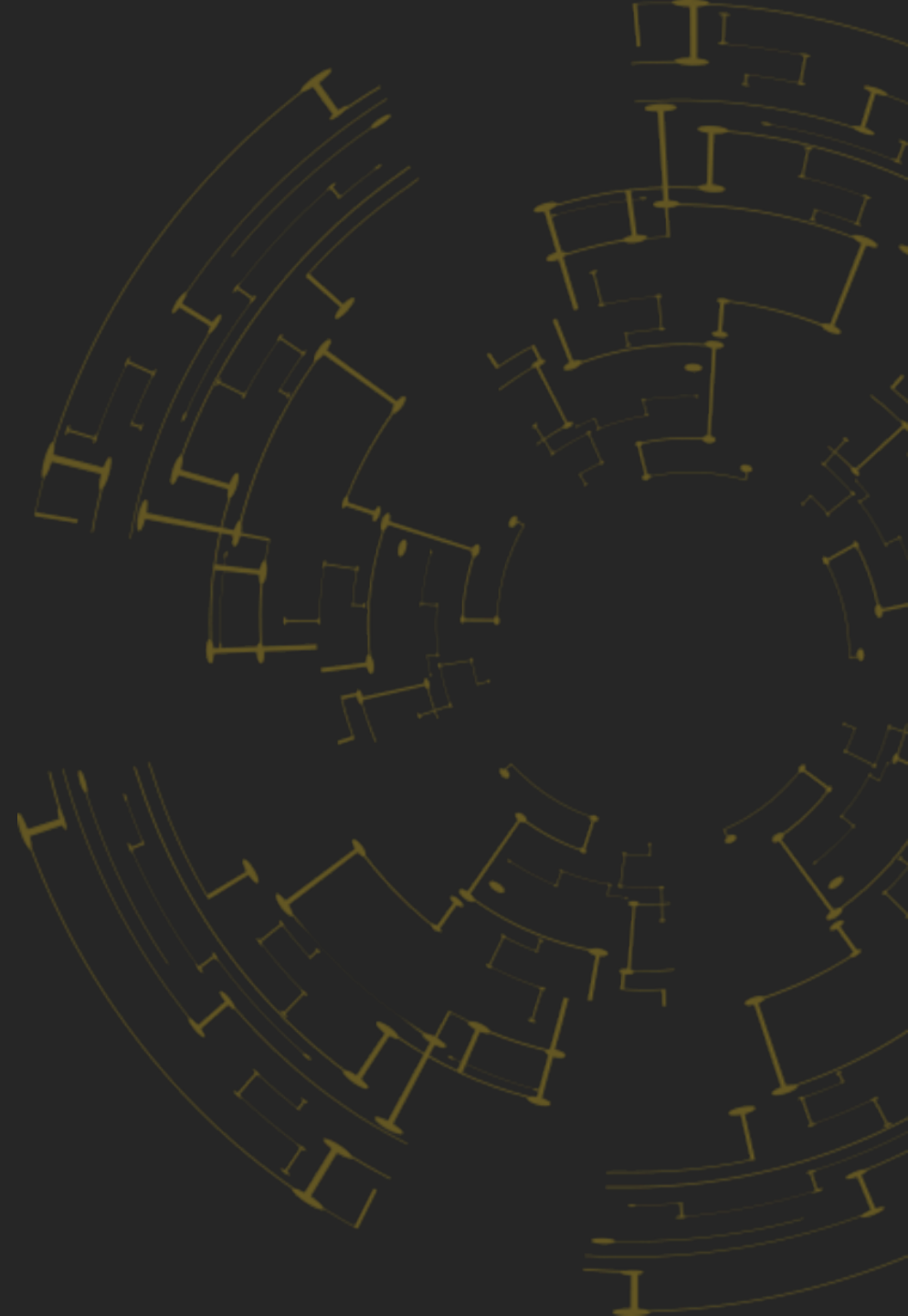




**1888<sup>EC</sup>**

VICTORY  
RE-IMAGINED



# Our Founding Story

Founded in 2020 by Solomon Kassa (TV Personality, tech consultant, strategist, author, and public speaker), 1888EC is a unique & innovative startup studio that will be the-first-of-its-kind in Ethiopia. 1888EC aspires to create disruptive innovators and change-makers in Ethiopia and beyond that will champion digital transformation, venture building, and job creation.



## MISSION

To solve society's grand challenges by creating venture-based solutions



## VISION

To be the premier African startup studio that champions a prosperous African future.



## VALUE

We commit to creating ventures that are people-centered, impact-driven, and grit-based.



# 1888 Founder's track record

[www.solomonkassa.com](http://www.solomonkassa.com)

## MEDIA



Producer/Host of a very popular weekly science & tech TV show on EBS

**9 YEARS, 18 SEASONS**

**600+ TOPICS**

**230+ EPISODES**

**85+ GUESTS**

including PM Abiy Ahmed

**MILLIONS OF VIEWERS**

Recently launched a NEW short vlog

[www.1888.studio](http://www.1888.studio)

## PUBLISHING



The 1<sup>ST</sup> of its kind science & tech book in Amharic

**400 PAGES**

**35,000+**

**SOLD**

Edited and endorsed by PM Abiy Ahmed

## CONSULTING/STRATEGY



Management consulting as a career profession

**LEADING MULTIMILLION-DOLLAR TECH PROJECTS**

Pro-bono tech policy and strategy advice public speaking coaching and panels

## INFLUENCER



**750,000+**

followers on social media



# Why 1888EC?

As a place to cultivate the next generation of entrepreneurs & tech startup warriors, 1888EC refers to the date of the victorious Battle of Adwa on the Ethiopian Calendar (EC). The letters “EC” also stand for ‘Enterprise Central’. Our motto, “Victory Re-imagined!” symbolizes the victory we want to re-imagine against poverty by empowering young entrepreneurs to improve the lives of many through tech-based solutions to everyday problems.



## Expertise

1888EC brings the expertise to build & operate startups. Using rapid prototyping, design thinking & several technical & business skills, we will design, develop & scale products & companies.



## Network

1888EC’s network is far-reaching. Founder & board of advisors will facilitate access to several partners by tapping into existing relationships & exploring new ones.

[www.1888.studio](http://www.1888.studio)



## Partnership

1888EC will be fostering local and global strategic partnerships as it builds the startup ecosystem.



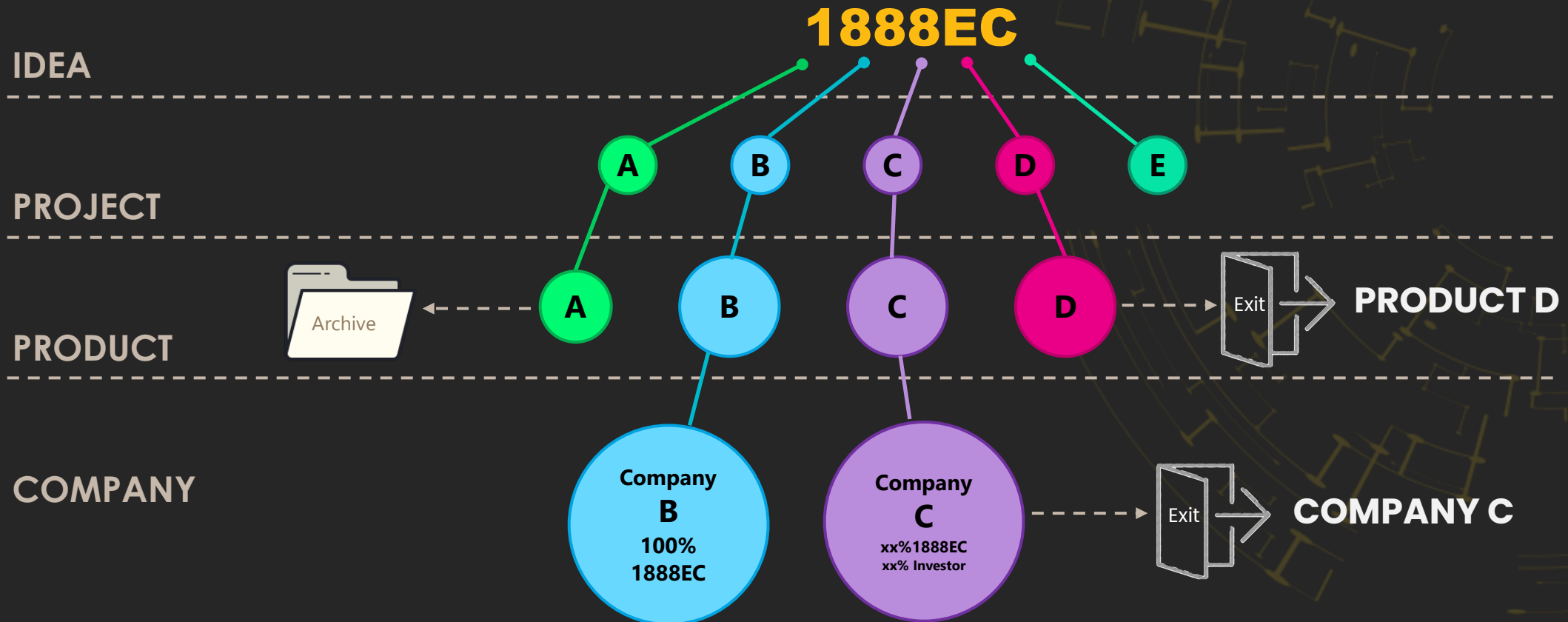
## Resources

With office in the U.S. & a studio space to be opened in Addis Ababa, 1888EC will offer tools & resources in a physical place for entrepreneurs to come together & collaborate.

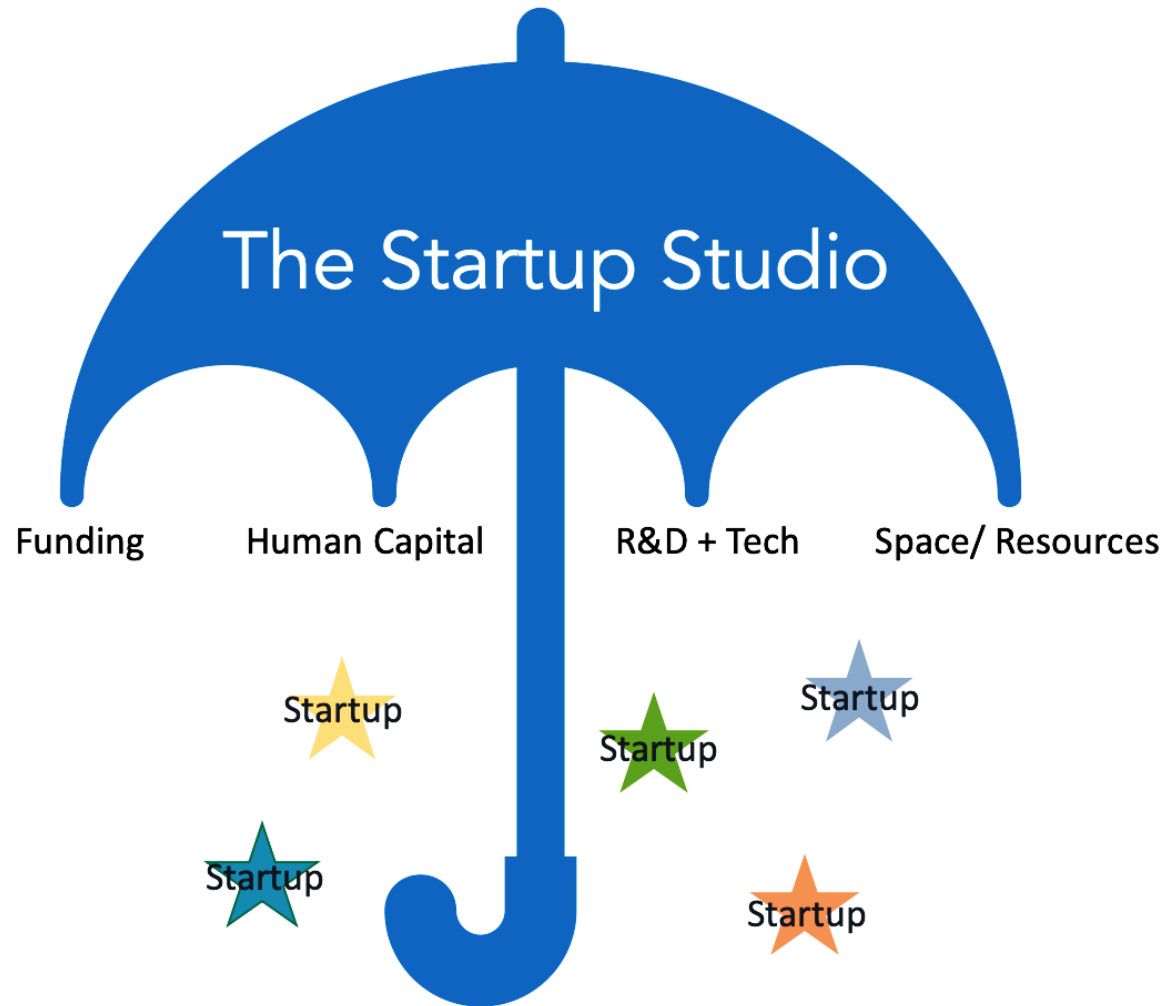


# What is a startup studio?

A startup studio is a structure whose aim is to repeatedly build and launch products and/or companies. Aided by shared infrastructure and resources, startup studios increase a startup's chance of success and optimize its creation and growth. Led with design thinking and rapid prototyping, studios also co-build products with their portfolio startup companies as an extension of the core studio team.



# A startup studio metaphor: Holding Co



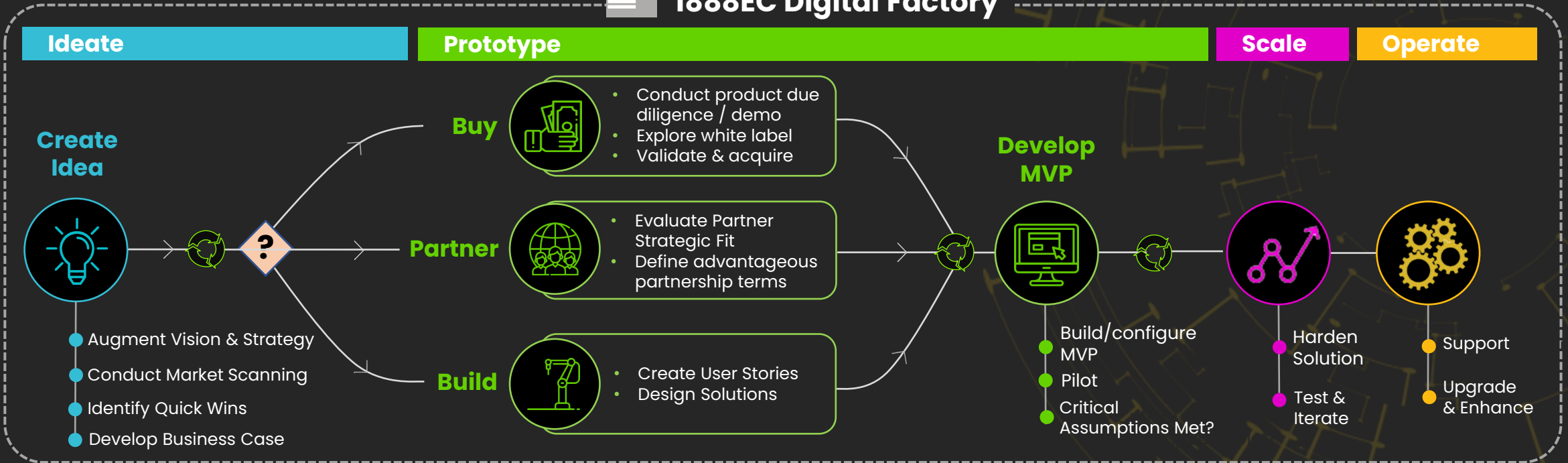
The Studio is one single company, and the startups are each individual ventures. The Studio, acting in this capacity, can be seen as a “holding company” or the “parent” company and the startups, its subsidiaries.



# Value chain in our studio

We use a high-speed, high-capacity studio with design thinking for rapid solution prototyping, development and scaling in a "SUCCEED" OR "FAIL FAST" approach. It allows for the rapid alignment, development, and implementation of high-impact digital initiatives and Solutions.

## 1888EC Digital Factory



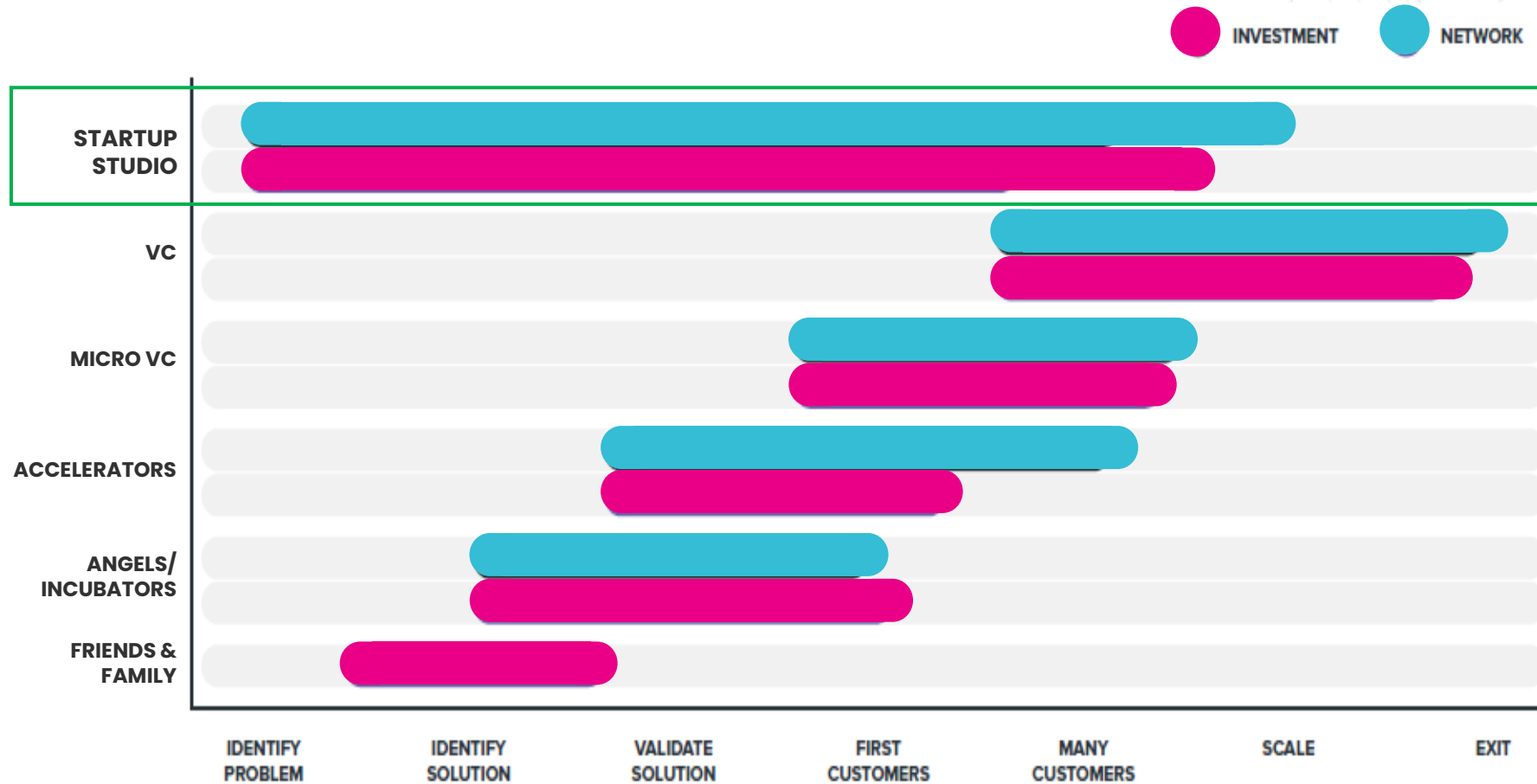
### Advantages

- Capturing speed to value index
- Optimizing highly constrained skillsets
- Delivering MVPs through agile methodologies
- Providing laser-focus on accountability
- Partnering with ecosystem key players
- Scanning for market innovations/opportunities & identifying quick wins
- Utilizing cost-effective tech capabilities



# Why a startup Studio?

Our value prop: we are end-to-end! Skin in the game from the beginning. We are fully engaged and invested to provide funding, human capital, and networking resources. We also play key role in bridging the gap between incubators and accelerators and VCs.



● INVESTMENT ● NETWORK

Examples





# Why Ethiopia?

With a young and growing population, more urbanization, exploding mobile & internet penetration several aggressive tech policy & strategic initiatives by the government of Ethiopia, digital transformation & economy has a huge potential making the country the next African hub for digital entrepreneurship and innovation.

## A big & youthful nation



**109 million**

2<sup>nd</sup> most populous nation in Africa



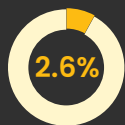
Under the age of 19



Urban population and growing



Median age



Annual population growth

## A growing connectivity



Total number of mobile connections  
68.3 Million

**Penetration**  
63%



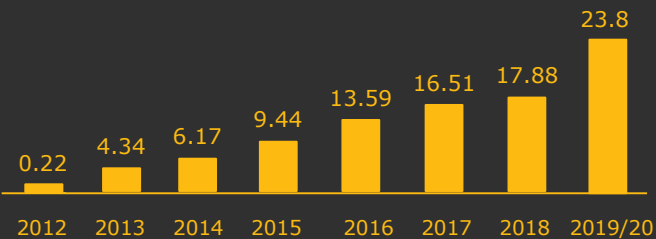
Total number of active internet users  
23.8 million

**Penetration**  
22%



Year-on-year change in average speed of fixed Internet connections  
**+27%**

### Number of internet subscribers (Million)



## Aggressive Gov't tech initiatives



**Digital Transformation Strategy**



**Startup Proclamation Act**



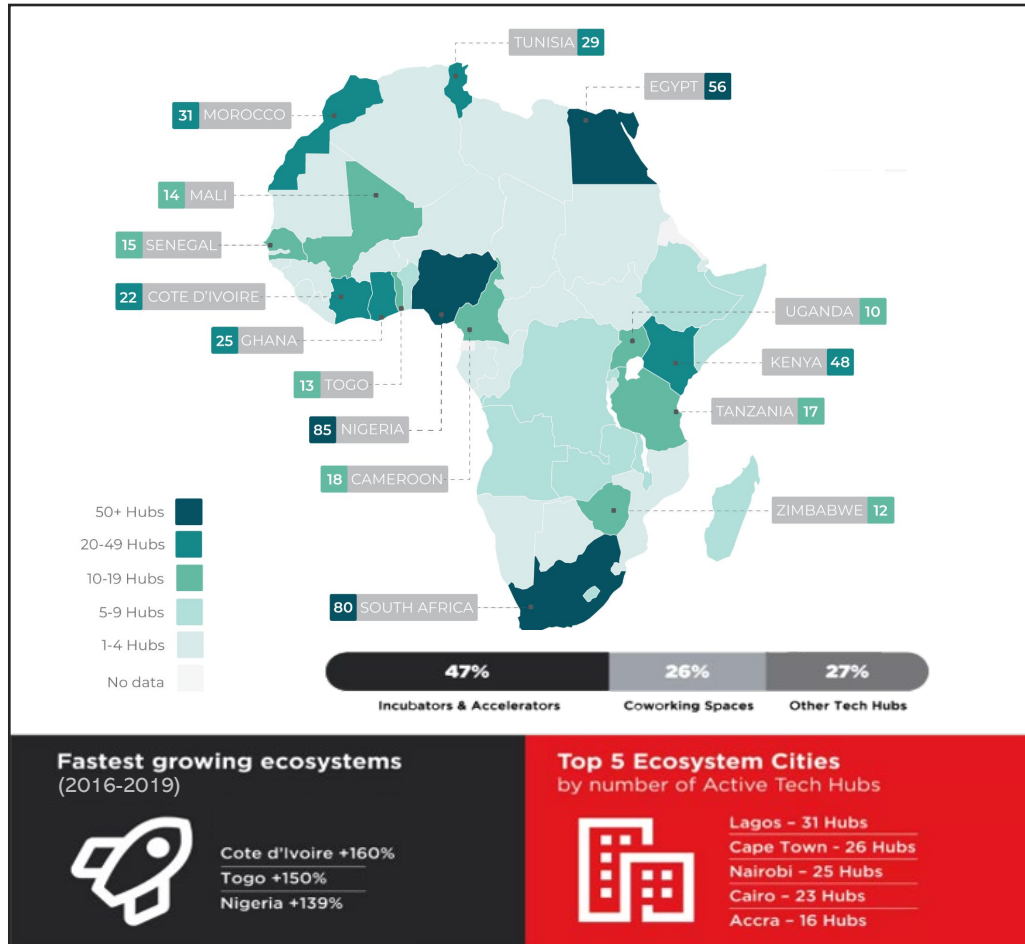
**Telecom Privatization & liberalization**

- More supportive regulatory framework has been in place to encourage private sector participation including strategy, policy & acts around **digital economy, data protection, electronic payments & startup proclamation**
- With 2 million job seekers entering the market every year, low labor costs & favorable access to major global markets, the government plans to create **289,997 direct/indirect IT jobs**. The Jobs Creation Commission estimates the ICT sector employed 78,000 in 2018
- The government of Ethiopia plans to sell 49% of Ethio Telecom's stake and add two foreign telecom operators to increase connectivity & drive the digital economy



# State of startup ecosystem in Ethiopia

Only three incubators and zero accelerator for the 2<sup>nd</sup> most populous country in the continent.



**iceaddis**  
Incubator & co-working space

**M in T**

**X HUB**  
ADDIS  
Incubator

**iCog Labs**  
Private Tech R&D

**blueMoon**  
Incubator & co-working space

**GEBEYA**<sup>TM</sup>  
Best of African Talent  
EdTech and Talent Marketplace

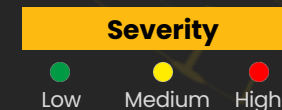


# Challenges of Ethiopia's Digital Ecosystem

Digital entrepreneurs in Ethiopia are faced with a number of challenges across the different stages of the business lifecycle spanning from financing to inadequate business skills and support structures.



<b>Key ecosystem findings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Low level of Research and Development (R&amp;D) activities and weak linkages between industry and public R&amp;D institutions</li> <li>● Increased reliance on internal funds or funding from informal sources for ideation</li> <li>● Shortage of business and entrepreneurship skills among graduates</li> <li>● Limited innovation and entrepreneurship culture in Ethiopians</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Funding mechanisms to support early-stage activity such as crowdfunding, angel investments, private equity, PPP and venture capital are still at an embryonic stage in terms of availability and regulation</li> <li>● Inadequate incubators and innovation hubs in the country</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Inadequate mechanisms to support commercialization of research and ideas</li> <li>● Lack of recognition of intellectual property as collateral by domestic financial institutions</li> <li>● Absence of robust credit information systems (credit bureau and credit registry)</li> <li>● Limited soft skills among startups in Ethiopia</li> <li>● Limited practical experience among graduates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Stringent collateral requirement by banks for credit extension limits the ability of digital entrepreneurs to scale up.</li> <li>● Lack a of a unifying vision on e-commerce at the national level and limited adoption of e-commerce legislation</li> </ul>	<p>We are not even there to talk about issue at these stages</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Relatively low levels of digital financial literacy among rural based population</li> <li>● Wide-spread cash culture makes it difficult for digital innovations that depend on digital payment solutions to pick up</li> <li>● Last mile delivery challenges for digital entrepreneurs as a result of transport and logistics bottlenecks</li> <li>● Large untapped consumer market that could be captured with mobile payments and e-commerce</li> <li>● Traditional "slow to react" approach towards regulating disruptive digital enterprises in Ethiopia</li> </ul>				



# What we do & our approach

We are a Startup ecosystem builders. One venture at a time! As venture builders, we will have end-to-end in-house expertise to ideate, plan, develop, test & validate our own ideas & scale them. Up on the success of the studio model, we will also welcome cohorts of early-stage startups to our studio so that we can co-build their products with our core studio team.



From inception to proof-of-concept, validation, initial customer acquisition & scale, we take every step using rapid solution prototyping & design thinking, an effective approach to new product development that keeps a human-centered design process at its core.

We will closely work with some of the brightest & promising early-stage startups & entrepreneurs who join our studio as cohorts. We will co-create & co-build together to grow & scale new ventures by offering access to our resources.



# What we offer

Besides creating, developing and scaling our own ideas within the studio, we will provide a variety of offerings and play a key leading role of developing a startup ecosystem in the process:



## Co-build

Explore & engage promising early-stage startups through our vast network & via our portal to be our cohort entrepreneurs.



## Mentor

We provide 3-4 months of mentorship, connecting each team with established mentors in their field. We will also launch state-of-the-art fellowship.



## Fund

We will support founders with early-stage funding to get startups off the ground and work tirelessly for access to follow-on capital to scale.



## Space

Establish a studio co-creating space to cultivate synergy & boost collaborative creativity.



## Support

Provide our in-house expertise to assist with end-to-end support including business plan, legal, accounting & marketing.



## Convene

Host impact driven events like demo days at our studio while leveraging our founder's nationwide recognition in the tech space.



# 1888EC's impact



## JOB CREATION

Provide employment opportunities for the youth in Ethiopian & beyond with the emphasis on women.



## ECOSYSTEM BUILDING

Be a hub to build a startup ecosystem and solve problems across private/public sectors.



## ASPIRING ENTREPRENEURS

Create young entrepreneurs driven by critical problem-solving thinking & "can do" mindset.



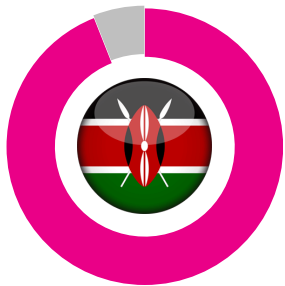
## DIGITAL ECONOMY

Produce a tech/knowledge-based economy & bring digital transformation.

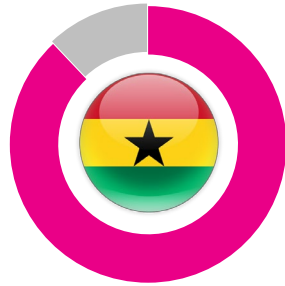


# 1888: EC is for Equity Central!

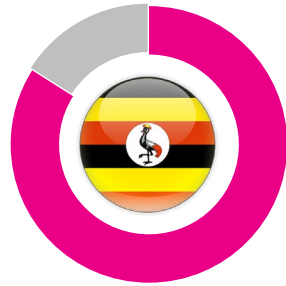
African-American, global African diaspora, local African entrepreneurs deeply share a common challenges of institutional biases. Foreign investors have the tendency to invest in African-based startups founded by western entrepreneurs. While the global black enterprise doesn't get the "first movers" advantage in emerging affinity markets, black-founded startups in Africa also miss out investment opportunities due to lack of exposure and equity.



94%



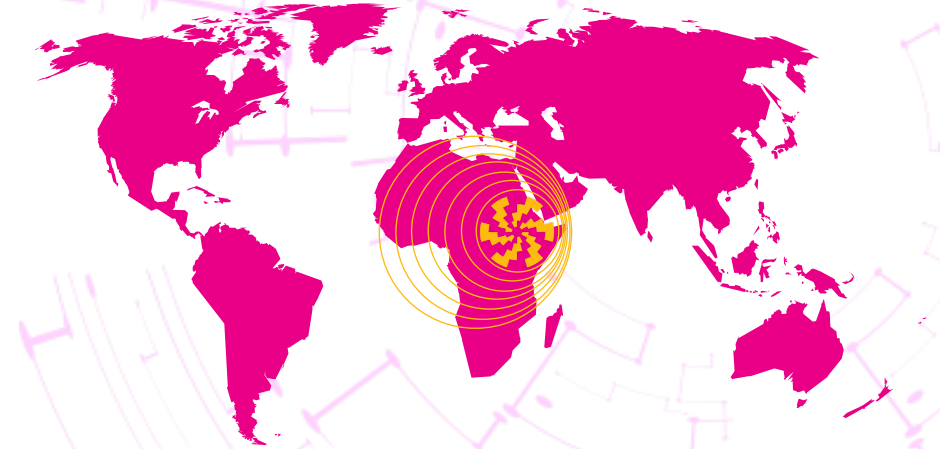
88%



84%

Percentages of startups in **Kenya, Ghana & Uganda** that received a million dollars or more of Venture Capital (VC) investment in 2019 was led by an expatriate founder.

1888EC strives to foster a global mindset and outlook while intentionally creating an **inclusive** and **equitable** ecosystem that can level the playing field for local-led ventures.



# Ethiopia is calling again...

One of the most significant individuals in Ethiopian history is Adolf Parlesák, who stood alongside Ethiopians during the Italian–Ethiopian war. He actively participated in the resistance movement against the Italian invasion. Adolf Parlesák is thus rightly considered to be one of the most important fellow Czech citizens to become Ethiopia's true pal and hero.

Adolf Parlesák offered his services as a voluntary military advisor, training the Ethiopian army in preparation for the Italian attack. Despite being well informed about the massive superiority of the Italian troops over the Ethiopian army, Adolf Parlesák chose to fulfill his duties with complete professionalism and style. Until the very last moments of the Italian–Ethiopian war he stood alongside his Ethiopian comrades, giving them his backing, advice, and moral support. His service in the Ethiopian army brought him recognition from Haile Selassie I.





# Adolf Parlesák Innovation Partnership

In recognition of the enduring heroic legacy and the contribution Adolf Parlesák has made to the sovereignty and integrity of Ethiopia, 1888EC proposes Adolf Parlesák Innovation Partnership, an Ethiopian–Czech collaboration platform to promote innovation and empower the youth in Ethiopia. It will be an impactful initiative aimed to recruit the brightest Czech innovators and provide them with transformational program to collaborate with their Ethiopian counterparts to imagine and build ventures that will solve Ethiopia's and the continent's wicked challenges.

We are seeking Czech Republic government and brands to join this noble endeavor to deepen the historical friendship between the two countries and to support technology and knowledge transfer to young startups and entrepreneurs by providing mentorship, training, and establishing innovation labs.



# Call for Partnership

We are seeking to raise **\$1,000,000** pre-seed pre-investment grant fund to launch our studio, hire core team, support startups as well as develop our initial MVPs, release the first products, establish our customer base and create a pipeline for our seed round.



**OFFICE &  
STUDIO**

Lease and buildout  
1888EC HQ and  
Studio space.



**TEAM  
HIRES**

Hire core team  
members.



**PRODUCT  
DEV**

Design, develop and  
launch four MVPs.



**FUND  
STARTUPS**

Seed fund startups with  
potential to scale.

**We have achieved our 25% pre-seed funding goal by securing  
\$250,000 grant fund from MCF**



# Our Team

## Founder



### SOLOMON KASSA

Founder, 1888EC | Tech Consultant & Strategist | TV Personality | Author | Public Speaker

In his professional career, Solomon has been working as technology consulting & strategy manager at a Fortune 500 Global Firm leading a multimillion-dollar large technology implementation. He worked as a software engineer prior to joining management consulting. He is also a producer & host of the popular "TechTalk With Solomon" on EBS. For the past 9 years, Solomon produced more than 230+ episodes, discussing several science & tech topics as well as interviewing prominent guests including Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. In 2018, Solomon published "ግርምት ሳይ-ቴክ" (The Wonder of SciTech) – the first-of-its-kind science & tech book to be ever published in Amharic. Solomon is a social media influencer with more than 715,000+ followers.

## Partners



A multi-purpose platform developed by 360Ground to provide personal assistance with integrated messaging, mobile banking & ecosystem of content, service & products.



[www.1888.studio](http://www.1888.studio)

## Board of Advisors



### AMROTE ABDELA

Regional Director, Microsoft 4Afrika



### SAMUEL ALEMAYEHU

Global Managing Director, Cambridge Industries Ltd  
Serial Entrepreneur



### HENOK ASSEFA

Managing Partner, Precise Consult



### SELAM AYELE

Director, Antler



### MIRAFE G. MARCOS

Ethiopian Country Director, ALX Addis  
Africa Leadership Group (ALG)



### STEPHEN OZOIGBO

Venture Catalyst  
Managing Partner, LIONS@FRICA  
CEO, The Africa Technology Foundation



### BAHIYAH ROBINSON

Founder & CEO, VC Include



### MELISSA SASSI

Chief Penguin of IBM Hyper Protect Accelerator | Founder, MentorNations



### BERNARD LAURENDEAU

Managing Partner, Laurendeau & Associates  
Co-Founder, Ethiopians in Tech



### DAVID SOLOMON

CEO, Good Machine



### BETHELEHEM TILAHUN

Founder & Managing Director, SoleRebel, Garden of Coffee



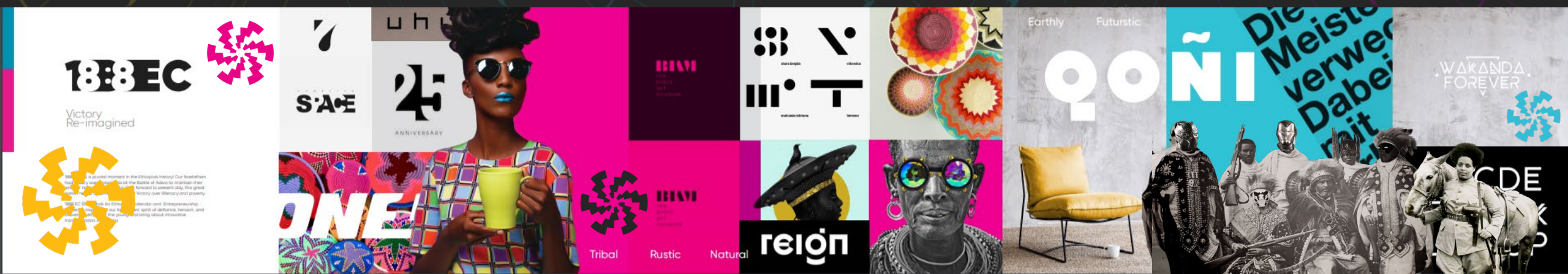
### KOMMY WELDEMARIAM, PhD

Master Inventor and the Chief Scientist, IBM Research - Africa





**“Without black, no color has any depth.”**  
 Without inclusion, we will not achieve a deeper & broader positive global impact!





Contact us:

Solomon Kassa

[solomon@1888.studio](mailto:solomon@1888.studio) | [info@1888.studio](mailto:info@1888.studio)

Direct | WhatsApp | Viber | Telegram

+1 202 203 8004

