now about time Kenya becomes a net exporter of technological innovation and ground breaking products.

The tech innovations currently being created, tested and deployed are not only benefitting Kenyans but can be replicated in most African countries. These startups have the potential to scale to other emerging economies and have a strong business and social case. Kenya has the potential to be at the forefront of cutting edge innovation that brings about real change, creates employment and spurs other innovators to build in Africa for Africa. Here are five startups that can quickly scale to the rest of the continent and beyond.

## M-KOPA Solar

According to the World Bank, 24 percent of the population in sub-Saharan Africa shares only 28 Gigawatts of installed generation capacity, which can be compared to what Argentina consumes. Off-grid pay-as-you-go alternative power providers like M-KOPA Solar are the hope of millions cut off from the main grid. M-Kopa Solar, now in its third year, aims to provide affordable and clean energy to replace Kerosene lamps littered in 70 percent of the homes across Africa.



Image via [123RF](#)

In a nutshell, M-KOPA Solar has created a solar system where users purchase 8W power by paying a deposit and Sh50 per day through mobile money after which the power system becomes free for use in 1 months. In May 2015, M-KOPA Solar announced it had connected the 200,000th home in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania and with 500 solar units being installed in the three countries every day, M-KOPA Solar is well on its way of achieving its goal of connecting one million homes by the end of 2017.

## Sendy

Most African cities are traffic-laden, unstructured and often chaotic, making delivery of goods a herculean task. Nairobi-based Sendy is your local DHL on two wheels that ensures you receive or send a package in

secure and timely way. Sendy, like ride-sharing app Uber, has created an app that connects independent (and vetted) motorbike riders with clients that need courier services.

Clients can pay using mobile money or Visa in a three easy in-app process that includes; setting pick-up a drop-off locations, paying, and tracking your delivery in real time. Users get a notification once their package is delivered. The young team running Sendy has set sight on facilitating 1500 deliveries by the end of the year, and has plans for regional expansion.

## **BRCK**

How do you provide internet to remote regions in Africa cut off from power, roads and telecommunication? This is the question the innovative Ushahidi team led by the 'Father of African tech hubs' Erik Hersman sought to answer when they created BRCK. BRCK (pronounced Brick) is a made-in-Kenya-assembled-in-America device that provides internet by intuitively selecting between WiFi, Ethernet, 3G or 4G mobile phone networks, whichever works best at a particular time. BRCK has an 8-hour back-up battery that immediately kicks in once power is interrupted allowing as many as 20 users to connect to the internet through the device.

While BRCK is essentially described as the 'the backup generator of the Internet', the rugged device has more utility value; charging other devices like mobile phones, a 16GB of cloud storage, networking capabilities and a web platform that helps users check ideal internet connection and power output. Hersman led a team that travelled by road from Nairobi to Johannesburg and back, passing through 8 countries and the device worked in the remotest parts of the journey. In BRCK's tag line, which should warm the hearts of Kenyans, it works in Africa, it will work anywhere.'

## **Chura**

A startup by former University of Nairobi students, incubated at the Chiromo based C4D Lab, is allowing mobile money users get additional services, over and above what telcos are providing. Chura - Frog in Swahili - gives users the ability to leap between mobile money services in different networks. Through the platform, customers can also exchange airtime for money across mobile networks, send airtime to someone in a different network and buy airtime or data using any of the mobile money services. The five co-founders that constitute Chura were shortlisted as finalists in the 25,000£ (Sh3M) Royal Academy of Engineering Innovation grand Prize. In addition, Chura has received requests to provide the services in Zambia, Nigeria and South Africa.

## **M-Changa**

Kyai Mullei and David Mark have created a mobile fundraising solution that leverages on mobile money services, adding accountability and convenience to the 'e-harambee' process. In Kenya and Africa in general, fundraising for various reasons like funeral, wedding, school fees or for medical bills is the norm rather than the exception.

Through a mobile and an online platform, M-Changa helps users raise funds through M-Pesa, Airtel Money PayPal, meaning anyone - even friends outside the country - can contribute to your fundraising. What sets Changa apart from traditional harambee methods is the seamless automation process that not only allows account holders to invite an unlimited number of contributors but also tracks donations. Over 10,000 people have used M-Changa, driven to the platform by M-Changa's unique mix of integrating SMS and social media

to reach and engage customers.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>