



## BURNING BRIGHT . . .

Bright Simons currently is Africa's most dynamic technology innovator, development activist and social entrepreneur. In 2016, Fortune magazine ranked him as the 47th Greatest World Leaders, just ahead of Justin Trudeau, the Canadian Prime Minister. He won the Innovator of the year- 2016 at the All Africa Business Leaders Awards for West Africa category and All Africa category respectively. In 2017 he was announced as an Eliasson Prize Laureate and a Tallberg Global Fellow in New York City. He is also a member of the World Economic Forum's Network of Global Agenda Councils and Technology Pioneers communities. He is

also an Ashoka Fellow, TED Fellow, Tech Museum Laureate and a Brain Trust member of the Evian Group at IMD. The African Leadership Institute also conferred him with an Archbishop Desmond Tutu Award.

Bright grew up with two entrepreneurial parents and learned early the value of the entrepreneurial skills he saw within his family. He received a fellowship that took him to Europe to study astrophysics but was quick to realize that the field offered him little opportunity to render the sort of change that he wanted to bring to the world and to the people of his native Ghana. This innate urge led to the development of his first idea to increase the native farmers' capacity to earn more by opening up new markets for them. The plan was to make them suppliers of organic produce to big supermarket chains across U.K. and then Europe. The research that the group carried on maintaining standards eventually led them to develop an

SMS based system for identifying and certifying farm produce from a number of smallholder farmers. But picking up a fruit and wanting to know if it is organically grown is similar to picking up a pack of medicine and seeing if it was properly tested and certified. Eventually it led Bright to shift his focus to the biggest threats of the developing worlds of today and tomorrow – the fast paced growth of Counterfeit or substandard drugs industry.

Counterfeit drugs are believed to be responsible for 20 percent of malaria deaths and viewed as contributing factors to the growing problem of drug resistance. At least 300 to 500 million-malaria episodes are treated annually in sub Saharan Africa and upto one million children die from malaria annually. In 2000, an Interpol survey of major pharmacies in Lagos, Nigeria, discovered

that 80 percent of the medications for sale there were fatal counterfeits. This rate is considerably higher than the World Health Organization's data suggesting up to 30 percent of the medicines sold across the developing world are counterfeit or sub-standard compared to only one percent in developed countries. Counterfeiting is a \$75 billion global industry that resists efforts by Medicine Regulatory Authorities working worldwide to protect public health.

All the impending challenges kept Bright occupied as he toiled harder and harder to find the answer: he eventually developed the mPedigree Network, a system that empowers consumers to instantly verify whether their medicines are safe and original with the special 12-digit code marked on their drug packets. It is the first system anywhere in the world by which consumers and patients can instantly verify the source of a purchased pharmaceutical at no cost, right at the point of purchase, using standard mobile phones and SMS messaging. Now mPedigree has its labels on more than 500 million packets, with clients including pharmaceutical majors like AstraZeneca and Sanofi. The company is currently active in 12 countries across the globe.

But there is no place of complacency for him – no time to stop and relax... as he keeps murmuring to himself... The journey has just begun.... And he has miles to go...

*for his relentless battle against deadly pharmaceutical counterfeiting, giving access to fair medicines to the marginalized and disenfranchised men, women and children across the globe, thus helping them fight the ills of counterfeit drugs.*

