“Scaling up: could Discovery Health’s Vitality programme be modified to support uptake of health insurance amongst low-income households and improve health outcomes?”

Dr. Thomas Brennan
Head of Special Projects, Technology and Innovation, Discovery Health, South Africa

After completing a Bachelors in electrical and computer engineering at the University of Cape Town, Thomas Brennan was awarded the Rhodes Scholarship in 2004. In 2009 he completed his D.Phil. in Biomedical Engineering from the University of Oxford. He then worked for Vodafone developing a mobile-based platform to monitor and support community health workers in South Africa’s public health sector. In 2010, he accepted a Wellcome Trust Post-Doctoral Research Fellowship at the Institute of Biomedical Engineering at the University of Oxford to develop and assess mobile health solutions for monitoring chronic disease in resource-constrained settings. In 2012, he took up a position as Research Engineer at the Laboratory of Computation Physiology at Massachusetts Institute of Technology working on clinical data mining applications. In 2015 he returned to South Africa to take up a leading role in Discovery’s R&D lab where he led the development of Discovery’s Smart Plan and DiabetesCare. He is now a Division Manager in Discovery Health’s Special Projects Team. He has over 15 years of experience in health informatics, biomedical engineering, digital health and machine learning.
Barbara Chesire-Chabbaga  
Lead Consultant, AB Consultants, Kenya

Barbara has actuarial training with 10 years’ experience in the insurance sector. She has gained extensive local and international exposure in applying actuarial techniques to microinsurance with over 8 years’ experience in microinsurance in Kenya. She has worked closely with international development partners to develop and market microinsurance products. She has hands on experience in the market in developing, piloting and scaling up microinsurance products with several lessons learned. As Lead Consultant at AB Consultants, she builds microinsurance capacity through market research, actuarial consulting, strategy development, pricing and product development. She has led projects in health financing, pricing and strategy development, with special focus on the informal sector. She also has interest in InsurTech and is a cofounder in a solution designed to make insurance accessible to those who need it most through technology.

Iulian Circo  
CEO & Co-founder, Triggerise, South Africa

Iulian Circo moved around the world a lot over the last 20 years. First as a relief professional pursuing humanitarian crises and later as a development executive running large field operations for Global Non-Profits. His portfolio during this time included highly complex projects such as leading post-conflict humanitarian missions in places like East Timor or DRC, starting up operations for a UN agency in Somalia or turning around country operations for PSI in Swaziland and Mozambique.
A human rights lawyer with a passion for social impact, this type of work has always been a natural fit. He always felt that incumbent Aid is very risk adverse and slow moving, so with encouragement from colleagues and other development professionals he co-founded Triggerise as a platform to incubate and scale up innovation aimed at solving some of the bigger challenges in global development.

Gayathri Sakthirajan
CEO, People Mutuals, DHAN Foundation, India

Gayathri is the Chief Executive of People Mutuals, the micro insurance and social security initiative of DHAN Foundation, India. People Mutuals works to safeguard the vulnerable and marginal communities from various risks and thus contributes to the overall mission of eliminating poverty. About 1.2 million lives have been protected against the life, health, cattle and crop risks. She designs mutual insurance solutions for the community organisations owned by the excluded communities. Also strategises insurance literacy programmes for the masses as well as professionals.

She has been in the development sector for about 20 years working on the themes of micro finance, micro insurance & pension and development education. She studied agriculture before starting her career.