



Press release

Start of the F-LANE application period

F-LANE goes virtual: Vodafone Institute launches the next round of its global social impact accelerator programme for female empowerment

- **Batch 5 launches with Yunus Social Business as new implementation partner, supported by Impact Hub, Social Entrepreneurship Akademie and WLOUNGE**
- **F-LANE aims to support innovative digital solutions with the potential to impact millions of girls* and women* around the globe**
- **Applications for the five-week virtual accelerator programme are now open until July 31st at www.f-lane.com**

Berlin, 17.06.2020. The global COVID-19 pandemic reveals the structural and social disadvantages for women* and girls* worldwide, more clearly than ever before. Despite many efforts in politics, business and civic society, women* and girls* still lack access to local and international educational resources, economic participation and health care.

"The COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented global challenge but at the same time, a catalyst for social innovation. Thus, the Vodafone Institute will run batch #5 of its female social ventures programme remotely in 2020, and with a new partner set-up with which we want to raise F-LANE to the next level and further scale the programme globally. Furthermore, we will take up COVID-19 as a current topic for women* as agents of change and support sustainable solutions to mitigate the impact of the pandemic for them, their families and communities," **explains Inger Paus, Managing Director of the Vodafone Institute for Society and Communications.**

F-LANE launches virtually with new partner set-ups

With the new round of F-LANE, which kicks off in September of 2020, the Vodafone Institute for Society and Communications – Vodafone's European Think Tank – draws upon the success of four previous programme rounds and expands its partner set-up to increase impact and scale. The Vodafone Institute runs F-LANE with its new implementation partner **Yunus Social Business** (YSB). Yunus Social Business was founded by Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Muhammad Yunus with the vision of financing, supporting and growing social businesses with large companies who want to see business in a different way. The F-LANE founding partners **Social Entrepreneurship Akademie** (SEA) in Munich will continue to support F-LANE with their excellent impact entrepreneurship competencies, while the **Impact Hub Berlin** remains on board as Community Partner providing participating start-ups with access to the global impact community and investors. Furthermore, **WLOUNGE**, as a new partner to the F-LANE network, will contribute its expertise in gender lens investing and its local and global investors and mentors network to support the cohort.

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For the first time, the programme will run remotely and virtually with digital coaching and webinars, to meet the logistical and economic challenges posed by COVID-19. It will further specifically emphasise the personal and individual support of each founding team. The programme focuses on the development of strategic measures in the areas of impact, product strategy, business model, customer access, sales strategy, marketing & branding and investment. The mentors from the global networks of Vodafone Group and Yunus Social Business as well as the other network partners like SEA, Impact Hub and WLOUNGE are in line with the specific needs of the social entrepreneurs.

Applications open

We are looking for social entrepreneurs and social tech founders from all over the world who are in the early stages of developing their business models and who use digital technologies to improve the lives of girls* and women* worldwide.

Applications can be submitted until July 31st 2020 on the **F-LANE website**. 10 selected start-ups will partake in the F-LANE virtual accelerator programme in September of 2020. Further information at www.f-lane.com.

F-LANE images and Marketing Kit can be downloaded [here](#).

About F-LANE

F-LANE was founded by the Vodafone Institute in 2016 and is looking internationally for innovative tech start-ups with a focus on women* who solve a social problem entrepreneurially and who have the potential to achieve a broad impact. The criteria for the selection of F-LANE start-ups are, besides the proof of a more-than-profit model, a measurable impact of the founding idea, the focus on technologies and the empowerment of women*, who are still underrepresented in the technology sector. According to the Female Founders Monitor of the Bundesverband Deutsche Startups e.V, 17% of all technology start-ups are founded by women. In Europe, it is as low as 15%.

About the Vodafone Institute for Society and Communications

The Institute is Vodafone's European think tank. We analyse the potential of digital technologies and their responsible use for innovation, growth and sustainable social impact. With the help of studies and events, we offer a platform for the dialogue of thought leaders from science, business and politics. It is our concern to provide better access to technology for all parts of society. That is why we support projects to empower women* in the digital economy.

About Yunus Social Business

Yunus Social Business (YSB) was founded by Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Muhammad Yunus, founder of Grameen Bank, which is serving more than 8 million borrowers in Bangladesh, over 96% of them women. YSB is working with social businesses around the world, offering financial and non-financial support. The company – set up as a social business itself – has run more than 30 accelerator programmes worldwide. YSB is working with corporate partners to “transform business into a force for good” through social innovation. YSB creates corporate accelerator programmes, builds corporate social businesses as joint ventures, and designs purpose strategies for large companies. Its global network spans over more than 1,800 social entrepreneurs, close to 1,000 mentors and over a dozen joint ventures.

Cooperation partners of the Vodafone Institute and F-LANE:

Yunus Social Business www.yunusssb.com

Impact Hub Berlin www.berlin.impacthub.net

Social Entrepreneurship Akademie www.seakademie.org

WLOUNGE www.wlounge.de

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