



## World Hearing Forum Student Changemakers Awards Information Sheet

Are you a university student interested in being a Changemaker in ear and hearing care and being part of a global initiative to transform hearing health? Here is your chance to turn your innovative ideas into reality with the chance to win funding. This is a World Hearing Forum (WHF) initiative led by the Changemakers' workstream with the support of Sounds of our Humanity, a CSR division of Solar Ear. The goal is to engage student changemakers around the world to develop innovative solutions for ear and hearing care in Lower and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs).

### Problem to be Solved

- Hearing loss of all levels currently affects more than 1.5 billion people worldwide.
- 430 million people live with disabling hearing loss, including 34 million children.
- Nearly 80% of people with disabling hearing loss live in LMICs.
- It is estimated that by 2050, 1 in every 10 people will have disabling hearing loss.
- Unaddressed hearing loss poses an annual cost of \$980 billion each year globally.

The initiative aims to champion innovative solutions in three categories, (1) Strategies to prevent hearing loss from preventable causes; (2) Develop low-cost assistive technologies to help people with hearing loss; and (3) Develop implementation strategies to train frontline technicians, pediatricians, teachers, and/or nurses to deliver hearing care.

WHO estimates that in children, nearly 60% of hearing loss can be prevented through public health measures. Only about 17% of people globally who would benefit from hearing aids use one. This highlights the urgent need for innovative solutions and expanded efforts to ensure that ear and hearing care is accessible to everyone, regardless of their location or economic status.

Often the focus is on diagnosing hearing loss and prescribing hearing solutions, with less attention paid to ongoing support. More focus on other aspects of ear and hearing care is needed to address the broader social and healthcare challenges associated with hearing loss, as well as addressing the preventable causes of hearing loss across the globe.

### About the World Hearing Forum

The [World Hearing Forum](#) (WHF) is a global initiative dedicated to promoting ear and hearing care worldwide. As an initiative closely guided by WHO, it seeks to integrate hearing care within universal health coverage and promote multisectoral collaboration to prevent

hearing loss and improve the lives of those affected. The WHF has five working streams, including the Changemakers workstream. Changemakers help to build a movement to persuade governments and societies to make hearing care a public health priority. All working streams are committed to making hearing wellness a priority for everyone and breaking the stigma associated with hearing loss. With over 200 member organizations and individuals, the initiative aims to raise awareness, influence policy, and foster innovative solutions to prevent and manage hearing loss.

## Categories and Prizes

There are three categories to choose from.

Category 1: Prevention

- Develop implementation strategies which support prevention of hearing loss.

Category 2: Assistive Technology

- Develop low-cost assistive technologies to help people with hearing loss.

Category 3: Training and Education

- Develop implementation strategies to train frontline technicians, pediatricians, teachers, parents and caregivers, and/or nurses to deliver hearing care.

Please choose **one category** to submit your proposal under. There will be three jury selections for each of the three categories. The prizes are the following:

- Category 1 Prevention of Hearing Loss:
  - 1st place: \$15,000 USD
  - 2nd place: \$10,000 USD
  - 3rd place: \$5,000 USD
- Category 2 Assistive Technology:
  - 1st place: \$15,000 USD
  - 2nd place: \$10,000 USD
  - 3rd place: \$5,000 USD
- Category 3 Training and Education:
  - 1st place: \$15,000 USD
  - 2nd place: \$10,000 USD
  - 3rd place: \$5,000 USD

All winning groups will be paired with a mentor to be assigned by the WHF . The mentor will be available to support each winning group of students to develop and deliver the project and see it become a reality.

In addition, one person from each first place winning group will be invited to present their project in Geneva, Switzerland at the World Hearing Forum Conference. The date for the conference will be communicated at a later time.

## Who should participate and Why?

University students from diverse disciplines have a golden opportunity to be part of a global initiative that can transform hearing health. Here's why you should jump in:

1. **Impact Lives:** By participating, you can impact the lives of hundreds of millions. Imagine being part of something that prevents hearing loss and expands access to hearing care!
2. **Innovation Across Borders:** Proposed solutions must be designed for Low and Middle Income Countries (LMICs). This means your creativity can cross borders and make a real difference where it's needed most.
3. **Team Up:** Assemble a dynamic team! Each group should include at least two students and an academic advisor. Multidisciplinary projects are encouraged, so collaborate across fields for fresh ideas.
4. **Prizes and Support:** There are financial prizes up for grabs, mentorship to turn your project into reality, and a chance to present at the WHF Conference in Geneva, Switzerland!

This initiative presents a unique opportunity to impact the lives of hundreds of millions and lay the foundation for the prevention of hearing loss from preventable causes, expand the access to hearing care and shift the mindset around education on this issue.

## Resources to refer to

Below are resources to refer to as you build your proposal. The resources are provided by the World Health Organization (WHO). It is important to not duplicate what has already been created. Instead, consider what the gaps are when it comes to implementation.

- [Deafness and hearing loss fact sheet](#)
- [WHO World report on hearing](#)
- [Primary ear and hearing care training resources](#)
- [WHO Make Listening Safe Initiative](#)
- [World Hearing Day annual advocacy event](#)
- [hearWHO app](#)
- [World Hearing Forum](#)

## Expected deliverables

The expected deliverables for the application are:

- Description of the current local challenges related to your chosen category.
- Description of the project which will help to address the challenges.
- Working and tested prototype, accompanied by user tests/interviews and analysis reports.

- A final short video presentation (maximum of 5 minutes) to the World Hearing Forum members with the project summary. Include videos, pictures, and interviews from the execution period.
- A realistic plan for further implementation of the solution.

In your deliverables, it is important to consider and highlight the “marketing mix” (product, price, place, and promotion) of the product or program you will propose. For example, consider the following questions for each category. Note, these questions relating to the marketing mix are not exhaustive.

**Category 1 Prevention of Hearing Loss:** WHO estimates that 60% of hearing loss can be prevented through public health measures. With this in mind, what is the program (PRODUCT) you would implement to support prevention of hearing loss and who will you target? What is the cost or selling PRICE? Who will be distributing this program (PLACE) and how should this program be PROMOTED to reach these customers living in LMICs.

**Category 2 Assistive Technology:** What is your PRODUCT idea to improve, detect or reduce the burden of hearing loss in the outer, middle and/or inner ear. Who will you target in LMICs and at what economic level is the target person(s). What will it cost to make this product and what will it sell for (PRICE)? Who will be the customers (PLACE) of this product (B2G, B2C, B2B or a combination)? How will the product be PROMOTED?

**Category 3 Training and Education:** As shown in the list of resources already available, training materials exist. Consider how to reach those who need the training. What is the PROGRAM you would implement or develop to support training and education in the area of hearing loss? Who will you target in LMICs? What is the cost or selling PRICE to develop or implement the program. Who will be the customers (PLACE) and how will this be PROMOTED to reach these customers?

### **Proposal Rating Scale Overview**

The following scale will guide judges in reviewing your proposal:

**1. Innovation and Creativity (25 points)**

Judges will assess how original and creative your solution is. Proposals should present novel ideas with significant potential for impact in ear and hearing care.

**2. Feasibility and Implementation (20 points)**

This section evaluates the practicality of your proposal. A strong implementation plan that considers local resources and conditions is essential.

**3. Impact and Reach (20 points)**

The potential impact of your proposal will be judged based on its ability to benefit a large population and its scalability.

**4. Sustainability (15 points)**

Proposals should demonstrate long-term viability, considering economic, environmental, and social factors.

**5. Cultural and Ethical Considerations (10 points)**

Judges will look for a deep understanding of local cultural and ethical contexts, ensuring the proposal is appropriate and respectful.

**6. Clarity and Presentation (10 points)**

Clear, concise, and well-organized proposals will score higher in this category.

Total Possible Points: 100

**Application timeline and submission**

- Monday, March 3, 2024: deadline to submit your final application.
- June 2025: Winners will be notified and mentors assigned to the winning groups.

After the announcement of winners:

- End of September 2025: Halfway progress report. All winning groups will be required to submit a halfway progress report on the status and development of their project proposal.
- January 2026: Final progress report. All winning groups will present a final status of the project during a virtual meeting with the WHF. Ideally, projects should be finalized and ready for implementation.
- WHF Conference. Date to be communicated at a later time. One person from each first place winning group will attend the WHF Conference in Geneva, Switzerland to present their project.

**Contact information**

For any questions, please contact Jacqueline Drexler and Ora Buerkli from the WHF Changemakers at [changemakers@worldhearingforum.org](mailto:changemakers@worldhearingforum.org)

We look forward to receiving your innovative ideas and seeing how you will make a positive impact on ear and hearing care in LMICs.