

Kenyan Teen Innovators Win Earth Prize 2026, Bag KSh 1.6 Million Award



by Faith Mwangi — May 12, 2026 Reading Time: 4 mins read



Fredrick Kariuki and Miron Onsarigo winners of the Earth Prize 2026. PHOTO/Earth Prize

Kenyan teen innovators have been named as the African Winners in the Earth Prize 2026 competition for their innovation in the clean air technology.

Following their win in the Earth Prize 2026, the two Kenyan innovators were awarded KSh1.6 million prize funding.

Fredrick Njoroge Kariuki and Miron Onsarigo, both 17, invented a 'HewaSafi' solution during the competition.

The solution was a low-cost vehicle exhaust system that captures harmful emissions using filters.

According to the Kenyan innovators, the emissions are captured through filters made from maize, agricultural products, disposable agricultural waste, coconut shells, and algae.

Fredrick Kariuki, growing up with bronchitis in Naivasha, was inspired to develop an invention to curb air pollution as an environmental issue.

“I didn't choose this problem; it chose me. Growing up in

Naivasha, my bronchitis got bad enough that I stopped thinking of air pollution as an environmental issue and started thinking of it as something being done to us. HewaSafi is our answer to that.” Fredrick explained.

On the other hand, Miron Onsarigo was inspired to invent the ‘HewaSafi’ solution due to people in his hometown, Kisumu, getting sick from vehicle fumes.

The overall estimated 11.1 million deaths in 2019 due to air pollution, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), was an inspiring factor for the Kenyan innovators.

Also Read: [Safaricom’s Ziidi Wins Global Fintech Innovation Award in Barcelona](#)

Kenyan HewaSafi Solution

The solution was designed as an affordable, multi-stage system that uses living algal components and maize cobs to capture over 90% of particulate matter.

Further, the system reduces toxic carbon emissions that, unlike the conventional exhaust purification systems, which are more costly, the HewaSafi solution uses locally sourced materials.

In addition, the solution offers a purification alternative that is specifically designed for informal, high-density transport networks.

Targeting the matatus and boda-bodas, the solution aims at curbing the harm from full vehicle emissions across African cities.

The innovators with local matatu associations have conducted pilot testing of the HewaSafi solution.

Solution Refinement

With the KSh1.6 million prize funding, the innovators are planning on refining their innovation to work with transport operators and industry partners to lead the adoption.

According to the innovators, the drive to adopt the innovation across urban areas, they are looking to start working with Eastleigh Matatu SACCO.

Further, the innovators are planning to phase out a product family known as the Hewasafi Emission Control System, which will be adapted to specific audiences.

In addition, the innovators will also have HewaSafi Lite, HewaSafi Pro, and HewaSafi Mobile under the HewaSafi Emission Control System.

All products under the HewaSafi Emission Control System will be available on installment plans to improve affordability for drivers.

Also Read: [List of All Kalasha International Film and TV Awards Winners and Their Prizes](#)

About Earth Prize

The Earth Prize by The Earth Foundation, a non-profit based in Geneva, Switzerland, was founded during the School Strike for Climate in 2019.

Currently in its fifth year, the Earth Prize has over 21,000 students across 169 countries.

According to Peter McGarry, founder of the Earth Foundation, the winners of the 2026 competitions were seven outstanding teams with impactful solutions to environmental challenges.



HewaSafi 3D prototype. PHOTO/Earth Prize

Tags: [Earth Prize](#) [HewaSafi](#)