Do you want to know more about young entrepreneurs from Africa? Do you wonder what innovative solutions we might expect from them for a more sustainable and just world? Or what drives them in their entrepreneurial journey?

In Young African Entrepreneurs Contributing to the Global Goals, 70 African young people take you on their personal entrepreneurial journey. Zimbabwean Candice started an urban-to-rural ultrasound imaging business after she lost her father and brother due to late diagnosis. Toka from South Africa is providing a free parking solution because he found it frustrating that customers had to pay for parking when visiting shops. Ugandan Ruth is offering emergency sex education through technology after she lost her family to HIV. Many more inspiring entrepreneurs will show you their worlds in their own voice.

Through the eyes of young people, we develop a different African narrative from the mainstream stories. It shows how young people are proactive in developing their community, nation and continent. Their contributions are fundamental to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity, and a self-reliant and sustainable environment.

Building Bridges Foundation
The Building Bridges Foundation is a not-for-profit organization established in the Netherlands. Its mission is to foster youth-led solutions from the grassroots through a multi-stakeholder approach. This book is the result of the Road to Nairobi project which ran from August to December 2016. It aimed to empower youth entrepreneurs in Southern and Eastern Africa and influence local and global policymaking.
The Building Bridges Foundation is a not-for-profit organization established in the Netherlands. Its mission is to foster youth-led solutions from the grassroots in order to contribute towards the effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Foundation works not only to bring the voices of youth to the table, but to also empower them. The guiding principle is to unite youth organizations, governments, NGOs, UN entities, the private sector and the media through a multi-stakeholder approach in order to co-create solutions for a more sustainable future. Only by working together with all stakeholders, can we achieve a more just, sustainable and equal world by 2030. In every project local teams are appointed, enabling them to develop useful skills, experience and networks. As a result, the Foundation has laid the groundwork for a youth network that now covers two continents and over twenty countries.

In the first project co-founders Jilt van Schayik and Teun Meulepas cycled from Amsterdam to Cape Town. The goal was to include the opinions and priorities of young people from all walks of life in the political process of creating the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The project reached over 15 million people online, was discussed in the United Nations Security Council and broadcasted on national TV in more than eight countries. The established network of young people continues to be actively involved in the implementation of the SDGs.

However, the road did not end in Cape Town. In its second project the Building Bridges Foundation visited over 80 youth entrepreneurs in Southern and Eastern Africa. The project reached over 15 million people online, was discussed in the United Nations Security Council and broadcasted on national TV in more than eight countries. The established network of young people continues to be actively involved in the implementation of the SDGs.

As a country that looks beyond its borders, the Netherlands is committed to building a safe, stable and prosperous world. From our headquarters in the Hague, to our over 150 embassies and consulates worldwide, our staff is involved in addressing issues such as poverty reduction, climate change, respect for human rights and the rule of law. One of the major challenges we face is the rapidly increasing amount of unemployed youth. Therefore, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands has supported the Road to Nairobi 2016 to identify the major challenges related to this growing issue.

Through its multi-stakeholder platform, the Global Partnership provides practical support and guidance and shares knowledge to boost development impact with a strong country focus to implement internationally agreed effectiveness principles at country level – country ownership, a focus on results, inclusive partnerships and transparency and mutual accountability. During the High Level Meeting of the Global Partnership in Nairobi (30th of Nov - 1st of Dec. 2016), the major issues related to effective development will be discussed across borders, and across sectors. One of the main topics is the economic empowerment of youth. The outcomes of the over 3-3-month ‘Road to Nairobi-journey’ will feed into the discussion around youth during the HLM.

The United Nations SDG Action Campaign is a special initiative of the UN Secretary-General administered by the UN Development Programme and mandated to support the UN system-wide and the Member States on advocacy and public engagement in the SDG Implementation. With a proven track record on innovative and impactful engagement techniques since 2002, the UN SDG Action Campaign intends to serve as a “universal entry point” to create awareness about the Agenda 2030, empower and inspire people across the world to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) while generating political will, to make the Goals attainable by 2030.

Ye! is the global online community of young entrepreneurs to various tools, resources and opportunities to support the growth of their enterprises. The objectives of Ye! are to support youth entrepreneurship, promote ethical entrepreneurial culture and stimulate job creation for youth. The Ye! online platform was launched in December 2014 and the community is already active and growing!
FOREWORD

This book is a collection of stories about the challenges and opportunities young people face when trying to start up a business on the African continent. The stories were gathered in the course of a three-month bus journey from South Africa to Kenya, across eight African countries. On 30 November the bus arrived at the Kenyatta International Convention Centre in Kenya for the High Level Meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. I was honoured to join Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta in welcoming the inspiring young people who were the propelling force behind the project. Their stories and presence at the High Level Meeting provided valuable input and brought the real-world experience of young entrepreneurs into the global policy arena. We need to see more of this type of engagement between young people and policymakers.

As the Netherlands’ Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, I actively advocate the inclusion of and engagement by young people in international development. We as an international community need to listen more to the concerns of younger generations, and act to tackle growing youth related problems like rising unemployment and gender inequality. The Road to Nairobi bus tour, with its unconventional approach, successfully worked with young people to identify challenges to youth entrepreneurship, and resulted in concrete suggestions by young people on how to tackle those issues. We have to keep in mind that innovative solutions to youth-specific challenges are not always found by policymakers alone. Indeed, one of the key policy recommendations that resulted from the bus tour was ‘include youth in decision-making processes in order to create bottom-up sustainable solutions’.

The stories in this book bear witness to the determination of all those young women and men who faced and overcame immense obstacles on their road to success. At the same time, these narratives serve as an inspiring example for generations to come.

Lilianne Ploumen
Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation
THE ROAD TO NAIROBI

Yes, we youth are the future, but also the present! There are 1.8 billion younger worldwide. They represent more than a quarter of the world’s population. But, did you know that more than 85 percent of the youth live in developing countries? And that they often lack opportunities to access quality education, decent employment, affordable and good healthcare, and other socio-economic opportunities? In general, most young people remain ‘role-less’ in their societies and are told to wait for a future for which they are ill prepared. For the successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is key that young people are no longer passive beneficiaries, but become equal and effective partners. After all, it is our future we are building.

On the African continent the situation is even more dire. The African ‘youth bulge’ is often referred to as a ticking time bomb. Currently, half of the African population is under 25 years old with the expectation that this will continue to increase in the coming decades. In an ideal world, this population increase may have a positive labor supply effect, but only if young people have access to quality education and enough employment opportunities are created. Unfortunately, currently most of these youth, especially those in the rural areas, have difficulty accessing quality education. Family circumstances such as serious illness, death or poverty may lead them to drop out of school, giving them few chances of improving their lives. Those who do manage to finish secondary or even tertiary education, face the challenge of finding decent employment.

At the same time, the strong economic growth in many African countries has, unfortunately, not translated into more accessible formal jobs for the youth. The IMF projects that an additional 125 million new jobs are required for the continent in the coming decennia. In an ideal world, this population increase may have a positive labor supply effect, but only if young people have access to quality education, decent employment, affordable and good healthcare, and other socio-economic opportunities? In general, most young people remain ‘role-less’ in their societies and are told to wait for a future for which they are ill prepared. For the successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is key that young people are no longer passive beneficiaries, but become equal and effective partners. After all, it is our future we are building.

In official and media discourses, youth, especially those unemployed, are painted as troublemakers, a risk or even ticking time bombs. The Building Bridges Foundation operates with the understanding that this attitude is counterproductive and is not based on scientific evidence. In fact, in many African countries, like everywhere in the world, youth are taking the lead in creating change. But their voices are often not heard and their stories not broadcasted. The Foundation decided to turn the tables and shine the light on a handful of the amazing social youth entrepreneurs who call Africa their home.

A team of African and European youth, embarked on a “road trip” through eight African countries, namely South Africa, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda and Kenya. The team set out to answer the fundamental questions: what challenges do youth entrepreneurs face on the ground? What can be done to scale-up youth driven solutions for a sustainable future and make them viable? Where are the gaps in current policies and what can be done to create sustainable solutions to enable youth entrepreneurs nationwide? In each country the team visited ten youth entrepreneurs on their home turf before organizing a multi-stakeholder event to get the dialogue on entrepreneurship and opportunities for youth started.

By recording the experiences and lived realities of youth entrepreneurs, the project aimed to not only contribute to policymaking and existing research on entrepreneurship, but also to show the human face of youth entrepreneurship. Why did those youngsters become entrepreneurs? Why are they passionate about their respective industries? How did their families respond? Where do they see themselves in the future? You will read that all entrepreneurs come from diverse backgrounds, live in different conditions and have distinct experiences. But what connects them is their drive for being self-employed and passion for creating a positive change in their country or even on their continent.

This book takes you from the metropolis Johannesburg to rural communities in Northern Zambia, from Uganda’s agricultural sector to Nairobi’s ICT hubs. You will find a short country introduction at the beginning of each chapter which will give you an idea of the economic status and the circumstances youth face in the respective country. It will give you the context needed to understand the, often personal, lives of the youth entrepreneurs we visited. Instead of starting by telling you, the reader, what business these individuals run, we show you the journey through the eyes of the entrepreneur: How do they see themselves? What are they passionate about? How did this translate into a business? At the end of each entrepreneurial story, you will find some company info and a short summary in case you want to know more.

It is only by reading these stories that you will see the world through the eyes of individual youth entrepreneurs. See their immense strength and thirst for success. Entrepreneurship is not for everyone, it is not easy, especially for those in Africa. But with this book we hope you will see the immense potential simmering on the African continent.
South Africa is a diverse country, which is reflected in its economy. Growth is hampere by a volatile political climate and the legacy of Apartheid policies. South Africa, according to the World Bank, is one of the world’s most unequal countries, leading to high unemployment and crime rates, a handicapped education system and structural inequality tied into gender and racial inequality. The youth of South Africa have become increasingly vocal as they worry about how the inequalities will impact their futures.

Youth Population
South Africa has more than 19 million young people between the ages of 15 and 34 (as defined by South Africa’s National Youth Policy), that is 42% of the population according to the United Nations. Strikingly, government statistics show that in 2015 only 6.2 million youth were employed and more than 3.6 million were unemployed, affecting those in the rural areas especially.

Youth Unemployment
The underutilization of the youth in South Africa is detrimental to the country’s economy. The South African economy is relatively diversified with services constituting 65% of GDP while agriculture contributed only 3% according to the South African Reserve Bank. The growth of the country has been slowing down, despite it being considered one of the BRICS. As the economy grows, new innovative solutions must be found to combat youth unemployment. To combat youth unemployment, the government has enacted a number of policies, but these have as of yet failed to significantly reduce the youth unemployment.

Government Action
The lack of significant safety nets and the responsibility to care for their families have left youth to cater for themselves. At the same time, the post-Apartheid government has outlined youth entrepreneurship as a way to create and foster youth employment as outlined in the National Development Plan (NDP) and the New Growth Path (NGP). In 2012, the Small Enterprise Finance Agency (SEFA) was established with the aim to streamline the funding process and simplify the application process. But there remains room for improvement regarding government initiatives.

In the 2015 MY World Global survey led by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Action Campaigns, most people in South Africa worry about good education. Indeed, for many black South Africans, they are the first generation to go to university. Not only because of the prestige it brings, but also because it is considered the only path to decent employment.
I’m a passionate, eccentric and determined person. I left a well-paid job as a financial planner to set up my own business. Under 5 years ago, my daughter fell ill and I didn’t have medical cover. We rushed her to the hospital, but treatment was slow and cost a sizeable chunk of our savings. There and then I decided to work as hard as I can for her and others who are also unable to take out expensive medical covers and insurance by providing them with an alternative service.

One’s background shapes you, but instead of thinking how unfortunate you are, you should face it head on. I didn’t go to university, but did get a professional qualification. It wasn’t bad; I’ve learned by doing and even built up my own business. I put all our savings into the business. But it’s worthwhile to help people avoid the situation that I was in three years ago.

Last year my business partner and I took the leap. In a technical sense, we’re not an insurance company. We design our product, underwritten by larger insurance providers. We handle all the issues so that we ensure we deliver on our promise. What we offer is an offshoot of medical aid schemes. We target the lower-income earners, as they are the ones who are unable to afford insurance. In South Africa, according to statistics only 7.5% of the population has some kind of medical cover. That means that 53 million people have to queue for hours and hours at public hospitals or pay out of their pockets. The big players deliberately neglect these people because the margins are low. When providing medical aid to the lower-income earners, it’s all a numbers game.

One of the ways we market is by targeting companies. Generally, in South Africa, as part of the employment contract, employers offer to pay 50% of your medical scheme. For many employees, their own contribution can be as high as 15% of their income before tax. So these employees opt out, not because they don’t care about their family, but because they can’t afford it. So we talk to executives and tell them, if something happens to your employee, how will you be remembered? As the one who didn’t provide help or as someone who paid for basic medical aid?

We propose to bring down the cost of the medical insurance so that instead of sponsoring 50%, the employer can pay fully and still save money. The benefits are not as comprehensive, but at least it gives access to preventative, primary and hospital care. Currently, we’re assisting 650 employees from one company. It’s a drop in the ocean, but if we’re consistent we can go far.

Being a first-time entrepreneur is not easy. Converting your ideas into practice is easier on paper than in reality. But on the positive side we’re no longer funding from our own pockets. I’m confident that we’re creating a healthier and better South Africa. Healthcare should be a basic right in any nation, yet especially women and children suffer from inadequate care facilities. We incentivize people to focus on prevention as opposed to cure.

When we started the aim was to help people to access healthcare, but as time went on, I realized that the beauty of being an entrepreneur is that in the process you also create jobs for people who otherwise may not have one. At the moment we employ seven young people, whom we have trained from scratch. At the moment we might not be changing the continent, but we are impacting a few families. To me, that’s a success story.

“I’m confident that we’re creating a healthier and better South Africa.”

SDG 3: Good health and well-being
SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth
SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure
SDG 10: Reduced inequalities

COMPANY INFO
• For-profit company
• Founded in 2015
• 2 Co-founders
• Pretoria, Gauteng Province with a branch in Cape Town
• Active in the Financial Services industry
• 7 Employees
• Growth and Establishment stage

BUSINESS PROFILE
Active Financial Services is a financial services provider born out of the inadequacies of quality and affordable insurance cover for healthcare and accident injuries in South Africa among the lower-income earners. They provide flexible medical aid products to corporates for their employees as well as individualised, affordable medical aid for individuals and their families.
Instead of having parking meters they had a camera at the beginning of each street which recognizes all the cars. Your bill gets sent to you. I thought it was cool and kept it in the back of my mind as something that I wanted to bring to South Africa. People all around the world, not just in South Africa, absolutely hate the parking experience. I would rather park 2km away from a mall and walk instead of paying for parking. I don't understand why shoppers have to pay for parking and even then the experience is so horrible. You should be able to go in and out of the parking without having to search for coins in your bag. I decided to provide a solution for this annoyance.

I started gathering number plates to train a program my co-founder had designed. We had to train it to recognize number plates and to read the characters on it. It took us over three months. Every time I went to a mall, I would pay the car guards to use my phone and take as many pictures of numbers plates as they can. We got into trouble a few times. It was difficult because we had to build a system of South African number plates from scratch.

South Africa lacks an entrepreneurial culture. Like in Brazil they have a soccer culture. It's easy to get children involved in soccer because their father played it and their mother is watching it all the time. Kids watch all the videos of Ronaldo, trying to become him. We need entrepreneurial heroes in South Africa. Kids should grow up wanting to be entrepreneurs. Not just Elon Musk or Mark Zuckerberg, but someone who they relate to.

It's difficult to be a young black entrepreneur in South Africa. I can feel the prejudgement when I walk into a meeting. It makes doing business challenging and as a result I've a white partner who does sales. It's a short term solution. By doing more business, hopefully these barriers start breaking down and people will see us black entrepreneurs as persons who provide value in business. I want to create cool value for people using our system. In time, we'll be hiring people and that means creating employment. I'm happy with that. My focus is on problem solving. I want to go global. If I'm successful, I'll become an entrepreneurial hero and that will add to the entrepreneurial culture and hopefully extend out to the society as well. Who knows maybe I'll be the next famous entrepreneur.
I’m an entrepreneur, an opportunist. At first I thought entrepreneurship was not for me, but then I lost my job. I lost my house, my car, everything I had and I thought, I can’t live like this. It was a bad experience, but it enabled me to be where I am today. I stopped looking for work and decided to create opportunities for others instead. That said, being an entrepreneur is not for everyone. It doesn’t happen overnight. It might take a year, a month, if you’re lucky a week. It’s a journey on its own.

Before starting my current business providing IT solutions, I started a few ventures, but they failed because there was no support. My business partner and I were sent from department to department trying to get information. It was frustrating. Then my mother moved to Diepsloot Township and I saw that there were a lot of opportunities there.

Diepsloot Township is portrayed as a very negatives place in South Africa with a lot of reporting on rape and crime. But that’s not really what it is. I looked at the community and found that there are huge gaps that can be solved through technology. I’m an IT graduate so it came naturally to me to look at that. I came up with an idea and put together a great team who shared the same vision and dream.

We wanted to register our business, but we didn’t have the capital for that. We worked for it. The guys went to dig and the women sold clothes. Eventually we raised the capital needed to set up our ICT startup where we develop mobile applications and web solutions to overcome the challenges that we’ve identified in our communities. We conducted our research and found that there were long queues in the public clinics so we developed an app for people to check their queue position from home.

We needed more startup capital, but all the financial institutions said we were a risk. They wanted us to have leverage, but we didn’t have that. Even our business plan and strategies weren’t enough because we were new to the industry. We started Kasi Hive with seven co-founders, but two left as we were unable to generate revenue quickly. At the moment we don’t have a salary, but we get stipends.

When we started we just had one desktop, which was challenging, especially for an ICT startup. Then the city of Johannesburg was running a pilot for young entrepreneurs. We made it to the top 5, got exposure and received support from IBM. That was the push we needed to move forward. Through their training and mentorship, we’ve been able to grow. At an event during the Global Entrepreneurship Week, we took the first place and we realized that something was really happening.

I’m so excited, we’re still starting this, but we’re so passionate. Sometimes it can be difficult to make decisions, but then we brainstorm and come up with solutions for our problems. As the CEO I occasionally have to make quick decisions. In those cases, I follow the principle: if it’s beneficial for the company, for the partners, then we have to do it.

We also work with universities and the youth. They are the future of South Africa. If we’ve more companies, there would not be so much poverty and unemployment. I see myself as a job creator. We want to hire at least 20 people in the coming year and also want to expand to other townships. Every time we enter a community, we’ll change it for the better with our solutions. We’re innovating and helping our community to prosper.

"If we have more companies, there will not be so much poverty and unemployment."
sensitive: if it’s too hot or cold, or if there is too much wind, they will die. One week it was really cold, so I had to move the chickens into the house. It was a crazy time, but they all survived. After this experience and our successful pilot I wanted to move and expand. But space was limited. I live in a poverty stricken area, so according to the law the local government had to give me part of the community land for farming. They didn’t really want to. I’m now here, but any day they can kick me off the land so it’s difficult to invest a lot. There are days I just want to sell the chickens, but when I wake up I decide to keep on pushing. There are some opportunities in South Africa, but most of them are in the cities. I decided to try my luck with the Mandela Washington Fellowship and I was even given a grant! With part of the money I bought 468 layer chickens. It’s always a race against the clock to collect their eggs otherwise the layers will break them. So I employed a community member to oversee them.

It’s important to me to set an example for the local youth. They all know me, I had nothing, but they can see that at least I’m trying. Employing someone was huge; it showed we can actually create our own employment. There are only 11 formal jobs in town so most people just spend their time sitting on the street. The youth should regain their hope, see they are not forgotten and make use of the resources that are available locally. We can’t keep blaming Apartheid, we need to focus and create our own future.

In the beginning it was tough being a black female entrepreneur, especially because agriculture is still dominated by men. At the animal auctions only 2 percent are female and you see them thinking: “she’s young, what is she doing here?” We, female farmers, need to show that we’re doing our work perfectly, even better than men.

My dream for the business is to grow, to supply nationally and to export. I hope to have 4,000 chickens by next year, all hand controlled. Poultry is very strict, but I don’t want to rely on computers because then we forget to nurture the chickens. They should be free range so that you can enjoy fresh chicken. You can taste the difference.

“Employing someone was huge; it showed we can actually create our own employment.”

INNOCENTIA MAJUBERE MAINE (28)
FOUNDER - MIS POULTRY FARM (PTY) LTD

I started my poultry farm here in Vredefort where I was born and bred. After I graduated from high school my career choices were all over the place. I got bored easily and didn’t want to constantly follow instructions. Then in 2014 I followed a program where they encouraged me to start my own thing. I was scared since I’ve no business background. But I took the plunge and now I’m no longer bored. It’s a great feeling to wake up every morning knowing that you’re going to do what you love.

My father informally held pigs and cattle. I loved joining him to take care of the animals. It gives me joy to raise something; you know how it starts and see it all the way till the end product. I wanted to do the same. I decided on poultry because it’s the easiest to get started with. Using the internet, I was able to find everything I needed. Then I learned how to care best for the chickens by doing.

I do what I do because I don’t want to regret anything in life. When I started, the chickens were in the backyard. They’re very sensitive: if it’s too hot or cold, or if there is too much wind, they will die. One week it was really cold, so I had to move the chickens into the house. It was a crazy time, but they all survived. After this experience and our successful pilot I wanted to move and expand. But space was limited. I live in a poverty stricken area, so according to the law the local government had to give me part of the community land for farming. They didn’t really want to. I’m now here, but any day they can kick me off the land so it’s difficult to invest a lot. There are days I just want to sell the chickens, but when I wake up I decide to keep on pushing. There are some opportunities in South Africa, but most of them are in the cities. I decided to try my luck with the Mandela Washington Fellowship and I was even given a grant! With part of the money I bought 468 layer chickens. It’s always a race against the clock to collect their eggs otherwise the layers will break them. So I employed a community member to oversee them.

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I’m the first person in my family to work in the health industry. I worked as a lab technician and was fascinated by clinical trials. I’ve some nurses in the family, but because I was the first to be involved in medicine, the expectations were high. However, I wanted to learn more, I wanted more responsibility and I wanted to be my own boss in the clinical trial industry.

It’s been difficult for my family to accept me as an entrepreneur. I went to school and got a job with a good salary and benefits. I was supporting them financially. When I decided that I wanted to leave and start my own thing, my mother wasn’t happy. It means that I can’t support them because I’m not making any money. I understand where they’re coming from and it hurts that I put them through this. To them it’s like I’ve gone backwards in life. They don’t see the bigger picture.

There’s not enough medical research coming out of Africa. While I loved working in the medical field, I began to see gaps on the clinical research market. I wanted to accelerate that research, providing capacity to health organizations and empowering communities for working with people directly from there. Unfortunately, it was challenging doing this on my own. So when I met my future co-founder, I realized she had the same vision and we explored a partnership. When she got a lead and premises, I contacted her and we teamed up. Together we’re changing the landscape and researching common for local pharmaceutical inserts.

We’re passionate about clinical research and have been pushing to make CRISMO work. We started in January and have established partnerships and secured two clinical trials. But we didn’t have a lot of capital to start with, so we’re still looking for funding to source some additional equipment, which is quite expensive. We work lean, not everything is state of the art but we make sure we comply with health and research standards.

This industry is predominantly white ruled and that makes things difficult. This has to do with our history. You need high levels of education in this industry and that wasn’t easy for black people during Apartheid. My mother wasn’t happy. It means that I can’t support them because I’m not making any money. I understand where they’re coming from and it hurts that I put them through this. To them it’s like I’ve gone backwards in life. They don’t see the bigger picture.

Once we get this site up and running, we’ll expand across the country. We’re developing capacity for our South Africa. We need each province to be able to generate research and reach the disadvantaged. I want to help people. I do community development work but I want to do more. I’m a believer. I have to keep going. There’s something inside me which keeps me strong.

"We wanted to accelerate medical research in Africa, providing capacity to health organizations and empowering communities.”

SDG 3: Good health and well-being
SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth
SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
SDG 10: Reduced inequalities

SUPPORT: Johannesburg, Gauteng
COMPANY INFO
• For-profit company
• Founded in 2014
• 2 Co-founders
• Johannesburg, Gauteng
• Health industry
• 2 Employees
• Launch and Pilot stage

BUSINESS PROFILE
CRISMO works in collaboration with public hospitals to offer multidisciplinary clinical research services. Founded in 2014, they work on improving capacity in South African health research by creating opportunities for health care professionals and patients to participate in clinical research. In addition, CRISMO is upskilling health professionals, researchers and support staff from disadvantaged backgrounds.
I come from the second fastest growing township in South Africa. I left when I went to university to get my electrical engineering diploma. I’ve always had these 5-year dreams. I see myself on stage influencing and speaking to people from all over the world. So I wondered how I could leave a legacy, something that benefits other people. I’m creative and chose the road that is less walked. My family didn’t approve initially of me quitting my job because I was putting the bread on the table. Whereas I’m more focused on the impact I’m having in the green energy and recycling field.

In Africa about 600 million people cannot afford electricity. I thought to myself, there must be something we can do. At first I created energy efficient lights and solar bulbs out of discarded cans. It wasn’t good enough. I just couldn’t get it to be good enough. So it never hit the market. However, I did work out two ways to influence the energy behavior.

One problem is that people don’t want to change their behavior because there is not enough awareness or it’s not interactive enough. Everyone has a smartphone nowadays, so I came up with an energy efficient game that teaches people how to save electricity. I already have the prototype and I’m developing the actual product.

Besides teaching, we also support other green entrepreneurs. We started this online “flea market” where entrepreneurs who produce green products can sell their eco-friendly products. At the same time, it also acts as a crowdsourcing platform to assist starting green entrepreneurs. If we pool together all ideas, and people get funded, something can happen. People will have access to eco-friendly products and understand its importance.

To do this I’ll have to move to Johannesburg. Entrepreneurship is thriving there and there is more ICT support. But mostly I need to focus on the company wherever it is located. I’ll need to conquer my limitations. If I want to become a global entrepreneur so that I can rub my shoulders with the giants around the world. I think it’s possible. But the road of entrepreneurship is lonely. I started with a partner, but our visions didn’t align. So I decided to do this alone for the moment. It’s not easy. I spend all my hours working on the company and make long days. I’m not only doing this for me, but also for my unborn babies.

“I enjoy being an entrepreneur, not just for me, but also for my unborn babies.”

SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy
SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure
SDG 13: Climate action

COMPANY INFO
• For-profit company
• Founded in 2014
• Bloemfontein, Free State
• 1 Founder
• IT & Technology industry
• 2 Employees
• Seed and Development stage

BUSINESS PROFILE
Sisanda Energy Lab was established in 2014 to eradicate energy poverty in Africa through digital energy. They have developed two platforms to do this. Firstly, with the mobile energy saving game EED, they aim to teach people on how to save electricity in a fun and efficient way. Secondly, through Igniteefficiency, an online crowdfunding space, where people can fund green initiatives.

MBANGISO MABASO
FOUNDER - SISANDA ENERGY LAB
IGNITEEFFICIENCY.COM

I come from the second fastest growing township in South Africa. I left when I went to university to get my electrical engineering diploma. I’ve always had these 5-year dreams. I see myself on stage influencing and speaking to people from all over the world. So I wondered how I could leave a legacy, something that benefits other people. I’m creative and chose the road that is less walked. My family didn’t approve initially of me quitting my job because I was putting the bread on the table. Whereas I’m more focused on the impact I’m having in the green energy and recycling field.

In Africa about 600 million people cannot afford electricity. I thought to myself, there must be something we can do. At first I created energy efficient lights and solar bulbs out of discarded cans. It wasn’t good enough. I just couldn’t get it to be good enough. So it never hit the market. However, I did work out two ways to influence the energy behavior.

One problem is that people don’t want to change their behavior because there is not enough awareness or it’s not interactive enough. Everyone has a smartphone nowadays, so I came up with an energy efficient game that teaches people how to save electricity. I already have the prototype and I’m developing the actual product.

Besides teaching, we also support other green entrepreneurs. We started this online “flea market” where entrepreneurs who produce green products can sell their eco-friendly products. At the same time, it also acts as a crowdsourcing platform to assist starting green entrepreneurs. If we pool together all ideas, and people get funded, something can happen. People will have access to eco-friendly products and understand its importance. It’s a matter of educating people about this and we have to do this in Africa. But we need to overcome people’s adversity towards technology. People don’t like to buy online and data is very expensive here.

Imagine if we could have something like an energy premier league. The house that saves the most energy, gets the cup. That would be cool. We need to be creative to handle this situation. But it’s challenging to find the right people to do the work. Essentially I would like to beat women. There is this African saying: “If you can feed a woman you’ll feed the whole nation.” My mom was a strong woman and I want to assist so that young mothers so that they can have an income and raise their kids at the same time. With everything I do, I want to be innovative. If it’s not, then it’s not me. Everything the company does should be relevant to what is happening in our country. I have big dreams. I want to start up hundreds of entrepreneurs showcasing their products on our platform and develop an energy game for the Xbox. Going big is the only way we can influence global energy and change people’s minds.

To do this I’ll have to move to Johannesburg. Entrepreneurship is thriving there and there is more ICT support. But mostly I need to focus on the company wherever it is located. I’ll need to conquer my limitations. If I want to become a global entrepreneur so that I can rub my shoulders with the giants around the world. I think it’s possible. But the road of entrepreneurship is lonely. I started with a partner, but our visions didn’t align. So I decided to do this alone for the moment. It’s not easy. I spend all my hours working on the company and make long days. I’m not only doing this for me, but also for my unborn babies.

“If you can feed a woman you’ll feed the whole nation.” My mom was a strong woman and I want to assist so that young mothers so that they can have an income and raise their kids at the same time. With everything I do, I want to be innovative. If it’s not, then it’s not me. Everything the company does should be relevant to what is happening in our country. I have big dreams. I want to start up hundreds of entrepreneurs showcasing their products on our platform and develop an energy game for the Xbox. Going big is the only way we can influence global energy and change people’s minds.

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“I enjoy being an entrepreneur, not just for me, but also for my unborn babies.”

SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy
SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure
SDG 13: Climate action

COMPANY INFO
• For-profit company
• Founded in 2014
• Bloemfontein, Free State
• 1 Founder
• IT & Technology industry
• 2 Employees
• Seed and Development stage

BUSINESS PROFILE
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It was difficult to get started. All of us were unemployed so we didn’t have any money as startup investment. We sat down and brainstormed how we were going to do it. At the time the local government was inviting business proposals. They saw our proposal, liked it and they helped us to purchase a green tunnel and a hydroponics system. It’s a new system and there are no mentors, so we’re learning from the internet. It’s a challenge.

It’s not easy to run an agricultural business in South Africa, because accessing the market is challenging. The big companies make it very difficult for us to distribute our tomatoes. They have a long list of regulations, but no support or mentorship to help us meet those. It’s also difficult to find suitable employees. We want to hire from the community, but they are not trained in hydroponics. At the moment, we’ve one tunnel with 900 plants. Each plant will give us two crates of tomatoes, so around 90,000 tomatoes! We want to bring more tunnels to Kwaggafontein and create more employment and change our community and eventually South Africa as a whole.

In South Africa, we need to invest in other people’s lives. Most of my peers quit education after high school. They go from job to job and spend most of their time on the streets, they are stuck. I want to show the community that they can be successful as well. I’ve developed an exhibition program on my own to promote further education among youth, get them involved and excited again. For my community, I want them to become interested in this project. We’re creating a legacy for the community so that the youth won’t suffer like we did.

The best thing we can do is to show by leading. I’m an innovative business person. I don’t want to stay just in agriculture, but I want to own a range of private companies. I’m not in a hurry, but I see myself as that successful well-known business woman. I’m the only woman in my team, it’s challenging to work with men, that is why young women need to be nurtured. Eventually I’ll conquer the world through my hard work, persistence, patience and commitment. I’m going far.

“From a young age I already wanted to own myself; in grade 11 I started my first business.”

Joyce Mahlangu (23)
Co-founder & Administrative Director - Isikhumbuzo Ecological Farming Group

Joyce Mahlangu was born and bred in Kwaggafontein. Her primary school was on one side and her high school on the other. Now she’s studying Logistics Management at the University of Johannesburg. It was eye opening; I went from a remote and underdeveloped location to a place where everyone had a laptop and was informed. I’m going to get a formal certificate, but my passion lies in business. My first business was in supplements and vitamins. Now, I’m running an ecological tomato farm with greenhouses. At home everyone questioned me why I was doing this; I should focus on studying. But from a young age I already wanted to own myself.

I didn’t want to ask my parents to buy things, to pay for a haircut and all of that. My parents can’t control how I live. To them I’ll always be a child, even when I’m 30. At first they thought I was mad and they told me to stop being an entrepreneur. But as time went on they realized that this is me; that they can’t change me. I’ll do everything for my business. I even spent transport money on the business instead of going to school. You know it will create problems, but you still do it.

My current business started only after I followed an agricultural management course. A friend told me about it. Then I met my business partners. Even though I study logistics, I’m passionate about agriculture; it’s business. Agriculture needs energy, it needs focus and you get drained from the sun. I love it.

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“From a young age I already wanted to own myself; in grade 11 I started my first business.”
Imagine: your mother has scraped together money to buy you a microwave. Now you have to either leave it and hope it will still be there or take it on the bus home. These worries are unnecessary, but add stress and are time-consuming. So I rented storage space, hired a car and sublet small proportions to individual students to make pocket money.

After I dropped out of university because I couldn’t pay my tuition fee, I let the business be dormant and went to work for an IT startup. Until I became more aware of the potential of the idea and the extent to which I could scale it. It’s a very simple operation with a potential market of half a million students. I registered the company and a few months later my partner joined me. We’ve been full-time on it since May 2016; before then we did it after work. We implement a lean approach to problem-solving.

Our solution helps students save on the costs of shipping or renting storage space by themselves. We cut the cost by half or even three-quarters. That’s money students can use for something else. In our pilot stage we served 150 students at four different universities. We envision to work together with bursary schemes to create a win-win situation for the students, the university and us.

The social aspect is everything to me. Profitability isn’t our biggest priority. We’re trying to solve too many problems by itself. It’s my responsibility as a black youth to create change and make our society better. So we’re looking for other opportunities within the student sector especially since storage is seasonal.

My philosophy is that the company should be cash flow positive within the first six to twelve months. The idea should be sustainable; not needing constant outside funding. Investment is only part of the expansion plan. Money is tight, but we manage. Even though it sometimes means waking up at 3 am to cycle to a networking event that starts at 7 am.

It’s hard work. In the coming months, we aim to serve several thousand students, work with corporate partners and be present in all 22 South African institutions. And then expansion. As much as we are South Africans trying to solve a South African problem, we want to spread beyond our borders. We, Africans, need to innovate from inside. We need to empower one another.

“Business is a tool. How I’m impacting people’s lives, that’s the sum of my life.”

SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure
SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities
SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production

COMPANY INFO
- For-profit company
- Founded in 2015
- 2 Co-founders
- Pretoria, Gauteng Province
- Logistics & Transportation industry
- 2 Full-time employees and 12 representatives
- Growth and Establishment stage

BUSINESS PROFILE
Storage Wars is a student centered storage company aiming to provide affordable solutions for short period storage. The team of four is a holistic package with pick-up and delivery of the client’s goods. They have digitized the entire storage solution with everything being done online.
Lack of access to funding
“We have approached the financial institutions everyone says we are a risk. One financial institution wanted to know how much are we contributing to leverage. But we’re a start-up, we cannot pay 20% leverage.”

Expensive to set up business
“There are a lot of young people who have ideas, they’re really strong ideas that are so powerful. But you’re unemployed. How will you pay to open a bank account, to register a company it’s R400, to apply for certificates? It’s quite expensive. And you are unemployed.”

Lack of government support
“They need to change. The government offices are supposed to guide you. People should be passionate, help you to track down the progress. But they send you from office to office. They have to help me to get land, but now I’m investing money without knowing if I will be able to run my business next month.”

Not valued in formal employment
“I never saw myself as an entrepreneur until 2012. I had lots of ideas, but when I told the manager and others they didn’t take me seriously. So I decided to take my ideas and start my own company, conquer my own world.”

Lack of mentorship
“We should value intergenerational conversations and have mentorships, but that doesn’t happen.”

Entrepreneurship not part of mainstream education
“The education system does not promote entrepreneurship. The education system does not promote entrepreneurship. We need to change this. The youth should be informed.”

Lack of entrepreneurial culture
“We need more Black entrepreneurial heroes. Youth need to be able to identify with people who are like them.”

One-size fits all business programs
“Most programs and incubators are not designed by entrepreneurs. The people presenting don’t understand what we entrepreneurs go through. We need practical teaching by fellow entrepreneurs, not CEOs, to move forward.”

Challenges faced by youth entrepreneurs

Lack of access to funds
Expensive to set up business
Lack of government support
Not valued in formal employment
Lack of mentorship
Entrepreneurship not part of mainstream education
Lack of entrepreneurial culture
One-size fits all business programs

Solutions for the road ahead

Joyce: “We need practical teaching by fellow entrepreneurs, not CEOs, to move forward.”

Jessey: “More incubation programs in the less advanced parts of the country with reasonable and accommodating criteria.”

Xola: “We need an entrepreneurial culture, a critical mass. We need more black entrepreneurial heroes. Youth need to be able to identify with people who are like them.”

Mbangiso: “Mentors should step up and provide assistance to those who need it.”

Vusumuzi: “Banks can create a different loan system. They should invest in the youth.”

Innocentia: “We need to change how things are run. The government offices should guide entrepreneurs. They should be people who are passionate, who care.”

Paul: “We need an entrepreneurial culture, a critical mass. We need more Black entrepreneurial heroes. Youth need to be able to identify with people who are like them.”

Major: “We need practical things when going to programs and incubators. The people presenting don’t understand what we go through. They are not entrepreneurs. We should learn from entrepreneurs.”

Jennifer: “The government can subsidize registration costs. It’s expensive for an unemployed person to pay and there are a lot of procedures.”

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Mozambique has a turbulent history. The country’s economic growth has been negatively impacted by the ending of Portuguese colonialism and the subsequent civil war. As a result, the quality of life of Mozambicans is low according to the United National Industrial Development Organization. The unemployment rate is high, the level of education obtained low and structural inequalities between the urban centers and the rural hinterlands are high. Mozambicans distant and recent past as well as current political and economic tensions have impacted the mindsets of the population, especially the youth.

Youth Population
Mozambique has a big youth population. Despite the fact that Mozambique’s economy has been growing since the 1990s, youth unemployment remains an issue. In the rural areas youth unemployment is around 8%, whereas in the urban areas it is as high as 36% according to UN statistics. Yet, these statistics hide the reality that close to 80% of the youth are underemployed. This is reinforced and exacerbated by the underrepresentation of youth in decision-making platforms and institutions.

Youth Unemployment
Youth are especially disadvantaged by the current education system. A significant proportion of youth drop out of primary and secondary school. Those youth often end up in Mozambique’s agricultural sector. According to the United Nations Capital Development Fund, seven out of ten of the working population is active in agriculture. Yet, agriculture only contributes a third to Mozambique’s GDP. Economic growth in Mozambique needs to be stimulated through an improved education system, more job opportunities and the promotion of youth entrepreneurship.

Government Action
Mozambican’s political leaders have attempted to empower youth to take the entrepreneurial track. From 2015 to 2019 the Mozambican government will work on improving access to education and developing policies for employment. At the same time, the Entrepreneurship Curriculum Programme which was piloted in 2007, will be integrated into the national education strategy and implemented across the country. Though youth entrepreneurship is considered a solution for the high youth unemployment and underemployment, other constraints will hamper the economy’s natural growth.

In the 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Action Campaign MY World Global survey, most Mozambicans indicated they want better education. Indeed, for many aspiring youth entrepreneurs the lack of formal and business education creates barriers. Better job opportunities comes fourth after better healthcare and protection against crime and violence, indicating that the Mozambican government has to balance its various priorities and young entrepreneurs will have to fend for themselves.
When I was growing up I wanted to be an architect, but in Mozambique there’s no money in architecture. So I did computer engineering. In my first year we started with 80 students and ended with 20. People ran away, not because it is difficult, but because people say it’s difficult. It’s the same with entrepreneurship, people are too scared to start.

While I was at university, a friend approached me to design a website for his company. I agreed even though I didn’t know how to do that. I looked it up online, read articles, watched tutorials and then designed the website. In the end his business didn’t open and I didn’t get paid. When I graduated, I didn’t have a job.

Another friend was working for a state company and offered me some work. At that point things were still informal. I wasn’t registered, but I decided I wanted to grow this business and spoke to my parents about it. My mother encouraged me to formalize it. My father motivates me and shares his experiences of building up a company from scratch. My parents wanted me to work for them, but they still support me.

I registered my business and decided to focus on growing it. I was running a one woman show. But the more contracts I got, the more secure I felt. It was a difficult time. I had to become more mature to keep up. I used to be a party girl, but that doesn’t work in business, so I stopped and lost some friends. But, I’m happy I pushed through. My business is still running five years later. Being a young woman in business isn’t always easy. Once, after a meeting with some businessmen, one of them went to my husband, and tried to get him to exclude me from future negotiations. It was shocking for my husband but not for me. He said, that if it were him, he would’ve dropped entrepreneurship. He sees how resilient I have to be to keep going.

Gender is still a big issue in Mozambique. When I go to a client I’m a businessperson. I have technical knowledge and I’ll show them that. If I was a man, my business probably would be more successful today. The more barriers I break, the stronger I feel. My business is growing, I’ve a team now and I’ve managed to open a branch in my home town, Beira. That wasn’t easy to do especially since I’m not there managing the day-to-day business. But it makes me feel good to take home a little of what I’m building.

When I was young, my parents introduced me to entrepreneurship. But even then, I couldn’t imagine myself here, with a business and a branch in Beira. I want to make it work. I don’t come from a wealthy background so I want to build something that helps others. I’m here because I’m passionate about creating new things.

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“I don’t come from a wealthy background so I had to do this myself. I wanted to prove that I could do this.”
I consider myself an entrepreneurial champion in Mozambique. But I can tell you, I didn’t have half the hurdles of an average Mozambican. It wouldn’t be 10 times harder. My parents weren’t rich but they were able to afford private school, studies abroad and travels. Before any startup ecosystem existed, my team and I, won all the competitions we entered with our model to give job access to the disadvantaged. Then we stopped competing locally. Now we focus on promoting Mozambican youth entrepreneurship. You have to decide, do you want to win or do you want to enable others?

That’s why I started. Mozambique has a gap in labor market information. The largest newspaper sells 10 to 15 thousand copies a day for a population of around 26 million. That’s a huge discrepancy and most job ads don’t reach the people. We saw technology as a way to democratize the information in the labor market. We’re really hooked on this thought that tech can have a huge social impact without any considerable investment. It’s addictive because you feel so powerful.

When I quit my job to start this I struggled. I was earning less than a fifth of what I was used to. But I put this in the perspective of a young Mozambican who might be the first graduate in their family and has a lot of pressure to get a job to pay the bills. How would they cope with the pressure and a market which isn’t enabling? It won’t happen. So I’ve to step up and help create an entrepreneurial culture.

When business reached critical mass, my partners and I adopted the Robin Hood Model. We’re not stealing from the rich to give to the poor. Our online job board follows a cross subsidization business model, we sell value added services to big companies and we use the revenues from that to be sustainable and offer free services to small enterprises, academic institutions and charities. We want to make sure we reach people, so that they can access the labor market.

I worked in big corporates and wanted to get to the top of the ladder. I was doing really well. I had everything you could imagine. Then I gave it up to become a social entrepreneur. It’s in my DNA, my dad is an entrepreneur and my mother works on social projects. It’s their influence. They taught me that you can have the good things in life while also helping people who never had the chance to dream. I see the gap between poor and the rich widening and I saw technology as a catalyst for development and change.

“...I saw the gap between poor and the rich widening and I saw technology as a catalyst for development and change.”

There are many names for what I do, whether you call me a change maker or social entrepreneur. I think this is an attitude towards life. I sold my car to give our company a loan. It’s hard to replicate the feeling that you have when you find that there are people who are taking advantage of something that you created to improve their lives. If I was offered a dream job I wouldn’t take it. If this business goes south, I’ll build another one. I wouldn’t do anything else.

Although we’re a modern tech company, we use low tech like USSD to reach lower income communities. We want the needy to access the labor market, so we created a product with tech they can use even without internet access. I want to give people the opportunity to work, to bring food to their homes. I want people to feel considered in their job and progress in their careers. But I don’t yet know if we’re giving them that. What I know is we’re making an impact. People get jobs. We’re now working on measuring that impact in a more structured way.

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UX is a company focused on creating technology for social development (ICT4D). The company is divided into two business units. The Technical Consultancy Unit, works with public sector organisations on governance projects, financial inclusion, and a number of other projects. While the Product Development Unit, acts primarily in the areas of employment, education and financial inclusion. Emprego is an online portal with a blog that disseminates local labour market information. Biscate uses USSD technology to connect skilled workers in the informal sector with potential employers.
After university I needed to gain more knowledge in the IT industry. In Mozambique it’s very expensive and it takes very long to get an international certification in Microsoft or Cisco. So I went to India, it’s the Holy Grail for a computer engineer like me and it’s relatively cheap. In one year I finished up to the highest level. While I was there I met people from all over the world. And these guys kept telling stories of the best things of their countries and how they’ve contributed to it. I kept quiet; I didn’t have any stories to share. But it made me determined that I had to do something.

When I came back, I realized many of my IT friends had similar problems in terms of upskilling themselves. I decided to open my own business to make sure that young graduates don’t have to leave Mozambique. I provide them with quality training at home for a somewhat affordable price. At first I did the training as a hobby. Then I realized the potential and went on it full-time.

I’m lucky; my parents don’t dictate what I should do. In the beginning, they were not supportive, but that didn’t stop me. I worked really hard for the first months, then I showed them the results and sold them the vision. Now my mom is a minority shareholder. But don’t get me wrong, my parents are not supporting me financially. So far I’ve not even received a penny from the company. I’m showing them and the board members my sacrifice. I knew that it was going to be painful, but it was worse. My mother even said to me: “we don’t want to see you die, if your dream is killing you, let it go.”

I was working long hours with no income, no help and no social life. That’s when I decided to have a structure; it was crazy for me. I got some board members and it was scary because in Mozambique the board often take over the company. But it didn’t happen and sometimes I wonder how I retained my position. I’m 25 with little experience.

Our model is very different. Every time I approach someone and tell them we’re taking a high-end course to the masses, compared to our competitors everyone is enthusiastic. My parents invested US$25,000 in my training and because of that, I was able to train 50 people in the first eight months. It’s great to see the result of your work every day and keep on growing.

Most Mozambicans can’t afford expensive training overseas. We’re charging about US$500 for our courses. It’s still expensive, but we’re working on ways to integrate our course into the university curriculum. What we are doing hasn’t been done in Mozambique. It’s still expensive, but I’m taking training and mass market it. I could easily sell it for much more to the corporates, but that won’t impact Mozambique.

Education is very important to me. My parents instilled that kind of culture in me. I believe in that as well and want to bring this to my country. But it’s also about changing the corporate culture. In Mozambique people don’t realize how impactful information can be or how new technologies can help them advance. That’s why in my business I want everyone to have access to information and be part of decision-making. My business can only be a success if everyone in it acts sustainable.

I’m creating change while living the dream of being an entrepreneur.

“I’m creating change while living the dream of being an entrepreneur.”

SIDES DA COSTA ARLINDO CHISSAQUE (25)
CO-FOUNDER & GENERAL MANAGER - BSA BRAINSTORM ACADEMY
WWW.BSA.CO.MZ

COMPANY INFO
• Social enterprise
• Founded in 2016
• 2 Co-founders
• Maputo
• Education industry
• 13 Employees
• Growth and Establishment stage

BUSINESS PROFILE
BSA Brainstorm Academy provides training in Information Technologies (ICT) and Communication for International certification. They aim to prepare Mozambican youth for the job market by offering high quality and affordable courses. The aim is to provide short-term intensive courses with guidance for examinations and mock exams, which are currently lacking on the market.

SUPPORT
SDG 4: Quality education
SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth
SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities
We googled and found that there are caves in Mozambique where there is guano, bat feces. It’s a type of fertilizer that is naturally available in the country. You can use it in various ways in the garden or for pastoral plantation. Between 1960 and 1980 guano was extracted, but then the civil war started. The Portuguese were kicked out and the knowledge of commercializing the product as well as the interest in it disappeared. There were local people extracting the guano for their personal use, but that was it. We decided to go to the caves and examine the potential.

There are actually a lot of caves around Mozambique. Some are easier to reach than others. But because of the current civil war conflict and the fact that some of the caves are literally in the forests and the bush, we don’t know if they’ve been destroyed or what state they are in. We can’t access them until the tensions are lifted, but we did visit some that are outside the war zone.

We went in very deep to look for the most ancient guano as it gives the highest quality. It takes about 100 years for guano to reform once you take it off. Over years the poo forms, layer after layer. When you go deep into the cave, there’s no oxygen so it’s difficult to extract. One cave has around 100,000 tons of guano, that’s about 20 years of extraction for commercialization. There’s great potential.

Currently, we’re about to hit the market, but we want to get our mining certificate first. There’s no competition in Mozambique so we want to do things properly and take the time needed. We need to go through a few approval stages and there’s always the chance that your certificate gets denied, but then later someone connected to a politician has copied your business plan and got the certificate. But for us it should be fine because we’re working closely with the community to ensure that they also benefit.

It’s important for us to provide benefits to the local market. So we target that at least 20% of our production goes to the local market. Not all farmers will be interested in our fertilizer because they use their own animal droppings. But if they do use ours it will make the soil produce more and improve the quality of their product. That way we can impact the agribusiness and change Mozambique. If this business fails or stops working, I’m good at identifying new business opportunities and sustaining myself. I love being an entrepreneur and challenge myself to make it a success and earn money in the process.

Identifying business opportunities is second nature to me. My entrepreneurial journey started while I was still in university studying electrical engineering. My first venture was a bit of a negative experience. My friends and I participated in a World Bank competition. We did a business plan around paying electricity via SMS. We won funding, negotiated with and got the green light from an electricity company when someone stole our idea and technology. It was devastating, but it didn’t stop me. We launched a few more technological initiatives that were doing well.

But then the crisis hit Mozambique. Technology is my business, but it’s also an area which is prone to be hit first when companies are investing less and focusing more on the basic industries. We realized that there’s a lot of focus on agribusinesses. So we researched the various possibilities. For machinery there are already suppliers and it’s expensive to produce here. We looked at seeds, but there’s no certainty of quality unless we harvest the seedlings and that’s a long process. Then we stumbled upon fertilizer.

We googled and found that there are caves in Mozambique where there is guano, bat feces. It’s a type of fertilizer that is naturally available in the country. You can use it in various ways in the garden or for pastoral plantation. Between 1960 and 1980 guano was extracted, but then the civil war started. The Portuguese were kicked out and the knowledge of commercializing the product as well as the interest in it disappeared. There were local people extracting the guano for their personal use, but that was it. We decided to go to the caves and examine the potential.

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Being in Mozambique as a Brazilian is easy. There’s a lot of opportunities here that don’t exist in Brazil. Mozambique has only been an independent country for 40 years so everything lacks. I can bring concepts and things from Brazil that don’t exist here yet. I can create a bit of difference. My parents both have their own companies so it’s natural for me to go down this path. Doing business here’s not that difficult, especially if you’ve got a local partner.

After I came to Mozambique I set up my own business managing communications and marketing. One day I was approached to join a new business venture. One of the other potential co-founders argued that social projects won’t work when people are hungry. The problem of food is something I can really see. People are working on the streets, they’ve got a lot of problems because they don’t eat. I thought to myself if I want to stay here for a long time, the best I can do is to try resolve this problem.

The guy who approached me is running a NGO which hands out soup every night to street children.

“They don’t make any money so this is a solution for that to become sustainable. In Mozambique there’s also a food crisis. There are a lot of small producers, but their produce rots because they don’t reach the market in time. Yet, the Mozambican market is flooded with food products from South Africa. We are paying double or triple for our imported tomatoes while the local tomatoes rot. Or we consume vegetables that were farmed with a lot of chemicals. But going local is not something Mozambicans appreciate or care about. It’ll take time to convince the locals. So we’ll first start marketing to expats and those who’ve stayed here for a long time. After that we want to create something that appeals to children through school campaigns.

The idea is that we provide baskets to clients with different vegetables and ‘sopa’ recipes. Soup is an important part of Mozambican culture. In almost every restaurant you’ll find that people have soup before the meal. At the same time, soup is a poor man’s meal. It’s very nutritious and rich with meat, starch and vegetables in it. So we want to make it pretty and more high class.

We want to be a local solution staying true to local traditions. We looked for local producers and thought we had found the one. We were ready to launch when we found out that our selected producer had their farm on land that was used as a trash yard. They didn’t care where the food came from or what had been on the land before. We had to make the difficult decision to stop our agreement because we can’t market organic veggies and sell potentially contaminated ones.

Everything else’s planned. We’ve got a partner to do the delivery until we work out a system whereby we can empower women. In Maputo, there’s a lot of women who sell food from their cars. They’re in the same industry and can take over as we grow. Providing local work is an important value, central in our work. We’re a local solution, but we have to be quick because there are a lot of big sharks.

We’re at exciting, but also anxious times. We hope to expand our brand all over the country, but the current conflict may interfere. In a few months we hope to have a better idea of where we’re at. Also for me personally, I want to hire someone to take over my consultancy firm so that I can focus my time on further studies.

“Doing business here’s not that difficult, especially if you’ve got a local partner.”

Doing business here’s not that difficult, especially if you’ve got a local partner.

SDG 2: Zero hunger
SDG 5: Gender equality
SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth
SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production

COMPANY INFO
• Social enterprise
• Founded in 2016
• 3 Co-founders
• Maputo
• Food & Production industry
• 0 Employees
• Seed and Development stage

BUSINESS PROFILE
Super Sopa delivers a selection of vegetables from small Mozambican smallholders to their client’s home. All produce come with explanatory cards detailing basic information about the production and nutritional value as well as soup recipes. Clients can choose the frequency of how often they want to receive the products.

FLÁVIA GIBSON BUSATTO (22)
CO-FOUNDER & COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR - SUPER SOPA
WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/SUPER-SOPA-1745542035730338/
I always wanted to be a teacher and studied for it at university. But then I realized I could have more impact by working on issues for young people. Education is important and we want to support children to receive quality education that’s not disturbed by material constraints. We’re currently studying a prototype to create school benches for schools based on the atomic shape of children so that they sit properly. We want to let some schools test it for free and then approach the Ministry of Education to examine whether it’s visible to supply to schools across the nation.

We’re young people supporting other young people. Currently we’ve employed three people to help us with adding value to the tires. There’s also this woman who collects tires from the street and we buy them from her. We also get our tires from a transport company. They have to cut them legally and afterwards they donate them to us for recycling. Before we had these arrangements, we would take them from the streets ourselves. One day we were on our way home from a meeting. We were in suits. Then someone with a good heart told us about abandoned tires so we went in our fancy suits. People stared at us.

But that doesn’t bother us. We believe in our ideas even when other people don’t see our vision at first. We’re confident that in ten years recycling is part of Mozambican culture. At the moment people don’t see the importance. It will take time for the idea of recycling to be accepted by everyone. Especially among young people, appreciation is growing. In March 2016 we supplied the interior design of the backstage for artists at the biggest festival in Mozambique. That gave us a boost. The other co-founder and I are a very close team. It’s difficult to walk alone, you have to go together. Of course there are times we don’t agree with one another. But they’re constructive conflicts. We all need to have the same vision. Not just us, but also our employees. It would be upsetting to destroy this initiative, this company because of disagreements. We’re like brothers to each other. We create things together and face our challenges head on. It simply wouldn’t be the same without him. Together we can change things.

“I’ve a responsibility and a dream to clean all the trash in Mozambique.”

SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth
SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure
SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production

COMPANY INFO
• Social enterprise
• Founded in 2015
• 2 Co-founders
• Maputo
• Waste Recycling industry
• 3 Employees
• Growth & Establishment stage

BUSINESS PROFILE
Orèra Moçambique is dedicated to recycling waste materials such as tires and drums by refurbishing them into innovative interior design products. Our mission is to improve the environment while creating value for the society through product as well as job creation.
I'm an ambitious and visionary person. I always envisioned myself as a politician until one course in university changed my dreams and life path. Now I want to be an entrepreneur for the rest of my life. It all started when I studied Public Administration. In my third year of university I had to create a viable business plan for a course. I choose cleaning as a random field, but as I developed my assignment, I saw a real opportunity. My parents were sending me money for the dormitory and food. I saved that money and raised enough to register the company.

Most young people believe you need money to launch a business and they lack the courage to start without that. I started the business without any money, believing that it would bring money as it grows. Through a friend of my brother I got a space and together with an unemployed university friend, I started preparing our material. I had no idea what to do. I couldn't clean myself, not even the basic things at home. It didn’t stop me. I created a presentation, printed a leaflet, and started to advertise the business.

It was a bold move. I had no equipment, no cleaning materials, not even workers. Then one day the university called for wall cleaning services. I didn’t hesitate, but gave a quote and got the contract. Now I had to quickly go out to buy branded T-shirts, find part-time employees and bought a small towel and cleaning product. I earned US$890 with US$636 being profit. Encouraged I used the money to rent a small office and strategized.

I prepared a business proposal and walked into parliament. It was God’s luck that I met the person responsible for cleaning. She showed me what they needed help with and I offered to do it for free. It was just a small job: a few tables and chairs. The contracted company was unable to clean all spots because of the dark wood material. I researched the material and found out that this wood needed a specific cleaning product. It taught me that the secret lies not in what the person does, but the product you use.

Based on the quality of the work I was invited to compete for a tender for the entire parliament. I got it. I started the business without any money, believing that it would bring money as it grows. Through a friend of my brother I got a space and together with an unemployed university friend, I started preparing our material. I had no idea what to do. I couldn’t clean myself; not even the basic things at home. It didn’t stop me. I created a presentation, printed a leaflet, and started to advertise the business.

When I started, almost 100% of the people didn’t believe in me. I was too young and could not lead a company. If you’re not interested in doing business with me, I’ll look elsewhere. People have seen what I can do and believe in my vision and professionalism. It’s all about identifying opportunities. I once took the risk to invest in cleaning materials and equipment for a big yearly festival. Six months before it was held. My workers were worried and skeptical. It was a big risk, but I got it. Now we’re expanding the business into the maintenance area and are commercializing our cleaning products. I started with nothing and now my company is worth US$2.5 million. I’m currently considering a proposal to sell off shares. It’s unique to be a young entrepreneur in Mozambique. But I’ve shown I’m an outstanding one who inspires and motivates young people to do the same. This is only because I took risk and believed in myself.

“I’m an outstanding entrepreneur only because I took risk and believed in myself.”

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“I’m an outstanding entrepreneur only because I took risk and believed in myself.”

LINEU CANDIERO (25)
FOUNDER & MANAGING DIRECTOR - LIN LIMPEZAS
WWW.LINLIMPEZAS.COM

COMPANY INFO
• For-profit company
• Founded in 2012
• 1 Founder
• Maputo
• Cleaning Services industry
• 82 Employees
• Maturity stage

BUSINESS PROFILE
Lin Limpezas provides certified cleaning services with environmentally-friendly products in all kinds of spaces. We also supply their own biological product to the Mozambican market. The aim is to offer high-quality services and constantly innovate to revolutionize the cleaning industry.

SUPPORT
SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth
SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure
SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production

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(25)
FOUNDER & MANAGING DIRECTOR - LIN LIMPEZAS
WWW.LINLIMPEZAS.COM
I'm enthusiastic and determined. People always tell me that I have power, energy and am able to handle a lot of things at the same time. If I hadn't gone to Portugal for university, I wouldn't be here having my own company. In Mozambique people are always very helpful, but in Portugal nobody wants to help you. It taught me to become independent and work hard. I studied International Relations because my grandpa, who was a politician, inspired me. But then I realized it wasn't for me so I changed to Human Rights and Human Resources.

When I came back, I worked at a Portuguese company in the HR department. It was very challenging because I was always calling and arranging things. One day my boss asked me to come to a meeting. The general managers and HR managers started to complain about how lazy young Mozambicans are and that they don't have the right attitude. They don't know how to write a CV or how to behave at a job interview. I told them that those things are easy to teach, but they said they don't have time for that. That's when I realized that this was an opportunity for me.

I quit my job, went to the north to work for my dad so that I could save money. Then I went back to Maputo to start the company. My father is unhappy with my decision and tells me whenever he finds well-paid jobs. It's interesting because he is an entrepreneur himself. When he faced challenges he would turn to my grandpa, but when I ask him now, it's like a third war. In an ironic way, this is exactly what I want to change.

In Mozambique children do everything that their parents tell them to do. Study accounting, become an engineer. No one asks: what do you want to do? But it's important that people do what they want otherwise they never grow up; they never learn. That is also why they are ok with just finding a job, going to work and not developing further. I want to change this mindset.

I want to make an impact and touch the heart of people. That's why I brand it as Atittude. We're not just a recruitment company; my company is a friend. We motivate and encourage youth aged between 18 and 28. It's not about getting a certificate, we don't offer this on purpose, but it's about learning. I want to empower the youth to find a job by themselves: speak with attitude, communicate with attitude and run your own business with attitude. It's great to see students grow over the duration of the training. For me it's all about impact. But that means it's difficult to earn money. Young people don't have money to pay for the courses, but I don't want to market to their parents because then the youth don't have the right attitude. We, small companies, need to fill the gaps because the big companies are not offering any workshops to students. I'm trying to reach out the foreign embassies to find a way to work on reaching more people and having more impact.

It's tough especially being a young woman. I'd to dress differently so that they take me seriously and not just think: who's this young girl? So I need to always be professional, confident and dominate what I'm doing. Business will come not because you are pretty, but because you do your job better than anyone else. I wake up at 3 am to work or don't go out with friends. With focus I'll reach my goals easier and faster. You'll see I will not just change my country, but also other African countries!

“I want to empower the youth to find a job by themselves.”

MARLENE DE SOUSA (27)
FOUNDER & CEO - ATITTUDE MSC

COMPANY INFO
• For-profit company
• Founded in 2015
• 1 Founder
• Maputo
• Training & Education industry
• 4 Trainees
• Seed and Development stage

BUSINESS PROFILE
Atittude offers workshops to young adults between 18 and 28. The workshops include CV writing, job interview skills and personal development. Through this we aim to professionalize the youngsters and prepare them for a successful job application process.

SUPPORT:
Maputo

SDG 4:
Quality education
SDG 8:
Decent work and economic growth
SDG 11:
Sustainable cities and communities
I found a way in which I could use my skills and experience to impact development.

The right opportunities. The gap I identified was that there is need for a bridge between the capital in the wealthy countries and the local opportunities in Mozambique.

I found a way in which I could use my investment skills and experience to impact economic and social development significantly. SMEs have the unique potential to promote development because they create jobs, address social problems and contribute to a more equal wealth distribution. However, there’s a higher risk to invest in SMEs, but we’re selling the impact on development and a more balanced economy. You can invest in real estate and have high returns, but it’s investment without a wider meaning.

I find SMEs and startups with high potential because I’m able to go the grassroots and relate to the ecosystem there. Good businesses are not easy to come across, you can’t easily search them on the internet, and those in existing donor programs are not necessarily the best ones. You need a local fund with a local team who speaks the lingua franca of the finance world and is able to make these companies investable. You help them get a market understanding, build the internal business structures and get their bookkeeping up to speed. Not because they’re bad businesses, but because they lack the skills and ability to access capital.

My key focus is on raising capital so that I can reinvest this in pre-identified local SMEs. When I started, it was a crazy dream to think that I would be able to raise US$14 million, but I’m getting close. We’ll recover the funds so that we don’t have to run with donor money and become sustainable. We also sell advisory services to SMEs. We’ve developed an affordable financial service by charging success fees to our clients.

My inspiration comes from being close to other entrepreneurs. When you talk to them you feel that contagious energy. When you work for a big company you don’t really see the direct impact of your work, but when you talk to other entrepreneurs and mentor them, you can see the impact. Entrepreneurs have the emotional inspiration, talent and drive; I try and bring in the rationale support.

For my own business, I’ve got a clear vision of where I want to go. I want to be in control and be able to take risks. Whatever happens, I can’t imagine myself going back to a typical corporate structure. I haven’t yet accomplished what I wanted, but I’ve succeeded in a few things already: my dream is within reach.

I only feel satisfied when I work on things that I believe in. I worked for seven years for a large consultancy firm and it made sense to me until I felt I wasn’t learning anymore. So I started to look for change. I’ve always wanted to be involved in development. I thought to myself, what could I, a person who studied business, do for development? I didn’t have an answer.

So when I first heard about social entrepreneurship I was intrigued. I’ve always believed in the power of business. I decided to move to Mozambique because of its cultural proximity with my home country, Portugal. Immediately I felt at home; people speak Portuguese, eat similar food and have the same type of humor.

Initially I worked for an investment firm in Mozambique, but after a year I realized I still hadn’t found the change I was looking for. I realized that there was a lot of interest from global investors in Africa, ready to invest millions of dollars, but they couldn’t find
SOME SOLUTIONS FOR THE ROAD AHEAD

**Frederico:** “There needs to be an enabling environment for youth entrepreneurs. Laws and regulations for companies need to be changed. Youth entrepreneurs need to be offered incentives, be it funds, or through buy-in from the government.”

**Wilton:** “Government must create conditions for young entrepreneurs to develop businesses. Especially fiscal policy because currently, policy officers don’t differentiate between being a young entrepreneur or an old entrepreneur.”

**Diogo:** “The public sector needs to be more independent from the party. That will ensure that people are working for their own objectives, not for the interest of an elite.”

**Sázia:** “Military needs to teach people how to build a sustainable business. Money alone won’t help youth entrepreneurs, they need knowledge.”

**Lineu:** “More young people need to have the courage to start for themselves. I started with nothing and almost 100% of the people didn’t believe in me.”

**Cláudio:** “When you register a business, you are sent from one place to another. The process will be better when everything is in one place. It should take less time and require fewer documents.”

**Culture**

In Mozambique you graduate, get a stable well-paid job, marry and have babies. We are not taught to have an impact.

**Bureaucracy**

“There is a lot of bureaucracy in the state government. You always have to know someone who can help you to make things easy. If you don’t have that, it’s a very painful experience for you to just get simple documents.”

**Sides:** “We need more incubators with people who have been trained to support youth entrepreneurs.”

**Marlene:** “The mindset of the youth and older generations needs to be changed. Big companies can help with this and should.”

**Solutions for the Road Ahead**

**Challenges Faced by Youth Entrepreneurs**

- **Conservative market**
  Mozambique has a conservative market in many many ways. You’ve got customers who are reluctant to adopt a product from a new company led by young people. They doubt the experience and credibility. It’s not potential and innovation. Then local investors only want to invest in real estate or oil ventures, not startups.

- **Lack of right mentors**
  “We were offered a consultant by a donor program. This guy was in his 70s. I recommended him to stay in a backpackers, not a bad one. He said, “oh no I’ll never stay there, the crowd is too young for me.” And I thought, if this crowd is too young how will you help our company? It’s tough to get a right fit. So of course it didn’t work.”

- **Lack of local talent**
  “It’s difficult to find people that have the right skills and experience to do the kind of work that we want to do. There are professionals out there, but because there are so few, they all work for the companies because they can just pay high salaries to even the younger of them.”

- **Civil unrest and unstable economy**
  “The civil unrest affects the whole economy, it’s having an impact. Even when I’m talking to investors, they always say Mozambique is in a tough situation. It’s not just the war, but the problem with the sovereign debt and all that.”

- **Gender**
  “Some of the general managers and other people I deal with were stalking me on a private basis. Because I’m a young woman, I need to work extra hard and show that I can do this job better than anyone else.”

- **High taxes and high bank interest**
  “All the money I earned, I had to give to the government. But how can I improve my company? Banks don’t give loans to small entrepreneurs and when they do they charge high interest rates. There’s no money left for the business.”

- **Not taken seriously as young entrepreneur**
  “People don’t take us, young entrepreneurs seriously. They don’t believe in young people because they only see lack of experience. You need to be determined and convince them.”

- **Culture**
  “In Mozambique you graduate, get a stable well-paid job, marry and have babies. We are not taught to have an impact.”

- **Bureaucracy**
  “There is a lot of bureaucracy in the state government. You always have to know someone who can help you to make things easy. If you don’t have that, it’s a very painful experience for you to just get simple documents.”

- **Lack of local investors**
  “In Mozambique people are not used to investing. They don’t understand the game. So the entrepreneur has the challenge of not learning how to be a good entrepreneur, but also the challenge to teach the investors how to be an investor. In Mozambique investors wants to see money quickly. But that’s not how it works in SMEs.”

- **High taxes and high bank interest**
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  “The civil unrest affects the whole economy, it’s having an impact. Even when I’m talking to investors, they always say Mozambique is in a tough situation. It’s not just the war, but the problem with the sovereign debt and all that.”

- **Gender**
  “Some of the general managers and other people I deal with were stalking me on a private basis. Because I’m a young woman, I need to work extra hard and show that I can do this job better than anyone else.”
Zimbabwe’s economy has experienced a downturn from economic prosperity to crisis. From the 1980s till the late 1990s, Zimbabwe’s GDP increased steadily. The country once known as “Bread Basket of Africa” because of its high agricultural yields, has crumbled. Since the early 2000s, inflation has hit Zimbabwe hard, exacerbated by drought and removal of international aid. The worsening economy has led to a brain drain, relocation of numerous international companies as well as a cash crisis severely affecting the adult working population.

Youth Population
Zimbabwe’s population is young, with estimates by the UN putting the number of people under 35 at 60%. The country has a well-established education system with high participation rates, but as a result, university graduates are left jobless. There is a major disconnect between the job market demand and the labor supply. Youth are especially disadvantaged with higher unemployment and underemployment rates than those who are 35 years old and older.

Youth Unemployment
The economic problems faced by Zimbabwe have driven more young people into the unregulated informal market. Estimates put the number of working population active in the informal market at 80%, contributing to 65% of country’s GDP. More and more youth have turned to self-employment in the hopes of providing an income for themselves and their family. The government is strained to handle the overall economic situation and as a result youth entrepreneurship has not received the much-needed attention.

Government Action
The Zimbabwean government implemented the National Youth Policy (NYP) in 2000 aimed at empowering the youth. In order to address the high unemployment rates, limited public engagement opportunities and other contemporary challenges as well as criticism, the Zimbabwean government revised the NYP in 2013. Through various initiatives such as the Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development Programmes it aims to combat youth unemployment and promote youth entrepreneurship. In addition, it also acknowledges that youth should be on the agenda of all Zimbabwean ministries. However, the current lack of resources limit the implementation of youth related policies and their participation in decision making.

In the 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Action Campaign MY World Global Survey, most Zimbabweans indicated they want good education. Although the literacy rate is one of the highest on the African continent, youth face barriers when it comes to quality education. Especially when it comes to education that would prepare youth for the workforce and would enable them to better job opportunities, another important priority of Zimbabweans. Better healthcare and access to clean water and sanitation are second and fourth, indicating a need for an honest and responsive government as well as opportunities for youth entrepreneurs who want to combine business with a social mission.
I want to bring the service to where the people live. I want to bridge the gap in inequalities - the haves and the have nots. If my father and brother had had access to radiology services, they would have still lived. The government doesn't have the money to bring these services to the rural areas. The private sector is not interested because there's no money in the rural areas. Everyone wants to be in the city and compete with one another there. Some people understand what we want to accomplish. They think it's a brilliant idea. Others are resistant to change. They don't understand this new concept. It's our mobility that sets us apart from the rest.

When I went to register the company, it was difficult. There was no legislation or requirements for a mobile radiology service. It took some time, but eventually we managed. My business partner, my ex-colleague, and I put our money together and bought a small portable ultrasound machine. Our clients are desperate, they're happy that the service has come to them. When you tell them that we're here for them, they're very excited. We've democratized a service that was previously unavailable to them. It's not always easy. Some people, especially young men, feel uncomfortable with me performing ultrasounds on them. They expect an older person, not a young woman.

Money is a challenge. Currently we subsidize the services from our own money. The community simply cannot afford the same prices as in town. It hasn't happened, but we're thought about payment in livestock. A cow is like 500 dollars, but the scan is around 15 dollars. So do you accept part of a cow? Or two chickens? It's difficult. And you can't present two chickens to the tax authorities. It hasn't come to it yet, but if someone is really desperate for the service, I would do it.

I dream of having an X-ray van that we can take to the communities. I'll help as many people as I can out there. In the future, we'll have more partnerships with mining companies as well as with public hospitals. National screening programs like breast cancer, tuberculosis and various cancers should be available in the more remote areas. I’ve this fire in my belly. Everyone should have basic health care and I’m providing it.

“My father and brother died because of late diagnosis; this drove me down this path that I took.”

I wanted to do more in my community. People in the rural areas sometimes have to travel hundreds of kilometers over bad dust roads to reach the hospital. It’s costly; the time spent travelling but also the loss of income. So they won’t go. They will stay at home. There is so much unnecessary loss of life. I always wanted to be a doctor, but instead of curing, I took the diagnostic route, that of radiology. Both my father and brother died because of late diagnosis. Their deaths could have been prevented, but it motivated me to bring radiology services to the people.

I’ve worked in radiology for ten years both in Zimbabwe and England. I saw people come in to the hospital with a medical condition, but sometimes it was too late. It was in England, where I felt that I needed to come back home and make a difference. I realized I can utilize my skills for the greater good. I felt that I could make a difference back home and could develop the country. I came back in 2014 and wanted to get things running, but it doesn’t work like that. You need to build a relationship with people who can assist you. Otherwise you can’t get things done.
Even when I was young I wanted to be an entrepreneur like my mom. She is the risk taker of the family. As I grew up I saw her starting things. I was inspired. In school I made burgers and hotdogs together with classmates and sold them for money. After graduation I tried being part of my mom's business, but it didn't work. We had different ideas on how to run the business. I decided to go my own direction and sell eco-friendly cooking stoves. My parents weren't happy at first. They said that with the current climate and economic situation it's not wise. I did it anyways because I didn't want to rely on them for money or other things. Initially I just saw it as an opportunity to make my own money.

I studied Economics, but was always interested in sustainable development. When I was young, Zimbabwe was really great. Then things got bad. When I was 16 we drove past mountains of waste. It stunk foul. I asked my dad, “Why can’t we do anything about this?” He said, “We can, but it is what it is.” So my first business was in waste management. Then I had a falling out with my business partner and I decided to start a new project on my own.

In Zimbabwe most people still use firewood as a traditional cooking method, which leads to deforestation and health problems. Some people have breathing or eye problems because of the smoke. As a nation, also over US$40 million is lost because of LPG imports. This needs to be resolved and I believe I’ve the solution: an ethanol stove which has a lifespan of ten years. Girl children can stay at home and don’t have to gather wood or start a fire. You can just wake up and light the stove. There’s no smell, no carbon emissions. The only challenge will be the pricing.

I’ve managed to get tax exemption as an environmentally friendly solution. It was a long challenge. The key product is really the ethanol. It’s much more efficient than firewood or coal. But people will need to replace it. Of course we need to run workshops in the communities to educate the people on how it works. It’s a great product, but needs to be handled with care. The moment it is left in an unventilated room and there’s a spark, it will go kaboom. There’s some resistance from the local communities, but most of it is because of lack of trust that the project will succeed. They’ve seen too many failed or abandoned development aid projects.

I want to make it sustainable. So I’m following all the regulations. But it’s tough. Ethanol as a cooking fuel isn’t promoted by the government now so I had to fight to get a license. I went through four months without trading. I just kept knocking on the door for two weeks. I kept complaining and complaining. Eventually my perseverance paid off. It’s a bit of a headache to import fully finished stoves. I’m anticipating to assemble them locally so I can create jobs and lower the price of the stoves. I’ll even set up my own ethanol distillery and establish a contract farming model for raw materials.

In ten years, I’m heading a big ethanol corporation operation in at least seven countries. That’s my target. It’s a lot of work, but that’s where I see myself. Zimbabwe doesn’t have the same support structures for the green space as other countries. But we need renewable energy and we need it now. I want to keep fighting for this country, this place. We can change from the inside.

“Traditional cooking methods lead to deforestation and health problems; I believe I’ve the solution.”

COMPANY INFO
- For-profit company
- Founded in 2013
- 2 Co-founders
- Harare, Harare Province
- Biofuels industry
- 0 Employees
- Launch and Pilot stage

BUSINESS PROFILE
Ambient Investments promotes the use of ethanol as a home cooking fuel. We’ve committed to raise the profile of ethanol fuel through retailing ethanol stoves as well as selling ethanol directly to the market. This will lead to decreased deforestation and less hazardous air pollutants.

SUPPORT
SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy
SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure
SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production
SDG 13: Climate action

**“Traditional cooking methods lead to deforestation and health problems; I believe I’ve the solution.”**
Having grown up in the rural areas, I realized that guys other than the farmers are making a lot of money. We saw a gap in our area of sugar cane farming. We could cut sugar cane and deliver it to the big companies. There are more and more small farmers in my area but they cannot afford tractors to get the produce off the field. For others, when their tractors break down, the sugar cane is left to rot. We’re the in-betweener. In the beginning people were wary. They only trusted their neighbours. But now we’ve gained their trust.

It’s not a very exciting or glamorous business. It’s pretty much calculated and set up step by step. At the moment we haven’t put anything into the community. I do want to impact the wider community eventually by drilling a borehole. But for the moment we only interact with and provide benefits for the farmers. Our solution is like renting a house instead of buying one. They can get their sugar cane to the mill without having to buy a tractor.

It’s not always easy dealing with farmers of an older generation. Some of them are illogical. They want us to haul their cane, but at the same time they kill our tractors. The farmers supply the diesel for our tractors, but some use bad diesel. It burns up the tractor’s pump. Then the farmers are upset that their sugar cane rots while we fix the tractor. Slowly we’re teaching them on how to organize their haulage and be professional.

The business is sound. Though there’s an off season when there’s no income, we manage to get by. But there are many frustrations coming from the economic situation in the country. Producing companies are pulling out of Zimbabwe or no longer putting money into Zimbabwe. It’s an opportunity for us to fill the gap, but also a challenge. We’ll have first-mover advantage. The good thing about Zimbabwe is that now the only way is up. I don’t want to move out of the country or work for someone else. It’s better to stay at home and own your things. I’ve started something so now I need to be patient and let things grow.

“It’s important for us to create a brand: have branded uniforms and show respect to the client.”

I am from the remote Zimbabwean countryside. I went to school in the city and university in South Africa. In 2012 I moved back to Zim thinking that it would be easy for me to find a job in my parent’s area. But the system doesn’t work that way anymore. I moved to Harare to try my hand in IT. I did some consulting and supplied laptops, but nothing sustainable. Harare is a bit difficult and you always need cash to survive. So I did the unconventional urban-to-rural migration to work in agriculture.

It was tough moving in and living with my parents. I was used to my freedom. Moving around as I wished. I was trying to get a job, but decided to start up my own thing in the meantime. I pitched my backhaul logistics idea to my dad and he jumped on the bandwagon to set this up together. We sold off some of our cows to invest into a tractor. It’s not easy to work with my dad. As a young person I can be a bit impetuous. I want to rush things. He’s more patient. But sometimes I’ve good solutions and teach him how things can be done quicker and more effectively.

Having grown up in the rural areas, I realized that guys other than the farmers are making a lot of money. We saw a gap in our area of sugar cane farming. We could cut sugar cane and deliver it to the big companies. There are more and more small farmers in my area but they cannot afford tractors to get the produce off the field. For others, when their tractors break down, the sugar cane is left to rot. We’re the in-betweener. In the beginning people were wary. They only trusted their neighbours. But now we’ve gained their trust.

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It’s important for us to create a brand. Before we started, companies used old tractors that spill oil in the field and hire untrained drivers. We train our drivers in the way they speak to clients, how to show respect and things like that. They all wear uniforms and have to follow the Safety Health Environment Regulations. This is how we differentiate ourselves and build a loyal customer base.

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As a child, I had always dreamt of following in my father’s footsteps as a doctor. But when I started seeing all the blood in medical school I knew I couldn’t do it. I came home and had to start again from scratch. I decided to follow my passion and love for good food and healthy eating by providing knowledge and coaching on healthy eating. Food Science and Nutrition is a new field and isn’t very well known in Zimbabwe.

I’m interested in health nutrition because I saw it working in my own life. I discovered lumps in my breast and needed surgery to get them removed. After surgery, I found that I was able to recover faster than expected by making some diet changes. I lost weight and was less fatigued. I started to realize that many people are struggling with their weight and health. I wanted to apply what worked for me to help other people.

My family had a mixed response to me starting a business in nutrition. It’s different to where they expected I would end up.

“I provide a complete holistic approach to people as individuals.”

Fully Enrich is a health and nutrition consultancy company that focuses solely on assisting individuals and corporates prevent chronic diseases. They specialize in diet, meal and exercise plans for clients ranging from 16-60 years of age, health and nutrition consultancy, workshops and seminars on the importance of health and the role of nutrition in being part of the solution for a healthier and wealthier African nation. They believe that preventive living is the best health approach and seek to fill the gap in the healthcare system.

COMPANY INFO
- For-profit company
- Founded in 2018
- 1 Founder
- Gweru, Midlands Province
- Health & safety industry
- 0 Employees
- Seed and Development stage

BUSINESS PROFILE
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SDG 3: Good health and well-being
SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production

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My family had a mixed response to me starting a business in nutrition. It’s different to where they expected I would end up. To bring them on board, I decided to help them with their own ailments to make them understand. My mother had insomnia for 25 years. I suggested banana and cinnamon tea and now she is off her sleeping tablets. Because they’ve seen it work, they’re more understanding.

Zimbabwe’s healthcare system is failing. Some hospitals have no equipment, medicine is scarce and health insurance policies are collapsing. I decided that I would use a simple approach with few resources to improve primary healthcare. As a certified health coach, I can help my clients gain the knowledge they need to becoming participants in their own healthcare and take responsibility for their own health. They don’t have to rely solely on doctors to help them live a healthier life.

Health isn’t only the absence of illness. It’s also about your physical, emotional and social wellbeing. I provide a complete holistic approach to people as individuals. I put together programs based on your blood type, health history, your past diet experiences and food preferences. Your blood type influences what you eat. When my mother was pregnant with me, she used to eat cucumbers and the funny thing is, as a blood type A, I love my vegetables.

As an entrepreneur I have to balance between logic and my heart. When I allow my heart to make decisions, it isn’t always logical but when I allow my mind to make decisions, then it doesn’t produce long-term results. I never really saw myself in a hospital, seeing patients for the rest of my life. The positive feedback I get from customers keeps me going. I know that if I can help one person, I can reach out and help others as well.
I'm a serial entrepreneur. I learned to take care of myself because I lost my father when I was 8 years old. He was the breadwinner. My mother paid my school fees until I started my business to help other entrepreneur start up and be sustainable. Then I paid for my school fees myself. When I was in high school I made a promise to my mother. "When I go to university, it's not to bring you a degree, but to make a difference. To people like you, mom, who are running small businesses informally to survive."

Sometimes things are difficult. I don't have anything, but I'll stay positive. I've that tenacity and resilience. My middle name is Destiny and I tell myself everyday in the mirror, I'm definitely destined for greatness and success. That self-talk removes self-doubt, fear from me. It's not being proud, but I'm telling myself that I can break barriers. Everyone is looking for employment. But not me. My inspiration is my mother and my country. My drive is the thought that if my mother was to live in this era where I can make a difference, she can have a better life than the one she lived. If every youth does something in their community, we can transform the country. Together we can make a difference.

It's not always easy to balance my studies and business. There was a time when I put all my tuition fee money into the business. It was tough. At times I miss class to work on the business. But I'm making sure I don't fail. To me business is like choosing a romantic partner. If you choose someone you don't love, you're gonna quit. But if you choose something that you want, you're never gonna quit. I just need to focus.

I've set up my business with little resources. I'm born as an entrepreneur so I had a lot of business ideas. I implemented one that didn't need much cash. I was able to get office space by going to the Dean of Students. It had never happened before. Now I still work under the banner of the university. I haven't registered my company yet because I'm not sure how I want to register it. That's so much potential in this company so let's see. It's challenging in the world-outside of university; people don't listen to a young person. But I insist and persevere.

I want SMEs to get the confidence: to believe that they're a real business. Small business owners should stop waiting for the government to provide jobs. And to believe that their small business can contribute to economic growth. I want to assist them so that together we can make Zimbabwe great again. When I was in university I joined an organization which trains students to do entrepreneurship. That was the turning point of my entrepreneurial journey. I remembered the promise I made to my mother that I would make a difference.

I want to ensure that SMEs have the rightful principles of business. For the country to make an economic recovery, we cannot ignore the informal sector and the registered SMEs. I found out that 80% of SMEs fail in their first year. Most people run a business for survival. I want to change this mindset. For me it's not all about making a lot of money, it's about the lives that I've impacted. For me it's an edge. Every fighter, every champion, every president, every lion, every entrepreneur has wanted to quit. You close the door of your office and you cry. Then you realize that every successful person has wanted to quit. And that what has made them successful is that they never did. So I keep pushing.

“It's not all about making a lot of money, it's about the lives that I've impacted.”
I like to call myself a developerpreneur. I do work that fosters development. My entrepreneurial journey started at 16. I lost my dad when I was 9 and didn’t know my mother until I was 19. So I grew up with my grandmother. Things weren’t easy but it taught me everything I needed to be successful in business. I’ve always sold a service; earned my own money. Some of my classmates ended up on the streets, doing drugs and hanging around. That was not me. I’ve grown by doing and being exposed.

At 18, I moved to Harare and offered freelance design for emerging companies. I was learning on the job. I enjoy that feeling when you create a product and the client is happy. I don’t mind spending the whole day behind a camera; I’m having fun. Things got tougher in Zimbabwe when the economy crumbled. I had to leave my little business, sell my desk and computer. I had no education, no certificates so applying for a job was out of the question. I relocated to Botswana to co-found a company specializing in printing and graphic design. We did well and even won two awards. Then, the economy in Zimbabwe recovered and I chose to come back.

I applied for a few jobs, but I didn’t get hired. So I bought 50% shares of an existing business. I wanted to do more, make an impact. I helped rebranding the company towards media for development. We looked around the country and realized that biogas could be solution to the need for energy in Sub-Saharan Africa. One of the biggest challenges to increased access to sustainable energy is lack of quality information for decision making. We aim to sell biogas services using our innovative multimedia platforms. We realized we can actually earn a commission for delivering sustainable energy solutions. My rural home used to be green. Now 32 years later, it’s a desert. People in Zimbabwe are taught little about how to take care of trees. What do you use now for heat or cooking? In Zimbabwe only 40% of the population has access to electricity. 55% depends on firewood; Zimbabweans have to care about the environment, there is no other choice. So we are looking to diversify our products. We want to bring actual solutions to existing challenges. We aim to sell biogas services using our innovative multimedia platforms. We realized we can actually earn a commission for delivering sustainable energy solutions.

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Access to modern energy services is fundamental to human development and an investment in our collective future. In many parts of the developing world, national grid electricity and modern energy services may remain a pipe dream for many generations to come. I’m representing the future of Zimbabwe. I’ve seen the worst of Zimbabwe, but I’m excited I can play a role in rebuilding the country. I represent hope to those who had previously given up.

“I’m representing the future of Zimbabwe; I give hope to those who had previously given up.”
I had an unconventional globalized upbringing. My parents were diplomats but I wasn’t a picture perfect child. I did really well at school but I got suspended because I made and sold my own cosmetic line. I think that’s when my spark for entrepreneurship began. I went to Cambridge and worked in health. Cambridge is like Silicon Valley, people are really innovative and creative. I learned from that and wanted to bring the innovative spirit to Zimbabwe.

In most of Europe, medical research is incorporated into policies. That’s not how it is in Zimbabwe. Through my personal experience with hospitals, I saw the shortcomings of Zimbabwe’s medical sector. I had a complicated pregnancy and almost lost my child. I was given infected blood and had I not paid to get it tested, I would have gotten sicker. What happens to people who can’t afford to buy and test their own blood? Zimbabwe doesn’t have an organ register. I saw this gap and decided to tackle this issue by providing an innovative and alternative legal source of organs.

I use technology to democratize the health sector through 3D organ printing. People think it will be expensive, but it’s actually affordable. In every society, rich or poor, everyone needs access to healthcare. Not everyone is on medical aid and even when people are, some things are not covered. Zimbabwe is still a very traditional society, very locked into culture and there’s no healthcare awareness. In 2013, my father passed away from cancer and I believe that if he had been more open to technology and different interventions he would still be alive. With more awareness, and cheaper healthcare, I can save lives.

When you want to start a project as big as 3D printing, you hit a lot of obstacles. I’ve met people who are holding this project back because they want to make something out of it. They ask “what is in it for me?” I don’t stand for corruption at all. I’ve gotten into a lot of trouble because I go against the status quo. I’ve had people threaten to blacklist me for not playing the game. My husband spent time in prison because I wouldn’t pay a bribe. When people make threats I say “bring it on” I’m not the only one, there are other young entrepreneurs who are willing to do ten times as much on this issue. If you stop me, another one pops up. Young people won’t be silenced anymore.

The point is to empower young people and to take industry to the rural areas. I want to set up shop in my home village. Young people shouldn’t be migrating to Harare to work, we want them to come back to the areas which need help. I only want to hire young people, between 18 and 35 and link them to training, get them skilled abroad and have them come back to Zimbabwe to create impact. I’m also thinking of accepting payment in a barter system. If someone doesn’t have dollars but has chicken and cows, they shouldn’t be denied healthcare. I aim to change the social fabric of a rural community.

I had access to opportunities and could have gone anywhere, but I came back to Zimbabwe. My dad said that you can go and work in Europe and get ideas, but you can’t leave Zimbabwe because that’s where you’re from. I came home and saw that I could contribute to healthcare which is component of everyone and everything. That’s why I love it. I’ve made sacrifices to do this but I believe that for anything good to happen, we have to sacrifice something.

My name is Chiedza Kambasha, 34
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER - IGNITE AFRICA

I’ve had people threaten to blacklist me for not playing the game; when people make threats I say “bring it on”.

SDG 3: Good health and well-being
SDG 4: Quality education
SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure
SDG 10: Reduced inequalities
SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities
I'm the first university graduate in my family. But when I was younger, I wasn't a star pupil. My family didn't believe I could do it, and I didn't either. I didn't have aspirations to study until my English teacher told my parents, if this guy works hard he can get a C. I took it as a challenge and wanted to prove them wrong. To everyone's surprise, I did so well I got into university. But I almost lost my place because my family couldn't afford it. My aunt had to fight for me to get in. It was embarrassing. I didn't want other Zimbabweans to go through the same struggle.

The pressure and the embarrassment motivated me. I didn't want my mom to keep crying about my studies. I couldn't miss this opportunity and focused on being the best I could be. Something in me started to grow and I wanted the next Zimbabwean to understand that they can't blow this opportunity. I did well and got scholarships. My family was surprised, one aunt even said “what kind of university is that that makes you smart?”

With my studies going well, I thought about becoming a lecturer. I thought it was my calling. I had done really well and thought getting a job in Zimbabwe would be easy. I applied for so many jobs and got the cold shoulder. I even began to doubt whether I had really gotten a masters degree or if I had dreamt it. I almost gave up on Zim, I was making plans to leave. Eventually, I got a job through a friend at a wedding. It paid my bills, then I got a job at a local investment bank through another friend.

At the bank, one of our potential clients was a school. They explained that since the dollarization parents were having a difficult time paying fees. I realized that people put a premium on getting their children into the best schools. I saw an opportunity to help these children access education. I pitched to get their account, and design them a payment system with low interest rates which maintains a low default rate. The system worked and my bosses were impressed.

Eventually, the bank hit a bad pitch following a bank run by depositors undermining the bank's ability to sustain the product.

After I left, I was unsure of what to do, but a friend encouraged me to start again on my own. I took the plunge together with the other co-founder. It has been a long difficult journey. My wife believed in me so much she decided to quit her job so that we could move to Bulawayo and I believed it was a better place to start the business. We struggled, we had no money and my family had to move in with my in-laws. I had put my family in a poverty situation. I didn't even have money to buy my son winter clothes or medication. I thought of giving up and I questioned my vision.

My wife kept me going. She held us together. I got job offers and wanted to take them to make things easier for my family. She told me not to take them and helped me focus on my vision. I didn't just want to change access to primary education, I wanted to change access to universities as well. I hustled and with time I closed deals with South African universities. But the Zimbabwean ones wouldn't work with me. They looked at me like I was a baby. It was a disappointing experience.

My passion to improve access to education started because I wanted to see my folks doing less. I didn't like to see them struggle. At a point it stopped being just about my parents and it became about giving opportunities for other people to grow. My vision is to the way people access education in Zimbabwe.

“I didn’t want other Zimbabweans to go through the same struggle to access education as I did.”

SDG 1: No poverty
SDG 4: Quality education
SDG 10: Reduced inequalities

COMPANY INFO
- For-profit company
- Founded in 2014
- 2 Co-founders
- Bulawayo, Bulawayo Province
- Education & Financial Services industry
- 4 Employees
- Growth and Establishment stage

BUSINESS PROFILE
Educate offers affordable and easily accessible funding to enable the average citizen to access quality education. We combine this with career advice to improve the value gained from the courses undertaken by the student. We partner with education institutions with the aim to improve the employment opportunities or business start-up ability of the Zimbabwean students that graduate from these institutions, sustainable ideas visible.
SOLUTIONS FOR THE ROAD AHEAD

Terrence: The government needs to create an enabling environment and stop there. We need to limit the level of government participation in business. All we need is the environment for businesses to thrive. This can be done by creating funds, through incentive structures and by creating a database of mentors.

Chiedza: We need policies for transparency of government entities and to have a system where ministers can be held accountable. Public servants should focus on advancement of the country rather than how much they can make by helping you.

Tichaona: We should have more hubs for entrepreneurs who want to make changes in the industry. There should be experts from other countries and industries who can teach entrepreneurs the knowledge they need to scale up.

Tafara: Things should be done differently in Zimbabwe. Incentives are good, but the government needs to follow up, do their due diligence. For the first years, youth entrepreneurs should be tax-relieved so we can scale up and then we can pay tax.

Shaun: The government could have people involved in youth businesses to ensure that they are run sustainably. This way you can give funds and ensure they will be paid back.

Candice: Youth should be made aware of the beauty of entrepreneurship. People have great ideas but they can’t develop them without assistance. It should be easier to get information so have support systems for youth.

Rumbidzai: Entrepreneurs need forums to use to connect and discuss the challenges that they face. Platforms where we can meet mentors who will walk with us step by step. That would give us confidence.

Tinashe: Entrepreneurship should be made part of the curriculum. The youth needs to get inspired, motivated.

ECHALLENGES FACED BY YOUTH ENTREPRENEURS

Lack of engaged investors
“Just giving money to an entrepreneur won’t help. You need to help out with the system that they have. In Zimbabwe a lot of business have no exposure to how things work outside the country. We need direction, mentorship and exposure from investors.

Indigenisation policy
“In Zimbabwe 51% of the company needs to be owned by a local. It hinders progress. Businesses can be helped with outside partners who believe in long term investment. But now lawyers will just say no, cross Zimbabwe off the list of investable countries.”

Dog eats dog mentality
“Everyone wants something in return for doing anything. Even suppliers want your arm. All I want is for them to give me a fair price. Why should they make it so difficult or rip me off to do my business? People don’t support each other’s businesses. They would rather see you down than see you succeed.”

Bad road infrastructure
“Many of our clients live in remote areas with kilometers of dust road. We only have a small vehicle, not suitable to drive on those roads. The bad road network in Zimbabwe limits access to the market.”

Not listening to youth
“People don’t want to listen to you when you’re young. They ask me how old I am. When I tell them, they say I should go back to school. They don’t encourage, they discourage. Youth are not given the opportunity to speak.”

Ease of doing business
“It’s a nightmare. It really is, to do business here. The registration of a company is red tape. To get finance, you need a licence. The process is corrupt and you have to hire a consultant to help you with the process. The consultant tells you that you have to pay bribes or things won’t move forward. We didn’t want to pay bribes so we had to wait 6 to 7 months to get our licence.”

Corruption
“When you’re doing a project everyone wants to know what is in it for them, even the government. I have the plans in place but somebody wants to be paid for approval. It doesn’t make sense. I know doctors in the diaspora who can’t come back and work because of this.”

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Malawi is considered as not only one of the smallest African countries, but also one of the poorest countries in the world. According to the World Bank in 2015 over 80% of the Malawian population lived in rural areas. This means that the economy depends predominantly on agriculture. In the past years the country has faced economic issues due to poor infrastructure development including road networks and electricity, low levels of institutional support and poverty. As a result, the country depends largely on international support although it's slowly moving towards economic independence.

Youth Population
One in every two Malawians is aged below 20 according to the Malawi Population and Development Unit. Many youths face diverse problems such as low high school graduation rates and widespread unemployment. Many female teenagers also face issues such as forced child marriages and early pregnancies. As a result, many Malawian youths are ill-prepared for the job market and face widespread unemployment.

Youth Unemployment
There is a severe lack of skilled qualified youth which leads over 54% of the population is self-employed. According to De Gobbi, of the self-employed youth less than 1% have completed tertiary education, but their businesses tend to lead to higher earnings. Most youth take to entrepreneurship to sustain themselves, but most businesses fail to take off due to lack of access to funding, scarcity of incubators and lack of mentorship. The Malawian government has its hands full, but it has also focused its attention on promoting entrepreneurship.

Government Action
In the 2013 National Youth Policy the Malawian government indicates that they are aware that the formal employment sector is unable to provide jobs for all employable youth. In order to improve the socio-economic status of youth, the government further outlined that they will promote and support entrepreneurship training facilities. Furthermore, the government stated they would create a Youth Development Fund to create a better climate for youth entrepreneurs. However, youth entrepreneurship is a continuing battle and more support is needed.

In the 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Action Campaign MY World Global Survey, young Malawians expressed the need for good education, healthcare and job opportunities. In order for Malawian youth to escape the current poverty, they are left to fend for themselves.
I've been designing for as long as I can remember. The other day I met a teacher from primary school and she told me how she'd always see me drawing at school. It was something I did in my pastime, the way other people play chess. I'd draw designs and with my mom, she has a tailoring company, we’d turn them into actual outfits. But funny enough I didn’t take art at school. My favorite subjects are math and history. I wasn’t someone who was good at art as a subject.

One night, I was reading the Nyasa Times and I came across an article about the Fashion Designer Edition having an “up and coming designers competition”. Even though it was past the application deadline I applied. I ended up winning the entire thing! Since then, I've showed at The Lake of Stars, an internationally renowned festival, and at an international show in Pretoria. I’ve been featured on local TV and newspapers. I’ll do more fashion shows in the future, but for now I have to concentrate on school.

Finding a balance between my school work and designing can be tough at times. I’ve a timetable, which I follow. I design in the evening after homework and right before dinner. I dedicate a maximum of two hours a day to this. During the holidays, I’ll design whenever I want and sometimes I even stay up until three am. Sometimes this happens during the school term, but I try not to. Right now I used to do well academically because in the future, I want to study International Relations and work for the UN. I see working for the UN as a way to have a positive impact on the world.

I think I’m already encouraging positive change in Malawi because I’m so young and before me, most entrepreneurs were older people. There was this idea that you had to go through college and turn thirty to be successful. But not anymore. Young people are popping up and showing their talent in different areas. I want to inspire people to go for their dreams at an earlier age. It takes a lot of work to make your dreams come true, even in the fashion industry.

The fashion industry isn’t all easy glamour. People don’t know how much effort and money goes into making something. They only see the bill and complain that the price is high. But local African print fabric can be quite expensive. Business can be slow, because the fashion industry has just started to grow. There aren’t many local fashion brands because people aren’t encouraged to work in this field. I don’t think people realize the impact of the fashion industry.

Fashion has the power to make a statement on problems that society is facing. I use fashion to speak out on patriarchy and the struggles Albinos face in Malawi. I made a line of custom designed African print hats for albinos people. I wanted to help them, to make them happy. That’s one of the ways I contribute to social education in Malawi. I’m thinking big and I want to be an international brand, to become tailors and designers, I can give back to my community and create employment in Malawi. When your dream scares you, that’s when you know you’re on the right track, that’s a belief I live by. Sometimes, I look at everything and think, will I really be able to be a 15 year old designer? This is crazy! But I know what I’m doing is really unique and special, and that I just have to keep on doing it. I’m inspired by the Black Girl Magic movement and all the other women empowerment movements I see. I feel like I’m contributing to that for Malawi. I’m proud of the color of my skin, I’m proud of Malawi. I want people to know that no matter how they look or where they were born, they can achieve their dreams.

“Sometimes, I look at everything and think, will I really be able to be a 15 year old designer? This is crazy!”
I know I was going to be an entrepreneur almost from a young age. My parents are both entrepreneurs. They had a tobacco farm when I was young until the market changed. I’m using the old farm which hadn’t been in use for three years. Even though I studied a bachelor in Agribusiness, I didn’t really know how to farm. So after I graduated I went to the farm to learn what farming was about. I realized there was a lack of skills in actual technical expertise on plant breeding. So even though the business had already started, I went back to do my masters. The company needed that technical back bone.

Farming is something that is looked down upon: it’s a trade of poor people done in villages. But recently there’s been a wave where farming is becoming fashionable. Perhaps because Bill Gates said that the next billionaires who come from Africa will be in farming. The young are more tech savvy; they’ll be open to modernizing agriculture. The problem in Malawi is that there’s a lack of technical expertise on plant breeding. So after I graduated I went to the farm to learn what farming was about.

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Seeds are like magic bullets. They can greatly improve agriculture through improved seeds; they’re like magic bullets. I strive to be the bridge between research and the farmers. Researchers are working every day to produce improved varieties of seeds. But these innovations don’t reach the farmers.

Most multinational companies only work with big estate farmers. They are not interested in tapping into the smaller market and they don’t have the trust of the farmers at the grassroots. But I’ve contacted on the ground. I’m from here. It did take time, but I’ve been able to create a sustainable business by working with smallholder farmers. We don’t only give them the seeds, but we also buy back the seeds they produced. It’s a win-win situation for everyone.

Trust is integral in this business. The farmers that we work with are under immense pressure and at times tempted to side sell the seeds if that means faster cash. We sign MOUs with the farmers and we purchase back the seeds that are produced by the farmers. Our field technicians will go out and educate the farmer on using chemicals responsibly and on identifying diseases early. Our field technicians will go out and educate the farmer on using chemicals responsibly and on identifying diseases early. We also work on creating a personal relationship with the community. You have to understand their problems, only then can you successfully work with them. Infrastructure is a big problem here so when the bridge was washed away, I pulled my resources together and rebuilt it.

We don’t want to kick out the local seed varieties. That wouldn’t be right. But we do want to grow. We started with one farmer and in four years’ time have increased to 250 farmers. We’ll be very big. Farming is a risky business, but through modernizations we’re improving the food security in the country. Being an entrepreneur is taking the road less travelled. I realized I’m growing. Initially I was stressed out easily, but it has built up my character. I’m sure that in five years, people will know me and I’ll inspire others to follow in my footsteps.

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I’ve been involved in many entrepreneurial initiatives from age 11. I started selling clothes in my father’s business and accompanied him on some of his business trips. He wanted me to take over, but I wasn’t interested. I wanted to do my own thing. When I went to university in Tanzania I was involved in trading the cheaper technological products and clothes that were available there in Malawi. After university I sold everything to try my luck in the U.A.E. because there are few opportunities in Malawi. When I went there I saw luxury everywhere. It made me think about where I came from and how people there don’t even know that it’s normal to have water in the house. I started thinking, what can I do to make sure my people have clean water?

I was born in Mangochi, on the shore of the Lake Malawi. We moved to the capital when I was young, but after my parents divorced I came back with my mom. The problems in this area are tremendous. Waterborne diseases are widespread. Many families don’t have proper toilets. Whenever there’s a cholera outbreak, my area is hit the hardest. Only 73% have access to safe drinking water. That may seem like a lot, but everyone should have access to safe drinking water. Women spend hours fetching water. I’ve gone myself, walked to a borehole and waited in the queue for at least an hour.

NGOs and the government are aware of the situation, but they prefer to work along the tarmac road. Those in the hinterlands also deserve access to potable water. Malawi is also facing another problem. We’ve been hit by food insecurity due to droughts. I developed a concept whereby I could empower the communities socially and economically. Families have no money to buy water. They expect water to be free. But creating a water system costs money and needs maintenance. So I decided to marry agriculture and water.

Small rural farmers are often exploited. They don’t get fair prices for their produce. I’ve devised a plan whereby farmers can make use of the water pipe system and pay a small subscription fee or they can let me trade their produce on the market. The profit will go to them, but I take a small commission. They will get more and are ensured a market. Their daughters don’t have to go fetch water and can stay in school or spend time studying.

But it’s not always easy. I started the project in a village and got approval from all villagers that we could use their borehole as a source for the pipelines. Then they suddenly decided I could no longer use it. It was a major setback as we had already finished 70% of the construction. I put all my finances into this project so seeing it fail is a major setback. For the moment I’ve stored the remaining pipes and trunks with a relative, but it worries me. I trusted this person to store all the materials and if any go missing it will make it difficult to finish the project.

My mother and sisters are afraid I’ll give up. But they keep pushing me to not stop. They have the experience of spending hours fetching water and they want to see other young girls not having to do that. What keeps me going is the success I’ve achieved in the past. I started with nothing, but have been able to sustain myself. Now things are going slow, but when we finish people will remember this project for decades. They will say: this water is the fruits of a young man who came here and invested in the village. That’s the vision I have.

I decided to marry agriculture and water to create social impact.

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I like doing weddings, but I really want to organize more events with a social cause. We’ve worked together with an NGO in Zomba to organize a flea market to raise school funds for vulnerable children. When I organize social events, I don’t aim to make a huge profit. I see it as a service to the nation. The social impact of the events is more important. If we can raise awareness on premature born children or child marriages, we can have social impact. That’s where I want to go, but it’s not easy when you’re just starting out. The wedding planning is where the money comes from, but because of that we’re known for our weddings. I’m currently working on rebranding and changing that perception.

People come to us with all kinds of requests for weddings. Things are picking up and sometimes we even have four events in one day. The difficult thing is that the clients always want to see me. But I can’t split myself up in four. So I’m trying to create a brand that’s not Tadala, but Estac Events. It’s not easy. I’m slowly coming out of my cocoon. I want people to take me serious as an events manager, not only as a lawyer. It makes me proud when guests come after the event and tell me we’ve done a good job.

The business of event planning is not easy because people are not used to event planners. They think you can work magic, and we can but to a certain extent. One client suddenly moved the date of their wedding from December to August. That was a challenge, but we pulled it off. Then there was a client who wanted the latest limousines and cars. We went to all the companies and got quotations. Then the client decided it was too expensive. We are in the business of making dreams come true, but we can only do so much. I’m often splitting myself in different roles. My husband is very supportive, but I worry about my son. I ensure I spend time with him, but when clients visit he has to entertain himself. A few times I just wanted to quit the business, but my team keeps me going. I can’t give up on them. They believe in me and follow me. If I give up, I’ll disappoint them. They’re passionate and dedicated, I couldn’t do that to them. One day we’ll be the biggest events company in Malawi and Africa. It will create a lot of employment. Malawi is struggling, but we can create some change. Hopefully in the next few years I can go full-time on this. I do my job for the sake of meeting my needs, but I run my business because I love it.

“I’ve wanted to quit but my team is so passionate and dedicated, I can’t disappoint them.”

“I’ve to accept that I’m an entrepreneur. I was very comfortable being a lawyer and doing event planning on the side. Event planning is where my love is, my passion. I never envisaged that I would become an entrepreneur. But I am. I’m still working as a lawyer, but my dream is to go full time. Sometimes it’s difficult to balance my personal life, my work life, my business life and all of that. But I can’t let go.

I became a lawyer because I was inspired by my friend’s mother. She was the first female judge in Malawi. I wanted to help people who can’t afford to hire a lawyer. It’s difficult to leave that part of my life behind. When I got married I planned my entire wedding by myself. A friend was so impressed that she asked me if I could do the same for her. It was my wedding gift to her. Afterwards she told me I should do it as a business. I just laughed it off. I didn’t see myself as an entrepreneur.

In Malawi, there aren’t many professional event planners. It’s normal here that friends and family organize events and weddings for free. If I wanted to become one of the few event planners in Malawi, I would have to be very professional and offer high quality services. When I went to London for a three months’ law training on Africa and law firm secondment placement, I used my free time to attend a training in event management. When I came back I was ready to take my business to new heights and create employment.

I’ve wanted to quit but my team is so passionate and dedicated, I can’t disappoint them.”

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“I’ve wanted to quit but my team is so passionate and dedicated, I can’t disappoint them.”
I didn’t become an entrepreneur overnight. I lost my parents when I was in secondary school. I couldn’t focus anymore on my education and my grades dropped. I passed, but I didn’t make it into university. I stayed home for a year and then decided to go for vocational training. I chose electrical trades because that’s what my brother was doing. I thought maybe I could compete with him when acquiring contracts and jobs. So I just gave it a try. Luckily, I fell in love with it and realized that there was a lot of potential.

I found a job with a company in the energy sector and received further training. I was supervising a team, but realized that the profit the company was making and my input were not matching the returns. My boss was getting paid millions but my team and I were getting peanuts. So it motivated me to explore the opportunities to venture into my own business. I decided to work on my own venture, but as an electrical company for the income and to network in the industry. You must know people to get anywhere. Especially because the technology sector in Malawi is still something new so everyone knows one another.

Malawi is facing a major challenge when it comes to energy. Less than 10% of the population is connected to the grid. We only 1.7 million people have access to green energy. The other people rely on firewood and it has led to massive deforestation. In Malawi at least 50% of the population has a cellphone. But how do you charge them without electricity? Now people use these battery packs to recharge their phones.

“I want to bring hope, to bring light to the people and give them electricity.”

I asked myself, what will Malawi look like in the next 30 years? What will the future generation say about us?

So I quit my job and enrolled in university to study Renewable Energy Technologies. I remembered my ambitious entrepreneurship plan so I decided to bring hope, to bring light to the people who have no form of clean light after sundown. That’s why I decided to call my company Kuunika. It’s a Tsina name meaning light. It’s a biblical reference to Isaac. I thought it would be a good name as it’s symbolic of what Malawi as a nation needs.

I’m working on a solution so that those who aren’t connect to the grid, will be able to access green energy. But there is a lack of technicians and engineers in Malawi.

That’s also why I want to empower my clients so that they can handle the solar panels in a good manner. And then use what they can attempt to fix themselves. Sustainability is a key component of our service offerings. We installed solar energy in a school which significantly increased the pass rate, but that was only possible because we managed to train the community and children on managing the system themselves.

I’m also working on other Malawian problems. Many people have no access to clean water. So we’re working on a solar solution for water pump systems. Another project I’m working on is biogas. We can create an integrated farming system whereby we will collect the cow dung and use it to produce electricity. Biodegradable waste can create a solution for our frequent blackouts.

I want to make sure I’m doing the right thing and improving Malawi. Whatever I do and wherever I go, I have a Malawian passport so I’ve to do my best for this nation. I want to be a role model. That’s why I not only pay my employees good wages, but also incentivize them to start their own businesses. I encourage them to think beyond themselves, to dream about more than what they’re doing today. I didn’t become an entrepreneur in one day. It was a long process, but I’m proud of what I’ve achieved.

I UNION Electrical and Solar Contractor promotes alternative sources of energy. We install solar systems for private and public institutions as well as NGOs. We are also working on providing biogas for domestic cooking. Kuunika aims to impact the majority of Malawians who do not have access to a clean form of energy. In addition, we also provide end-user training to enhance sustainability of the system and ensuring that clients are able to obtain the maximum value out of their investment.
Happiness is not about myself, but about everyone around me so if I can help someone, why shouldn’t I do that?”

I’m a fighter and changemaker. Life became hard when I lost both my parents. It was challenging to pay for my school fees, but luckily a relative helped me. That’s when I realized that education is very important. It opened up my mind and gave me an advantage to create a better life. I didn’t want to depend on the goodwill of my relatives so I made bracelets and necklaces to sustain myself. I doubled my investment and realized I could make it into something bigger. I told myself that I shouldn’t be scared or doubt myself, but just do it and see what happens.

Despite hardship, I was lucky. I’ve seen many women struggle in Malawi. Women who were unable to fulfill their dreams because someone else denied them or made decisions for them. Women who were married off at a young age. And women who were told that they should study female subjects or drop out of school so that they can provide for their siblings. But times have changed and women are now as important as men. We need girls as much as we need boys for the development of Malawi. It’s time to change the old mindset.

I sat down and decided to turn my venture into a bigger initiative that would also have an impact. Together with a school friend we set up Duwa La Mawa. It’s a Chichewa word meaning: she’s a flower. Girls are flowers: they need to be watered, need to have sunlight and need to be nurtured so that they can grow. To me happiness is not about myself, but about everyone who is around me. I wouldn’t be happy if one of my friends is suffering. Even if I’m happy, what am I doing to make my friend happy? I know I can help so why shouldn’t I do that?

Our idea is to not only impact girls by supporting them to stay in school, but also by providing them with skills that they don’t learn in school. So far we’ve managed to get three girls back in school. We went to talk to their parents and changed their minds. It seems small, but every girl that returns to school is a victory. In Malawi we depend on outsiders, but charity begins at home. We shouldn’t rely on others. The same goes with the girls, we teach them skills so that they can be economically independent. Because often girls drop out of school because they can’t afford clothes or sanitary pads. If they can sustain themselves in their everyday lives, we are one step further.

At times it’s difficult to combine entrepreneurship with my studies. I promised my guardians that I would manage and that it wouldn’t affect my school. But it’s difficult. My vision is to see all girls in Malawi obtain education without any financial or cultural obstructions. But that means expenses and hard work. It’s tough. But I’ve inner strength. I’m focused on whatever I’m doing. If I decide to do something, then there is a reason for doing that. So even if I meet challenges, there is a force within me that drives me to continue. Despite the challenges or setbacks, I know I will preserve.

Wait for it, one day we will be the name in society. People will know us far and wide. I’ve been able to run my business and support my younger sister’s education, but I can still do better. There is a lot I still need to learn. There are so many chances and opportunities in Malawi, I have to take advantage of that. I live life to the maximum and never limit myself. I’m inspiring hundreds of girls to keep going and take ownership of their lives. I’m making a change.

Duwa La Mawa aims to promote the education of girls by providing financial assistance to vulnerable girls in society. We also teach girls handicraft skills which they can use to generate an income to sustain themselves. In case girls are unable to pay for their education, we examine ways to sponsor them. The venture has the mission to improve the societal attitudes towards womanhood so that more girls will be able to finish their education.

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COMPANY INFO
• Not-for-profit organization
• Founded in 2014
• 2 Co-founders
• Zomba, Southern Region
• Education industry
• 13 Volunteers
• Growth and establishment stage

BUSINESS PROFILE
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I don’t like being told what to do. I prefer to do things my way. I studied Renewable Energy Technologies at university and applied for jobs, but it wasn’t for me. So I started to think, what can I do with my hands? My mother inspired me to go into nutrition. In Malawi a lot of people are suffering from malnutrition. A healthy nation can prosper. I was thinking, what can I do to help? My generation can help to create jobs for the coming generation and also provide healthy quality foods. That’s why I decided to become an entrepreneur in food processing.

The passion and drive of entrepreneurs is what will develop Malawi. The government can’t support and provide for everyone, so we, entrepreneurs, can come in and help the government. I started to think about nutrition and realized that there are a lot of vitamins and proteins in the ground nuts, we grow locally. But a lot of the nuts never reach the market and end up rotting. The farmer ends up with nothing while many children die of hunger. So I decided to try and process peanuts.

Together with my brother we started producing peanut butter in our home kitchen. We decided to only buy the best nuts, free of toxins, locally available to ensure that they were fit for human consumption. Groundnuts in Malawi are prone to aflotoxins which can cause cancer. Using those nuts would not benefit anyone. We’re driven by our passion for nutrition, so quality is key to us. We tried different recipes, always keeping in mind that we need to focus on what people actually want.

We operate with the idea that we offer a solution-based product. When we researched the market, people complained that the peanut butter on the market is too hard and that you can’t smear it on bread without tearing it. So we spent hours in the kitchen coming up with the right consistency and taste. Now we’re ready to get the certification and be allowed to sell our product. In order to obtain this certificate, we had to move out of the kitchen and set up a separate production unit in the garage. I hope it’s a coincidence that a lot of great companies are born in garages.

Our production is not yet perfect. Malawians have to deal with regular power cuts. Most of the time there’s only electricity at night. So I’m sacrificing my sleep by making peanut butter from the evening till four in the morning. My friends sometimes complain that I’m not going out with them. But when you get an order, you have to produce. Business is about the customer. It makes me happy when a customer is happy. Even though all the producing now means that I don’t like nuts anymore.

I’ve a dream to eventually produce many more Malawian products. Developed countries have processing facilities, about 98% of what they grow they process. But in Africa it’s only 50%. There’s a need for variation and I will bring it. In Malawi we can add value to other local produce such as tomato sauce, apples and so on. It not only means a guaranteed market for the farmer and cheaper food for the people, but also more employment opportunities.

I want to set up my own factory. We’ll be able to create a lot of jobs. I blame the previous generation for not creating jobs for the youth. So I’ll take it on me to ensure that the coming generation will have access to decent jobs. It’s important to create a link between employing young people and agriculture. As an entrepreneur I’m in control and I’m responsible for taking this far. I love the risks of being in business, innovating and making decisions.

“I’m sacrificing my sleep by making peanut butter from the evening till four in the morning.”

DUMISANI KANANZA (24)
CO-FOUNDER & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OFFICER - BLUE CLOUD
WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/LIAN-PEANUT-BUTTER-1047618261949844/
I’m a writer and a poet. It’s something I’ve always done and I use it as a form of self-expression and healing. It’s been an important part of my journey. Growing up, I had a lot of older friends who acted as mentors to me without me even realizing. Through them I understood the importance of a good support structure. I want to make sure all girls in Malawi get the support they need and I want to give them an opportunity to express themselves through poetry and writing.

One day I was waiting for the bus on my way to work and a young girl, around nine years old, stopped me. She was looking for work in a home. I asked her about her story and found out that her mother was in hospital and as the eldest daughter, she had to fill her mother’s role. This was a challenge I was fortunate enough not to have faced in my life but I knew that I needed to help her. I didn’t think it was right for such a young girl to be looking for work. She should be in school, she should be working towards her dreams. I thought back on my childhood and realized that this had happened to so many girls. I wanted to help her, and girls like her. That’s how Girls With a Vision started.

I sat down with the young girl to try to develop a plan on how I could help her. The plan was to link her with organizations who could ensure that her family’s financial needs were met while she remained in school. After that, we went to her neighborhood together and interacted with young people there. That experience taught me that there was a lot of potential in the youth, but not a lot of opportunities. Young girls lack role models as their mothers aren’t educated. I started with one primary school and created a program encouraging girls to stay in school through mentorship and skills development. Things grew from there.

These days, I have more people on board and we reach out to primary and high schools. In addition to mentorship, skills development and career guidance, we also focus on gender relations and sexual education. Child marriage is another huge issue in Malawi. Some girls are drawn to older men because they see them as an alternative to living in poverty. We try to discourage young girls from entering into relationships with these men. I believe we should start from a young age, and also work to include boys in the discussion to help them understand the issues facing girls and women and what role they can play.

The NGO sector is difficult in Malawi and one of my key focuses is on sustainability. I don’t want to have to depend on donor money, so I’m looking at running poultry and piggery farming and then feeding the proceeds of that back into the organization. It’s a work in progress and I’ve had to contribute my own money to keep things going. I literally put in my entire salary and had to worry about what I would eat the next day. Recently, I’ve also been to China to source wedding dresses to sell in Malawi. The wedding industry in Malawi is huge, and I saw this as another opportunity to fund the organization.

I’ve found it difficult to find support as a young entrepreneur in Malawi. I’m not sure whether it came from the local or international NGOs, but Malawians suffer from a dependence syndrome which has left a lot of us crippled and lazy. That’s something I work to avoid. My end goal is to have socially and economically empowered young women in decision making positions. These women will help inspire others in Malawi and beyond. Entrepreneurship is about finding a gap and trying to fill it. That’s what I’ve tried to do for the young girls in my community. I consider myself a social justice advocate.

“Malawians suffer from a dependence syndrome which has left a lot of us crippled and lazy.”
“I had to chase him to get him to come back!”

During school plays, when the teacher would assign characters, I would always play the dentist. So, people started calling me Doctor Dussell. That’s when I started thinking of being a dentist. But I think I really fell in love with dentistry in my first year when I started seeing patients. I liked how a patient would come to see me in pain but by the time they leave they’re smiling. I believe that everyone should be able to afford a good smile. It’s my mission to give people healthy smiles.

After dentistry school, I worked for government for two years. But I wasn’t getting the experience I wanted. At the government facility, dental equipment is limited and in poor condition. From there, I moved into private practice to get more experience. I saw patients from all walks of life. I realized that a lot of them were patients from Dwangwa, a remote town in Malawi. That started my interest in that region, I wanted to see the community and find out more.

Through market research I found out that there are a lot of companies and schools in the Dwangwa area, but no dentist. I saw this as an opportunity to open a sustainable dental practice here. Distance is a barrier to healthcare. Because services are far away, people don’t go unless they have big issues. This was an opportunity for me to serve this community by bringing healthcare closer.

Opening the clinic wasn’t easy. It took me over two years and I had to use my savings before I had everything in place and could leave my old job. Funding was the most difficult. I went to the bank but they said they could only fund existing businesses. My uncle offered to help me but his business wasn’t big enough for the size of loan I needed. In the end, I got a loan from a friend and finally had enough money to start. I learnt that when you want to start a business, you need 90% guts and 10% capital.

Equipment is one of my biggest challenges. My business was inspected and accredited by the Medical Council of Malawi. But I needed more equipment because I’m committed to giving patients a good comfortable environment. Malawi doesn’t produce medical equipment so I have to import it which is quite expensive. I also have problems with electricity. The number of power outages is increasing and the power goes for longer, sometimes the entire day. It means that I can’t help patients or give them the service they deserve.

Some of the patients have been to fake dentists who are not trained and certified but pretend to be dentists. These patients have terrible, painful experiences there and are scared when they come to my dental practice. When patients are afraid or anxious that makes things more difficult. I’ve to be understanding and over the course of treatment the patient develops trust. I’ve had a patient who couldn’t differentiate pain and numbness from the anesthesia while I was removing a tooth and he walked out with my tools still hanging on his teeth. I had to chase him to come back! There are some crazy experiences, but when a patient is smiling again, it’s worth it.

In the future I want to be able to offer more health services to the public. I want patients to be able to buy their medication directly from me in my dental practice. Some patients, especially those living in rural areas, struggle to source the medication elsewhere. I’d like to have another dental practice so that I can serve more people who otherwise don’t have access to dental care. With the help of another dentist, I’d have more time to give back to the community, be going to schools and orphanages and teaching people proper dental care. I also dream of having mobile services so that we can reach patients that live in remote areas. I’m proud of what I’ve achieved so far. To keep going, I must stay strong and resilient.

In the area of Sustainable cities and communities

SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities

Reduced inequalities

We offer services including, but not limited to, the fixing of decayed teeth, root canal treatments, scaling and polishing of teeth and the alignment of crooked or ill positioned teeth. We work with companies and organisations in the area to provide professional and affordable dental services in the area.

COMPANY INFO

• For-profit company
• Founded in 2015
• 1 Founder
• Dwangwa, Central Region
• Health industry
• 3 Employees
• Growth and Establishment stage

BUSINESS PROFILE

Dwangwa Private Dental Clinic, accredited by the Medical Council of Malawi, provides general dentistry to the people of Dwangwa and the surrounding community in a radius of more than 100km. We are the only dental clinic in the area. We offer services including, but not limited to, the fixing of decayed teeth, root canal treatments, scaling and polishing of teeth and the alignment of crooked or ill positioned teeth. We work with companies and organisations in the area to provide professional and affordable dental services in the area.

ALEXIOUS NG’AMBI

FOUNDER & MANAGING DIRECTOR - DWANGWA PRIVATE DENTAL CLINIC

WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/DWANGWA-PVT-DENTAL-CLINIC-323169884695982/

SUPPORT:
• SDG 3: Good health and well-being
• SDG 10: Reduced inequalities
• SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities

For-profit company
• Dwangwa, Central Region
• Health industry
• 3 Employees
• Founded in 2015
Malawians are not open to change
“Most Malawians are conservative and there is a resistance to change. Event planning is a new thing. Normally, you don’t hire people to plan your events, your friends or family do it for free. At events you can see some family members are unhappy that we’re there. They think an event planner is a waste of money.”

No support for the youth
“Youth entrepreneurs have a tough in Malawi. The big bosses in most institutions are older people. If you go there, as a young person, they don’t take you seriously. They want to work with established businesses. I wonder if that’s the reason Malawi is developing slowly.”

Difficult to register
“If you’re in one of the smaller towns, you have to travel to a bigger town to get registered. As a young person, if you don’t have the money to do that because you’re not employed, then it’s difficult.”

High bank loan & lack of flexible payback plans
“Bank loans have a 30 to 40% interest rate. It’s a challenge to get funding. If you’re in one of the smaller towns, you have to travel to a bigger town to get registered. As a young person, if you don’t have the money to do that because you’re not employed, then it’s difficult.”

Little market support
“Bigger companies don’t package for small and medium sized enterprises. It’s expensive for smaller orders. Their target is the bigger companies. We’ve started asking them through the national association, hopefully they’ll consider it.”

Inflation
“Malawi went through a period of really high inflation and that meant our production costs increased. This reflects on the final price which also increases but then, some people are unable to afford the high prices. This means that the market, which was already small, starts shrinking.”

Unstable currency
“I got quotes for products in December, but the Kwacha has been fluctuating, which means I can no longer afford the quote. I have to buy discretion. People are afraid of using dollars because they’re afraid that $1000 today is $1 million tomorrow.”

Gender
“Most of my staff, including myself, are ladies. Some people don’t understand that a lady can deliver. They don’t think that we can make presentations in a corporate setting. You can actually see that they’re doubting you because you’re a woman.”

Corruption
“There are corrupt practices in Malawi and they are a challenge. Everyone wants a bribe. Even before you know whether you’ve won a contract, people expect a bribe. If you refuse to play the game, they give the contract to someone else. But what do I benefit, I’d lose my reputation if I bribed.”

Dependency on NGOs
“I’m not sure whether it comes from local or international NGOs, but Malawians have a dependency syndrome. Lots of people have become crippled, lazy and unable to do things for themselves.”

Solutions for the Road Ahead

Abdul: Entrepreneurship should be introduced as part of the school curriculum. People should be trained on how to start and run their own businesses.

Nurud: The youth should have access to loans. If you want a loan, they ask you for your house as collateral. If you’ve just graduated, you won’t have a house. That stops you from starting your own business.

Dumisani: The youth need a mindset change, because trying to get employed is not moving the country forward. It’s a dependency syndrome and it has to change. You have to take the initiative and start a business.

Shane: The government needs to be stronger in fighting corruption. They say they’re against it but give people time to hide and cover their tracks. That’s government bureaucracy. I think they should shut down government, stop people from leaving, all the public servants must work from a central location while they bring the forensic auditors in.

Ahmed: We should change the system to allow people to access information about entrepreneurship and even register their business on the internet or their mobile phone. Even people with older phones that don’t have internet should have the same access. That will help connect us as young entrepreneurs.

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Tafia T: Youth entrepreneurs struggle to get information about business processes, like registering your business. To make matters worse, sometimes the information you receive is wrong. Youth entrepreneurs need business information that is verified.

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Since independence, Tanzania has been struggling to translate its economic growth into welfare improvements for its citizens. Despite significant growth rates in the service and manufacturing sector, it didn't lift people out of extreme poverty and it also didn't benefit the youth. As such foreign aid remains an important development strategy for the Tanzanian government while youth feel left out and flock to the cities in search of a more stable and secure livelihood.

Youth Population
Tanzania has a very young population, about 60% is under the age of 25. In recent years the government has universalized the basic education, which has led to a significant increase in primary school enrolment. However, absenteeism, dropping out and gendered issues remain challenges that need to be overcome in order to provide the Tanzanian youth with better chances on the job market.

Youth Unemployment
Every year around 800,000 youth enter the work force, creating a huge demand for decent employment. Most of these youth are involved in farming, sometimes when they’re not even 10 years old. In Tanzania youth unemployment is also related to the achieved level of education according to a 2015 ILO study. Especially those with higher education face challenges in accessing decent jobs due to a serious mismatch between what is offered by educational institutions and what employers require, disproportionately affecting women. As a result, many Tanzanian youths look at self-employment and entrepreneurship as viable alternatives. Yet, poor infrastructure, lack of finances and lack of training, make it challenging for youth to follow this path successfully.

Government Action
The Tanzanian government has acknowledged that the answer to the employment challenges for youth lies in policy formulation. In 2009 the National Investment Steering Committee commenced their work to increase Tanzania’s performance in doing business. Key to their strategy is to work together with other East African countries to harmonize policies and regulation. In addition, the National Youth Development Fund and National Entrepreneurship Fund are small steps to alleviating some of the problems. Yet, youth require more assistance and a more enabling environment to thrive as employees and entrepreneurs.

In the 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Action Campaign MY World Global Survey, Tanzanians voted that a good education and better job opportunities are their top two priorities. Indeed, youth unemployment is high due to youths having either no skills or incompatible skills due to lacking education. As a result, young adults are forced to create their opportunities for themselves and others.
I always wanted to do things by myself. In university I rented out movies because I wanted to show people that I could provide for myself. After graduation I worked for an employer, but being an entrepreneur is in me. One day I drove past a roadside accident. To my horror the victim was the son of Maria, my domestic worker. It was a terrible accident, but it didn’t look like a fatal accident. The next morning Maria called me and told me her son had died because, even though I paid her a good salary, her family couldn’t afford to access the expensive medical healthcare.

That personal experience of losing someone because they couldn’t afford healthcare, was a wake up call for me. I started working on a proposal to provide a special healthcare package specifically for the lower class. That’s when my company Jamii was born. Traditionally health insurance is not considered attractive so we wanted to find a name that made it attractive. I wanted people to feel that they can rely on us. That feeling of community, to market our product. We thought we needed to go to the people, the community, to market our product. We thought we would become a big company quickly. But there were so many things I didn’t know: venture capital, incubators and so on. We realized we needed to become part of the startup world in order to be taken seriously and be investable. Now we’re ready and we expect to impact the lives of 720,000 people in Tanzania by 2017. It’s a big number, but I’m confident.

We created a product whereby we cut the insurance administration costs by 95% so that we can offer affordable health insurance. But we made the rookie mistake of not considering the user experience enough. We found out that what people need is a short term cover, not a yearlong as it becomes more expensive. Now the product is aimed and designed for the poorer population. But it’s tough for them to understand financial services. They don’t always understand: they pay me US$1 and they’ll get US$30 in monthly medical credits. They find it strange.

Our product is so cheap because we enrol them to a mass product. We need to go to the people, the community, to market our product. We thought we would become a big company quickly. But there were so many things I didn’t know: venture capital, incubators and so on. We realized we needed to become part of the startup world in order to be taken seriously and be investable. Now we’re ready and we expect to impact the lives of 720,000 people in Tanzania by 2017. It’s a big number, but I’m confident.

And the market needs us. I was shocked when I found out that 95% of the Tanzanians don’t have any form of health insurance. What’s worse, the situation isn’t different in other African countries. We’re 1 billion people, but only 3% of us have health insurance! Interestingly, the penetration of mobile phones in Tanzania is around 70%. It became obvious to my partner and me that going mobile could disrupt the insurance industry.

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“...we’ve established very good strategic partnerships. It’s a great feeling to know that you’re giving 47 million Tanzanians the possibility to have health insurance for the first time in their lives. But it’s also tough. There are days that I think I can’t do this and just want to cry. I lost my mother a week before the official launch date. She was buried on the same day as the launch. It stings that she didn’t get to see my success. It was difficult, but I had to keep going. Within a week I was back in business. I don’t think I’ll be running Jamii for the rest of my life. I want to expand to other countries, but it will need someone else to make it big on the African continent and even in Asia. And I’ve other ideas. There are so many problems in Tanzania. There’s so much that needs our attention. I don’t want to limit myself to just one thing. I want to spearhead more organizations. As long as they’re based on good ideas and I’m inspired by them....
I'm passionate about my community and as a go-getter. It's these two characteristics that I utilize in my business on a daily basis. My passion comes from some of the problems I've been seeing while I was growing up. I lived near a small forest, but people in the area destroyed it. On the way home from school, I could see them setting fire to the brush to clear it for agricultural activity. On day I asked my teacher if we could have a small plot to plant trees.

The world is changing, but young people are not taking enough initiative to solve the community’s problems. My father wanted me to become a teacher, but I didn’t want to. I told him I wanted to become who I am today: to be in control of my own business and help the community. This realization did take me some time. I stayed at home after graduation and I tried to find some jobs, but essentially I moved and lived with friends. After a discussion with two of my friends, we decided to go into eco-tourism. It will help us earn a living while benefitting the community and environment.

My dad didn’t accept my choice to become an entrepreneur 100%, but he gave me the financial support to run this social business. Many communities living in and around nature, are not aware of conservation. Deforestation and disruption of wildlife by local communities is a serious problem. Inappropriate waste management is another. Some people just dump their waste inside the forest and don’t realize the impact it has on their environment. So we organize cleaning campaigns and information sessions. We’ve also started a program where we teach school children to plant native trees so that they’re empowered to take care of the forest. This way we can save the forest for today and tomorrow’s generations.

But our strategy is to also provide a source of income for these communities. There are many international tourists in Tanzania, but they only visit the wildlife parks and other famous attractions. We want them to visit the people and experience their lifestyle. We’re in a good area for doing this. Besides watching monkeys and birds, we provide cultural tours. We take tourists to the farms and show them the irrigation and farming activities, and they can have lunch from local mamas.

Sometimes the tourist visits can also create tension. One day a German client got really angry. Quite a few motorbikes were crossing through the forest at high speed. It was the harvesting season and they were bringing crops to the city, but had to cross through the forest. It took me a long time to explain that it’s a public road and that you cannot tell the villagers to not use the road. It takes time to raise local awareness about the environment.

After all, we’ve already achieved something. My friends really criticized our idea. They thought that we would not be able to achieve anything. But now when we post photos on social media of walking in the forest with clients, some message me to ask me for a job. I’m really proud of that. We’ve managed to change the way people look at us, from desperate self-employers to entrepreneurs with potential. I’m doing something to solve the problems of the communities in which we live while earning money to sustain myself.

“I won’t give up before I reach the goals I’ve set out for myself.”

I'm a go-getter and passionate about my community. My passion comes from my experiences growing up near a forest where local communities destroyed it. I decided to focus on eco-tourism to earn a living and benefit the community and environment. I faced challenges, like lacking financial support from my family, but I persevered and my business has grown. I'm proud of what we've achieved so far and I won't give up on my goals.
Due to the high supply in the harvesting season, you’re forced to reduce the price, followed by a shortage afterwards. In Tanzania more than 40% of the food is left to rot. On top of that farmers have no real ownership over their produce. There is so much produce and the farmer is in a panicky state to sell off his produce, so the middlemen become the price makers. The farmer doesn’t want to waste the produce and can do little more than accept whatever price the middlemen offer. Then the middlemen have to sell it to other middlemen from bigger towns and so on. In the end the customer also pays high prices. We want to take away the power of the middleman by changing the entire logistics chain. We’re not a middleman as such that we offer trainings to the farmers and want to enter into partnerships with them. Quality fruit and vegetables start from the farmer. So we want to equip them with the right knowledge and skills and introduce them to modern farming techniques. We buy directly from the farmers and take care of the entire process from transporting to sorting to selling to the end consumer. Because we’re not only middlemen, but also farmers, we understand the problems the farmers face. Middlemen just stay in town and only go to the village during the harvesting season. We want to play a role in the entire farming process to ensure quality as well as quantity. But eliminating middlemen is not a one-day thing; it takes time. We need to gain trust from the farmers. I’m both an entrepreneur and employee in the company. I took a risk by starting this venture, but I don’t regret it. I know where I want to go and will do everything to get there. My partner and I take both roles. As long as we get some form of salary we’ll stay motivated, despite the challenges that come on our path. In Tanzania a lot of entrepreneurs start the same business as you. They’re copycats. And then there is the government who can make it very challenging for us and you often don’t even know why. We’re like a seed that is planted in a desert with no water. There is light at the end of the tunnel. The challenges make us strong. In ten years’ time, I will still be an entrepreneur. The world keeps changing and needs new solutions. As an entrepreneur and a leader I need to serve my community and society. By being an entrepreneur I’ll impact people’s lives.

“As an entrepreneur and leader I need to serve my community and society.”

CO-FOUNDER & MARKETING MANAGER – EAST AFRICA FRUITS FARM & COMPANY

I was already a leader when I was in school. At one point I went to a seminary school because I wanted to become a priest. But I’m the only son and due to our African culture, I have to continue to clan. So I left the seminary and found another way to make use of my leadership skills. Leadership and entrepreneurship are a perfect fit. I’m currently still finishing my master degree, but I focus more on entrepreneurship. I’m studying how to make money, but if I’m already making money why should I focus on studying? This current business is the first time I’ve ventured into agriculture. My business partner’s parents are farmers so we started farming pineapples on their land and sell the produce directly to the final user. Then we realized that during the peak season there are a lot of pineapples in Tanzania.

SUPPORT:

SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth
SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure
SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production

COMPANY INFO

• For profit
• Founded in 2013
• 2 Co-Founders
• Dar es Salaam, Dar es Salaam region
• Agriculture & Logistics industry
• 20 Employees
• Growth and establishment stage

BUSINESS PROFILE

East Africa Fruits Farm & Company aims to reduce post-harvest losses in the Tanzanian fruits and vegetables production through making use of cold chain logistics in transportation, handling and storage of the produce. We work together with smallholder farmers to train them in better farming techniques to improve yields and by providing them with fairer prices for their goods. After buying the products we also distribute them directly to hotels, supermarkets, restaurants and others.

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I’m proud to not only be Tanzanian, but Zanzibari as well. What’s more, I’m a local young female role model. Every young person knows me here; I’m a form of inspiration because of the work I’m doing in running the nursery school and my passion. There aren’t many women who play an important role in Zanzibar. I want to say to everyone: yes, I’m a woman and I’m doing something meaningful with my success. I was born in Saudi Arabia, but after my father passed away my mother took us back to our home country Tanzania. In Saudi Arabia women are not allowed to work so there was no way we could survive there. We lived with my grandparents at first. It wasn’t easy living with the extended family, going to school here and getting used to life here. I didn’t want to wait to get into university so I went to Dar es Salaam on the Mainland. One day my aunt decided that I was going to finish university in India. So that’s what I did. India was challenging, I was without my mother for the first time, the culture and food were different. I wanted to go back to what I was familiar with, but the political atmosphere had changed when I came back. I worked as a volunteer for a few projects until I got a job working for the Zanzibar National Chamber of Commerce. But it wasn’t what I dreamed of doing. I wanted to start a kindergarten. Until 2014 most children went from home directly to primary school at age 6. I felt that it was better for children to first go to kindergarten. I’d been working to have enough funding to start my own kindergarten. Then in 2013 a new law was launched whereby all children had to attend preschool. Suddenly the demand for preschools skyrocketed while there were very few to none. I established my nursery school and started the process of getting officially registered.

It was difficult to find a location at first. Landlords can terminate your contract whenever they want and it’s quite expensive. So when we had a donor we took it down with my family to explain to them what I wanted to do. Eventually they agreed that I could use our home for my kindergarten. We started from scratch and couldn’t afford anything. Slowly we built up the school, but some things are still missing.

I went to our school one day and received a handwritten letter from a parent. He came in and asked why we didn’t print it. I’m sure it was the realization that we didn’t have a printer. The next day we had a printer donated. I then explained the support and acknowledgement from the parents and the children that motivate me to keep going. And it’s not always easy. I want to cater to children from all social backgrounds without discriminating. But it’s also challenging. Some children come to school with no food or drinks and we don’t provide it. It’s heartbreaking when a toddler opens his bag and finds nothing in it. Or when a child only has juice with no food or drinks and we don’t provide it. It’s quite expensive. So I sat down with my family and we thought of ways to change people’s views. When the other children see we treat her just like any other child, they develop a positive attitude towards people with disabilities. Now I’m thinking of getting more special needs children, but providing them with our midday meal doesn’t look good. When the other children see we treat her just like any other child, they develop a positive attitude towards people with disabilities. Now I’m thinking of getting more special needs children, but providing them with our midday meal doesn’t look good.

Last year we also accepted our first special needs child into the school. At first I didn’t want to, but the parents begged me to take her. In our society these children are not accepted, they’re viewed as a burden at home at their entire lives. So we decided that we could do something to change people’s views. We don’t want to be the only ones doing it. I want to go back to what I was familiar with, but the political atmosphere had changed when I came back. I worked as a volunteer for a few projects until I got a job working for the Zanzibar National Chamber of Commerce. But it wasn’t what I dreamed of doing. I wanted to start a kindergarten. Until 2014 most children went from home directly to primary school at age 6. I felt that it would be better for children to first go to kindergarten. I believe that when you are committed you can achieve a lot.

"Yes, I’m a woman and I’m doing something meaningful with success!"
I grew up in the rural areas of Tanzania and come from a poor family. Logically, I went to the city for university. I studied agriculture, and was thinking what can I do to get rich? In Tanzania a lot of youth are unemployed. Back in 2006 my classmate and I were thinking, what needs to be done for the youth to make them interested in creating their own jobs rather than waiting for the government to do something?

My partner and I decided we both needed more experience before we would be able to run a successful company. After I worked for a few different employers, I decided to take matters into my own hands. We started a bar, but after two months I couldn't stop thinking it was unethical. So we came up with a new idea to give youth all the tools needed to become successful farmers. In Tanzania life is changing and more youth are moving from the rural areas to the cities dreaming of nice cars and big houses. I was thinking about my own community and wanted to create more opportunities for them.

Most farmers here cultivate just to survive. But agriculture can also change your livelihood and become a style of living. Modern agriculture is a phenomenon everywhere in the world, but in Tanzania it's a new idea. If agriculture can be sustainable and lucrative, then youth will be encouraged to go back to their villages and start farming. We need agriculture to survive. So we can make it into something that has a lot of potential.

We want to reduce poverty among the farmers through increasing productivity. We can never say 100% because it'll take a lot of effort through research and manpower, but it's possible. Youth can and should create their own jobs. The older generation is resistant to change. They continue to follow the ways of the ancestors, but when youth return they can help changing their mindset and be productive. Young people can transform the agricultural value chains.

Of course what we do isn't new, but we need to promote local solutions to food insecurity. There are a few big international companies that deal with this. Why should you go to outsiders, if we can also manage it ourselves? We need to empower ourselves to become less reliant on outsiders. We, as a business, are purely Tanzanian and I'm proud of that.

I try to help build my country. I encourage my workers to think farther than their current positions. They should learn as much as they can and then branch out on their own. Just go and do it! Tanzania is facing high youth unemployment, every young person starting their own business is providing employment for others. We can depend on the private sector. I believe that when we're committed to creating impact and change we can achieve a lot.

The government should support local youth and invest in youth entrepreneurs. Igrowing into the production side of agriculture as well. We're sourcing capital, but once we have it we can transform raw products and add value by making them into processed products. It's a win-win situation: higher revenues for me, more jobs for local youth and increased GDP for the country.

I see us as a puff adder. It's a very poisonous snake and can kill its prey instantly. That's also what I want to do with this company: catch everything we can in agriculture and become big. All jokes aside, if we unite and work together, Tanzania can achieve a lot and it's all possible. As long as we never stop learning.

“We need agriculture to survive so we need to transform the agricultural value chains.”

SDG 1: No poverty
SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth
SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure
SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities

“Bryson Maro is a Tanzania-based entrepreneur who founded Puff Ader General Supply Ltd in 2012. The company provides general supply to local farmers, such as drip irrigation and solar water pumps, and constructs greenhouses and fishponds. Puff Ader's main goal is to bring modern agriculture to Tanzania, focusing on inspiring youth to see agriculture as a viable career path.”
like solving problems. Since I was young I’ve been inter-
tested in using arts to be critical about societal trends
and issues such as corruption and unemployment. While
I was studying, I wrote articles for the school magazine
and published critical blogs. I’m trained as a technological
engineer so I looked for ways to combine my love for social
issues with my interest in modern technology and media.

One day I met this guy and we got to talk about our visions. His
passion is in animation, but he didn’t know how to get started.
In Tanzania, actually all over Africa, animation comes from the
USA and Japan. Children’s cartoons, commercial advertisements,
nothing is produced locally. That’s when we both started to dream
about starting the first Tanzanian 3D animation company.

We spent two years learning everything we could about the anima-
tion industry. I watched different Youtube tutorials so that I could
connect with the artists, scriptwriters and so on. Then we started
to create a team and invested the money we had earned while
working. It wasn’t easy as we had little funding and there were few
local talents interested in working for us. It remains
difficult and sometimes people join until they find
a better job. We just have to get better.

My role is to manage the team and be the marketer.
I look for clients, pitch story ideas and reel clients
in. The biggest challenge is to show potential
consumers that there really is a Tanzanian animation
company. Most people don’t believe it. But creating
local content is important. This way we can create
content that Tanzanians can relate to. Topics that
we like to incorporate often come with a political
undertone. People are interested in news so we try
to turn that into animation in order to make
the news more attractive to the youth.

We publish our animation in different ways, one
of which is social media. It’s a good way to engage
the audience and stay relevant. We also produce
animation shows for TV, which are quite popular.
We work with the idea that we need to collaborate.
We ask ourselves: what do people want to see? Espe-
cially when creating advertisements, it’s important
to listen to the clients. If they want The Lion King,
we give them The Lion King, if they want the ad to
fit their overall media campaign, we make it happen.

In five years’ time I want us to be a premium partner
in the animation industry. We will have built a
reputation as being one of the most innovative
companies in the East African animation industry.
We will have a full team of artists, scriptwriters,
voiceovers and marketing just like Pixar or Disney.

The first animation show I saw was Kung Fu Panda.
Since then I’ve been intrigued by animation and
what companies can do. Why can’t Tanzania
produce the next big international animation
production? It’ll have a positive impact on the
economy and give the people confidence about
Tanzania. Now it’s a far away dream. But just wait,
one day people will know Rogech.

Every entrepreneur has the ability to make it. But
the definition of success is different. As an entre-
preneur I find it important to always grow on an
individual, but also on a corporate level. I would
say that’s my biggest success so far: being able to
grow. My family, especially my dad, did not accept
my choice to become an entrepreneur. They wanted
me to become an employee and earn a lot of money.
But now that we’ve won different awards and have
been recognized by various organizations, they’re
impressed and more accepting of my choice. It’s
for them that I keep going: I’ll make them proud.

“I combine my love for solving
social issues with my interest in
modern technology and media.”
I'm an adventurous entrepreneur. My entire family is in business so the only thing we talk about is business. At age 17, I started my first company while I was in Zambia. I did business all over Southern Africa. I travelled for four years and then I decided it was time to go back to Tanzania to finish my school. I hadn't really thought about the community I grew up in, but when I came back I was intrigued by the local coffee production. How does business impact the coffee producing community?

It's then that I saw that the coffee farmers were cultivating a few avocado trees on their coffee plantations. In Tanzania more than 107 million avocados go to waste or are fed to livestock every year because there is no market. The kind of avocado grown in here isn't suitable for export because of its thin skin. After some research I found out that you can easily add value to avocados through pressing them. There is a huge market for avocado oil. The only problem is how do you do that? I took my time to design a special machine for pressing the avocados. I'm not an engineer so it was a challenge. It's been a long road, but I managed. Then I went back to the farming community that I grew up in. Initially the farmers were skeptical, but I told them I would find them a market. That helped to convince the farmers to focus on the fruit instead of coffee because they could earn more money.

Our value proposition is to improve the entrepreneurial spirit of the community. I care about solving the unemployment and poverty problem in the village. Before I came, farmers would sell between 50 to 70 avocados for US$1. With me, they get US$10 for 1 liter of avocado oil for which you need roughly 43 avocados. Furthermore, we want the farmers to co-own the project in order to have maximum social impact.

The community should play an active role in the entire value adding process. After showing the farmers how to use my machine, they're responsible for the oil. There's simply no infrastructure to do the pressing elsewhere. The village that I'm working with lies on the foot of Mount Meru and the roads are terrible. It's easier to transport the oil than the delicate avocados. Once the oil is in the city, we pasteurize and do the packaging.

Unfortunately encountering the oil pressing process also leads to challenges. It's difficult to store the same quality oil when different farmers press without supervision. So I've spent eight months to refine the machinery with a hydraulic process. But we're also thinking about other supervisory systems of the oil pressing.

My life now is avocados. I'm hoping that if the oil is successful we can also do something with the seeds so as to avoid unnecessary waste. The seeds are full of nutrients that can be grinded into pulp for tea or for hair treatment. Another cool idea that's in the pipeline is to create a machine for producing biogas from avocados.

“One day the whole world will know Yesse.”

I love being an entrepreneur, but it also makes me feel old. Everyday I've to wake up early and even then I don't get everything done. The worst is I don't have the time for socializing or I'm simply too tired. It makes me uncomfortable at times. But it has to be done. If I want to be taken seriously in Tanzania, I've to work hard and show people what I'm capable of. No one cares about a nobody. I've to make this into a success so I can follow my dreams. I dream of going to Ghana to do business.
I'm a cheeky gal with lots of energy. I found my passion in life when I did my high school O-levels when I chose cookery studies as an extra subject. My mom used to ask me to cook and bake whenever visitors would come over. I love watching cooking shows like Chopped, Cake Boss and Siba Mtongana. So when I went to India to study as my sister was there and the curriculum is more practical, but came back to Tanzania for my career. I'd worked as an intern for the government and had hoped to continue that. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to so I worked as a freelance nutrition consultant giving direct advice to clients on adopting healthier lifestyles. It was challenging because some days you work and then others you don't.

I started thinking about other things I could do and realized that the majority of my clients had one big challenge: it was too difficult to eat healthy food. I would give them a diet plan, but when they came back they always had the same excuse for not following the diet plan. It was not convenient to carry their lunch boxes to work or there were no healthy food options around work.

So I saw an opportunity to set up a healthy food catering company. This way clients would no longer be able to hide themselves behind the excuse of there not being any healthy food options. So many people in the industry responded negatively to my idea thinking I would be unable to do it as a woman, it demoralized me, but I still decided to go ahead and give it a try.

Different from other catering companies, I don’t care about the food being delicious, but I also want it to be healthy and suitable for people with different diets. Of course, we all have our guilty food pleasures. I love pastries and cakes and occasionally eat French fries, but in a balanced manner. So I hired a chef to design different menus and prepare the food. I then looked at it and modified the food so that it is low on the calorie intake, but ensured it’s still yummy.

We mostly cater to corporate people who order lunchboxes and we do catering events. Because of the chef’s input, we’re flexible in coming up with special menus on request. At the moment, we even provide in-house lunches for office staff who work nearby. Having a few restaurants across the country is one of my expansion plans.

We try and accommodate customer requests, but I’ve also learned to say no. Recently a customer asked us to organize a cocktail event. They seemed quite serious so we came up with a plan, only for them to give us a budget of less than US$2 per person. I was dumbfounded. Sometimes society thinks that you’re a millionaire because you run your own company. But the reality is completely different, I can get by, but it’ll take a long time to become a millionaire. I’ve to think about costs all the time: rent, food, delivery and of course staff. We can’t afford to pay our staff a lot, but in return we train them. All the workers have to occasionally work in the kitchen to learn different types of preparing food and what ingredients go into what dish. They upgrade themselves which will help their future careers.

My venture is like my first born. I’ve to be there for it all the time. I feel like I’ve to be everywhere in order to make sure everything goes right. It’s really an addiction for me. While other people plan weekend outings, I’m thinking about how I can be innovative and grow. It has made me look at things in a different manner and now I don’t take no as a no, but rather as a challenge.

“My venture is like my first born; I’m addicted to working and want to be everywhere to make sure everything goes right.”
SOLUTIONS FOR THE ROAD AHEAD

Lilian: A working group should be set up for youth in technology so that they can work together on improving the educational curriculum as well as the overall state of technology in the country.

Tessa: There needs to be a more lenient tax system for youth entrepreneurs. I want to hire staff, but then I need to pay them not only their salaries, but also account for employment tax.

Annal: Create a network for all entrepreneurs in the country so that they can present their businesses to each other and support one another.

Bryson: There need to be better support systems for youth entrepreneurs and direct interaction. Training, workshops and brainstorm sessions with government officials can lead to better policies and help entrepreneurs run their businesses.

Doreen: Youth registering their businesses should receive a discount because they often don’t have any or very little startup capital.

Hamie: Young people have the power to change not only the nation and the world. Give the youth a platform to share their ideas and solve community problems.

Peter: The government needs to stop thinking inside the box. Youth all over the country are coming up with innovation solutions to local problems, but because their solutions don’t fit into any box, they are not understood and discouraged.

Kraete: Inspire youngsters to become entrepreneurs rather than workers. The unemployment rate is high and entrepreneurship is both a viable career option and solution!

Yessie: There needs to be a more lenient tax system for youth entrepreneurs. I want to hire staff, but then I need to pay them not only their salaries, but also account for employment tax.

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Hamie: Young people have the power to change not only the nation and the world. Give the youth a platform to share their ideas and solve community problems.
Kenya is considered the economic powerhouse of East Africa. Nonetheless, the 2008 post-election violence has hampered economic growth, especially in the tourism industry. In addition, Kenya’s economic growth has also slowed down due to regional interconnectivity. East African integration has been key for Kenya’s socioeconomic development, especially in terms of increased business relations. However, economic instability, civil unrest, environmental concerns, inflation and political changes in neighboring countries affects Kenya directly due to increased business ties.

Youth Population
Kenya’s population is relatively young due to rapid population growth. Many youth face problems accessing education due to high tuition fees, quality of education and the distance that needs to be travelled to schools. This has led to high dropout rates especially among girls and teen marriages. As a result, many youth are disadvantaged in the job market and face higher unemployment and under-employment rates.

Youth Unemployment
The education situation creates barriers for youth trying to access the employment market. There are high levels of competition as hundreds of thousands of youth are joining the labor market around the same time. In addition, there is a lack of concrete and reliable job market information as well as a skills mismatch between what education prepares the youth for and what potential employers expect. This has led to high youth unemployment rates among the youth. The African Development Bank in 2012 estimated that youth unemployment makes up 70% of the total unemployment population. In addition, the focus on ethnic groups or tribes in Kenya makes it even more difficult to penetrate the job market unless one has a personal contact. This situation has forced many youths to look towards self-employment opportunities.

Government Action
Kenya has a thriving entrepreneurship culture, especially among the youth. Notable success stories, especially in tech, have emerged from the country. However, there is a very high failure rate of SMEs. Most ventures do not make it past a year and even fewer are able to become self-sustainable. In 2006, the Kenyan government created the Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF) which offers loans with low interest rates and flexible collateral to support youth entrepreneurs. However, youth entrepreneurs continue to struggle and are in need of more guidance and support.

In the 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Action Campaign MY World Global Survey, Kenyans indicated that protection against crime and violence is their number one priority. Secondly, young Kenyans are very keen on good education indicating the need for education reforms. Interestingly enough, better job opportunities is only priority number eight, perhaps hinting on the tendency of young Kenyans to create job opportunities for themselves.
I’m a proud, independent Samburu woman. Every aspect of my life is Samburu, a remote area where nomadic life remains the norm. I’m from a humble background and always look back at home. I want to change things. My parents passed away when I was very young and my oldest sister became my mother. It was difficult. I was at the best scores among the girls in the district. I even made it to university. That’s quite unusual. People in Samburu are active in pastoralism, the climate is very dry and the land is semi-arid.

To many people, our land is not conducive for agriculture. While I was in university I was thinking about home. It’s where my heart is. In the long 4-month holiday, I didn’t want to just sit at home and do nothing. I realized agriculture could be an attractive way of living. I started an initiative with some others, but they didn’t share the same vision. That’s when I founded my own company. Nesartim means daughter of the land. It’s symbolic of my journey.

I studied Finance Commerce, so agriculture was completely different. I got most of my information from google and some NGOs. But most knowledge in this area is related to livestock. Not maize, beans or potatoes. After I planted the first time, I almost gave up. Wild zebras came at night and stomped over the entire plantation. My sister said, don’t worry, we can do this. We can still fence the place and plant again. I’m passionate about this. It’s worth the sacrifices.

After the first harvest I looked for options to expand. I found a farm in the highlands owned by a widow. I proposed to her that we work together. The land there is good for potatoes. In my area we face a potato shortage. It’s a staple of our diets, but the potatoes come from far so they’re relatively expensive. If I could produce my own potatoes, I could bridge that gap.

At the moment my main crops are maize and beans. Schools around here ask for tenders. So I’ve been supplying directly to these schools. I aim to get to the interior schools, those that even the government can’t access. It’s like relief food. We should not live from outside the area if it can be provided for from here? I’m looking into having greenhouses so that I can overcome the lack of rain. Tomatoes are a major scarcity around here as well as onions and carrots. That’s the bigger picture I’m working with.

The reason that I do this is to inspire other young people in this area. It’s never only about me. People learn from seeing. Youth can do great things if we unite together. I want them to know that they have immense capacity and potential. Every person has different passions, but I want them to know that even though we live in remote Samburu, we can do things. Especially the young girls. In Samburu there can be child marriages or girls drop out of school due to pregnancy. I want to empower these girls and young woman economically. They can go around markets or towns instead of staying at home.

Samburu has a rich culture; I don’t want our people to lose that. But culture doesn’t mean you should compromise things. Girls should not be marginalized. Youth can and should play a bigger role in the community. We should be united socially and have the community at heart. Pastoralism is part of our culture. But there can be other alternatives. I don’t want anyone else to go through what I went through. I can make a change so I should take it on.

“I do this not only for myself, but to inspire other young people in this area.”
I'm the marketer, the technician, the receptionist, the entrepreneur. I saw an opportunity and seized it. My dad had a big farm so while I was at university I made pocket money by clearing trees, burning them and selling the charcoal. By the time I graduated all the trees were gone. I saw donkeys passing on the side of the road carrying bags of charcoal and I was thinking that must be an alternative. In Kenya 700 tons of charcoal are burned every single day!

I searched on the internet and read about briquettes. I choose briquettes because I was confident I could do it. Initially it was all about the monetary value, but I realised fairly soon that I needed to consider the green space and the benefits of using briquettes. Now I had to find a way to produce the briquettes, but the technology wasn’t in Kenya yet. I found an ex-military engineer; he told me he could make a machine for me.

I sold my laptop, invested all my savings to buy this machine that could produce 400 kg a day. Peanuts. I did some farming at the same time, but realized that it couldn’t work. One business was eating the other one. So I decided to focus on briquettes. They don’t require you to cut down trees, they provide more fuel, are smokeless and cheap to produce.

I had to create my own briquette. People thought it was a joke when they saw me with my wheelbarrow collecting sawdust and charcoal dust. For the binder I initially used clay, but I found that it produced minimal heat. Then I moved to molasses, but it’s difficult to work with because it absorbs water. In the end I found potato starch. In Kenya, potatoes are a staple, and the peels are usually thrown away. I collect the waste, cook it and use the starch as a natural binder.

Convincing the customer to switch to briquettes is not always easy. For the locals it must be as cheap or cheaper as charcoal. But people think that it’s clay or a stone because they don’t know the product. Or they think it’s only for well-off customers. So because of that I have two different price points. One for the locals and one for the corporates. But the quality is the same.

It’s tough running the business by myself. Sometimes the workers prefer to take shortcuts so that they can produce more. So once a customer came back and told me that there was smoke. If the sieving process is not done correctly, a small stick of charcoal may end up in the briquette, which produces the smoke. But for me, I bank on it being smoke free so I need to deliver on that promise. To reach new customers while maintaining the same quality promise I obtained new machinery which means that I need to do more marketing.

It’s been a challenge for me, I’m not good at marketing. I still struggle with the branding and reaching my two different markets efficiently. Creating awareness is the most important. People need to be aware of this environmentally friendly cooking fuel alternative. So to me it’s important to train other youth. Making briquettes is the same as cooking chapatti, everybody makes it differently. I’m happy to teach others free of charge so that they can become entrepreneurs in the same field if they wish to do so. The more we are the better. My briquette is unique so customers will find me for that.

My slogan is to act. The youth have the potential and need to take it. From running my own business I’ve learned to be humble. Every entrepreneur, small or big, is trying to make it for themselves. I respect what they are doing and appreciate where they are. The road is tough, but I’m happy with my business. It’s mine and it’s growing. No one can come and tell me I need to leave tomorrow. I will still be doing what I love.

“Making briquettes is like cooking chapatti; mine is unique and the customers find me for that.”
I lost my father when I was 12 and my family struggled. My mother was able to take care of us, five kids, because of coffee. That’s why I’m passionate about coffee. Because I wouldn’t be here without it. After school I went to Nairobi but couldn’t find stable work. After a long search, eventually I got a job in agriculture research. I had always had an interest in agriculture, but now I got to learn more about the industry and to travel around Kenya.

One day I was on a work assignment to interview an old man about dairy farming. When I got there, he sold me to look at his coffee crop, he felt that’s where his money was coming from. He encouraged me to branch into research on coffee, because there were so many struggling farmers. He felt that with more research on the coffee sector, the industry would change for the better. I remembered, back in the 80s coffee did well. My mom went to school because of coffee. I did the research and realized that these days, there is poverty in coffee. When I was researching the challenges, I decided to start Nyumbani Coffee.

Kenya’s coffee is the best in the world, but few Kenyans drink it. The coffee industry is highly regulated and the government controls processing. To get an export license you must pay up to 100 million Kenyan Shillings. There are two big problems. Farmers should be benefitting more from their coffee crop and Kenyans should be consuming Kenyan coffee. I saw that to solve these problems, I had to start with the small local market. In Kenya, coffee is seen as something for white people. But that perception is changing with the younger generation. I want to help push that change.

My mission is to promote coffee in Kenya. When I started, I thought I would make money right away. That’s not what happened. I had to learn the importance of mentorship and how to be patient. As young people in the coffee sector, you have to attach yourself to someone older who knows the industry and can show you the ropes. It’s difficult to do it on your own because the youth aren’t empowered in business. It’s similar with coffee farmers, they’re also disempowered.

Coffee farmers have been using the same methods for years because they can’t access information about the latest farming methods. Some farmers are still using synthetic fertilizers which deplete the nutrients in the soil, decrease productivity and add to climate change. I wanted to use my background in agriculture research to help coffee farmers. So when I urge to buy coffee beans from them, I put them through an informal program where I teach them about how they can benefit from their coffee and how they can improve their farming through organic fertilizers. Ultimately, this will result in better yields for the farmer and better coffee for the consumer.

I want coffee to be something people drink when they’re out, in coffee shops and restaurants, but also when they’re at home. Nyumbani Coffee means “home coffee”. I want people to feel at home when they drink my coffee. I want to have as many people drinking my coffee as possible. Even the president, he tried my coffee once. If he would speak about how good it is in public that will encourage more Kenyans to drink coffee. I’m willing to go to State House and tell him that he needs to buy my coffee!

“The president tried my coffee once; I’m willing to go to State House and tell him that he needs to buy my coffee!”

FRIDAH GAKII MBAYA (28)
FOUNDER AND CEO - NYUMBANI COFFEE ENTERPRISE
Interior designers are not really entrepreneurs. They just focus on implementation, but no one is creating or manufacturing their own products. I want to bring entrepreneurship to interior design. I attended a program in Nigeria, where they challenged me to think within your system what people need most or what is lacking. It hit me then and there: walls. A wall is made of so many things, but we only see the paint or wallpaper. You don't realize it's so much more. I wanted the wall to shine. To stand out. I want people to think about walls as they do with shoes or fashion. I want to be that person, when you think of walls, you think of me. I don't have an education to compete with, but I have another strategy. I want to become relevant. Be a big name in the market of wall. I will create a business empire creating wall panels, wall decorations and much more. I'm using the wall to be an entrepreneur. I'm a do-er. I don't want to sit in the office and manage things. I want to be in a position where I can do things that I'm good at and that I love.

I've this energy in me to teach people and empower them. I want to inspire people who have no formal education, to go out there and do something. I hire people like myself. I teach people the skills so that they can go out into the world and employ themselves. I want people to know that you don't need a lot of money to do things. In my business I aspire to only use recycled materials. All the wall panels are recycled plastic. I'm also making lights out of empty wine bottles and I collect tree branches from the beach. There's no need to destroy the environment when producing beautiful things.

Things are not always easy, but I keep going. Ten years ago I didn't think I would be here. I have my daughter, am raising my family. I had no education, couldn't afford anything. And look where I'm now: I'm helping my younger brother through school. My young daughter inspires me every day. I don't want her, my wife or my employees, to go through the same as I went through. I want them to have a better life, a better future with less challenges.

My motto is: work hard and let's meet at the top. I want my business to be innovative and bring art to the world of interior design. We create wall panels, wall decorations and much more. We use recycled materials and create innovative designs that stand out. I want people to see my business and know that you don't need a formal education to be successful in this industry.

My biggest skill in life is to make things. When I followed artisan design in high school, I found my calling. It helped me to be who I am. My calling is in interior design. But because I didn't have a formal education as a designer it's tough. It's like being a doctor. You can't service people unless you can see what you've done. No one wanted to hire me. But that didn't stop me. I turned to self-learning with the use of the internet. At one point Google was my best friend. Being on the internet enabled me to do an interior design course. I realized there was a big problem with interior designers.

“My motto is: work hard and let’s meet at the top.”

**COMPANY INFO**
- **For-profit company**
- **Founded in 2009**
- **1 Founder**
- **Mombasa, Mombasa County**
- **Construction industry**
- **3 Employees**
- **Growth and Establishment stage**

**BUSINESS PROFILE**
Dankiz Arts and Creations aims to convert wall spaces from dreams to reality. We provide design consulting experience and manufacture our own wall products that meet our client’s mission and values. Our feature product is 3D wall art that makes your walls come to life through wall panels, lighting decorations and other products.

**SDG 8:** Decent work and economic growth
**SDG 9:** Industry, innovation and infrastructure
**SDG 12:** Responsible consumption and production

**SUPPORT**

**DAN MUGAMBI (30)**
**FOUNDER & DIRECTOR - DANKIZ ARTS AND CREATIONS**
DANKIZARTS.COM
My entrepreneurial life started at age 9. It helped me learn what is hurting business owners and tech stuff. Before I got to school I would have already sold it off. It would then go back, buy a new phone and the story repeated itself. Yet, I didn’t always see myself as an entrepreneur. At first I wanted to become a neurosurgeon, then a pilot and at last an actor. After high school I started to have a vision that what I really wanted to do was have an impact. It was either health or agriculture. I found especially food a critical part of people’s lives.

While I was studying Computer Science I was making applications. The greatest challenge was one for agriculture. I always failed to make the ideal application. I wanted to project my envisioned problem onto the farmer. But that’s not the right approach. I realized I needed to understand the user requirements, that what the farmer needs, and only then develop a product. If I did that, but it didn’t feel impactful. I wanted to marry agri and tech. But I could only do that if I understood the agri space fully. So I became a farmer.

It’s tough. One season the machinery broke while harvesting. Then it rained and I had to stop again. A job of two days turned into a week and in the end I’d make the decision to leave part of the field unharvested. It was painful. But now I can relate to the problems farmers face. I know what challenges they’re experiencing. Being a farmer myself also makes it also easier to talk to the farmers. I’m one of them. And now it becomes easy to bring in the technology.

BizKati brings convenience to agriculture. It’s a win-win situation for everyone. Nowadays Kenya has quite a few laptop farmers. Instead of working on the farm, they look at the reports coming from the people who are actually farming their land. They have no idea what’s really happening on the ground. Often the real scenario is completely different from what you see behind your laptop. Internet of Things (IoT) can change things for all kinds of farmers.

I’m working on a system with automated reports and predictions. Is it going to be cold tonight? The farmer will get a message that you can use a certain type of natural chemical that can avoid damage being done. Has it rained for weeks? You’ll have a realistic statistic of expected yields so you can prepare accordingly. The farmer will get a message that you can use a certain type of natural chemical that can avoid damage being done. Has it rained for weeks? You’ll have a realistic statistic of expected yields so you can prepare accordingly. We will provide reports, videos and pictures what happens on the ground. It makes it less scary and risky to invest into the agribusiness.

I’m often my own guinea pig. I plant an acre of wheat or onions, bring the equipment and tools and experience. If it works I take it as an investment, otherwise I write it off. People make entrepreneurship sounds easy and hip. But it’s not. I’ve built my skills over the past ten plus years. It’s a process and hard work. Every business I’ve started feels like a new baby. I’ve tried a lot of things, but I try to perfect them while I do it. I treat everything with the motto that nothing is impossible. And so far nothing has been!"
While studying I was volunteering in a children’s home and saw that the children faced the same problems. So I decided to make the provision of water filters my fourth year project. Unfortunately, my lecturer didn’t like it and I failed. But by now people had heard about my filters and they approached me. So instead of giving up, I decided I wanted to grow. I made 300 water filters. At first I was embarrassed, they don’t look good, they’re handmade. But the customers loved them. Then people from other areas were sending me messages that I should come to their place.

The thing with water is, before you go anywhere, you’ve to understand the place. You’ve to know the water. Borehole water has a lot of heavy metals and excess minerals. In other places there are sediments. So in those other areas my filter cannot work. There was no point in distributing them. I started looking for alternatives. An affordable solution is water guard, but people are critical using chemicals in water. So I would tell people they could use home materials like lemons. I discourage boiling water because a lot of wood is needed for that and I’m an environmentalist.

I still needed a better solution. There are many water filter producers in Kenya, but no filters for low income households. The problem is in how you define this group. Many distributors say that EUR 40 is cheap and affordable, but that’s not how I see it. When I failed to find a local partner, I looked to import from abroad. The price of the filters I sell has to be EUR 5. Even that is a lot of money. I asked the locals and they said they love to have filters, but they don’t want to pay for them. As long as the water is clear, they don’t care. So I try to have a payment scheme whereby they can try out the filters and pay for them over time.

The imported filter also has challenges. People need to change the catalytic filter every 3 months. That costs money. And the filter is not able to remove everything. It’s perfect for cities like Nairobi, but it doesn’t work everywhere. So it’s my dream to produce my own clay filters that can be used everywhere and for life. People won’t have to replace any components or use electricity. And it will be affordable. When I started I had no idea about water, so the past three years have been a school for me. Everyday I learn something new about water. And in the process I help the community. I simply can’t imagine doing anything else.

“Everyday I learn something new while helping the community; I wouldn’t want to do anything else.”
I was born in Zimbabwe, but the country’s economic situation meant that there were no prospects for me. My brother and I migrated to Australia when I was seventeen. After two years I moved to New Zealand and settled there for ten years. My brother inspired me to become an entrepreneur. He’s a mechanic by profession but he’s quite inventive and enterprising. Together, we explored perpetual engines and the recycling of metals. I was quite drawn to metals because it’s a common thing all over the world. Wherever I’ve been, Zimbabwe, Australia, New Zealand, waste is a problem.

In New Zealand, I met my wife, she’s Kenyan. I moved to Kenya to marry and be with her. On the way from the airport to our new home, I saw how waste was being indiscriminately dumped. Everyone knows the city and the problems it faces. That’s how I started my project.”

“Entrepreneurship excites me, it doesn’t have the monotony of an office job and I’m forever learning and discovering.”

SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation
SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy
SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth
SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure
SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities
SDG 12: Responsible production and consumption

TAPUWA NDONGWE (34)
FOUNDER AND CEO - GREENNOVATIONS
GREENNOVATIONS.CO.KE

Presently, people perceive waste as a menace. It’s an inconvenience for them so they treat it without regard, it’s out of sight and out of mind. If you add value to waste, you can change the way people see it. Once you change people’s perception, then the country will become cleaner. If there’s a monetary value on waste, you can create opportunities for collectors to earn revenue. Without a financial incentive, people won’t care.

I see the value in waste and want to recycle plastics into fuel, but that’s not the end goal; the dream is a power plant which I’ll run using my own fuel. I’ll sell the power I generate to the main grid. Right now, two of us, myself and Titus, are working on this project and we’ve been running tests on our diesel to make sure it’s perfect. We’re using pyrolysis to turn the plastic into diesel and in theory, the process should be around 80% efficient. We’re currently at 50% and want to get that number higher and then we’ll patent the process. Titus has been indispensable, and every day, we’re learning more about this process and the opportunities we can create.

There are job creation opportunities in waste. I’ve been to Dandora, the main dumpsite of Nairobi and it’s considered a no-go zone. Here I found people to help me with waste collection. All the negative perceptions people were telling me about weren’t there. Even though I’m a foreigner, they’ve treated me well. People were more professional than some of the official service providers in Nairobi. That professionalism has inspired us to look across the city to create employment. We’re looking to hire around 600 people to help us collect waste. Helping others is one of the great results of entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship has been a journey for me, I’m forever learning and discovering. That excites me because it’s not the everyday monotony of an office job. When you design and implement something to its maturity, it’s very satisfying. My approach to waste is different because I came of age in Australia. Their system is different. You don’t find trash all over the city. It’s the same in New Zealand. You’d feel guilty littering, a mindset that’s part of me even here. When my friends throw something out the car window, I always tell them off. I tell them they can leave it in my car and I’ll take care of it. I bring my own waste from home to work so that I can recycle it. I want to be part of the change the makes the world talk about. That means that I can’t just work in recycling and then create waste. I need to lead by example.

I’m forever learning and discovering.

ENVIRONMENTAL

SDG 13: Climate action
SDG 14: Life below water
SDG 15: Life on land

COMPANY INFO
• For-profit company
• Founded in 2013
• 1 Founder
• Nairobi, Nairobi County
• Energy industry
• 1 Employee
• Seed and Development stage

SDG 10: Reduced inequalities

BUSINESS PROFILE
Greennovations Limited is piloting a waste-to-energy power plant in Nairobi as a sustainable solution to plastic and tire waste. Using pyrolysis technology, we want to produce electricity from waste plastic and tires. The solid waste is converted into fuel and the fuel is used to run the generators which produce seven megawatts of electricity at our power plant. The electricity generated is sold to Kenya’s main power grid to increase the energy supply of the nation.
I always wanted to make a difference, do something for someone else. Then I stumbled on this venture. One day I went to donate desks at a primary school. I didn't have enough to buy the materials so I asked what I could use. They showed me the girls who were using clothes to contain their flow. I discovered that some Kenyan girls use clothes to contain their flow. So I designed good quality washable sanitary pads.

But I didn't have a space or funds to buy machinery. One day I was talking to a friend, I had no idea. This friend rehabilitates prisoners. She told me that many female convicts have no money and they can't find work. So I thought about setting up a workshop to train them to make sanitary pads. I asked her, if the prison can give me a space, I can teach the prisoners how to make these disposable sanitary pads. By the time they're done with their sentence, they've learned a skill and can capitalize on that.

So I started to fundraise and donate your supplies of sanitary pads and panties to more than 2000 girls. As the days went by I got more into it. Schools would call me, but it was not sustainable. When I asked the girls I realized that the problem was not that there is no money for the menstruation, the pads on the market are just too expensive. That was the turning point. I began my research on sanitary pads.

I found that in East Africa, we supply 20% of the global market of bananas. That means there's a lot of waste after harvesting. We can use this waste to create sanitary pads from banana stems as the fibres are rich in absorbency. We're a prototype but it's not there yet. It's a bit bumpy, can only be used for up to three hours and is not yet completely biodegradable. But we're 95% there. While developing it, I discovered that in Kenya, 2.5 million girls can't afford sanitary pads. And at least 900,000 miss school every month.

Last month four of the prisoners I worked with were released. I had just set up another workshop to handle increased demand. So I asked the women if they wanted to continue to work for me. This way I incorporate them into the job market and give them a second chance. It's in the early stages, but if it works, I want to hire more ex-inmates. They're grateful to be given a second chance. It's in the early stages, but if it works, I want to hire more ex-inmates. They're grateful to be given a second chance.

Their feedback is very valuable. I also test myself to see how long the pads will last, how comfortable they are, how long it will take to dry. Some of my friends have tested as well, but in Kenya menstruation is a taboo. You don't talk about it and we fear touching menstrual blood. Even with female friends, you don't tell them you've cramps unless you're in deep pain.

I've named my product “Malkia”, it's the Swahili word for queen. I want girls to feel nice, to let them know periods are not bad. Even so, I also found it difficult telling people what I do. I was giving myself room to fail. But this year it's been easier to tell people. I can now tell friends and strangers I manufacture sanitary pads in Kenya. They're often surprised I don't source from elsewhere. It makes me feel proud. I'm impacting the lives of thousands of Kenyan girls and the prison ladies. I've earned my bragging rights.

I've earned my bragging rights; I'm impacting the lives of thousands of Kenyan girls and female convicts.
But my mind hadn’t been put to rest. Many rural homes don’t have electricity so I came up with a windmill prototype that would generate electricity to pump water from a borehole or well. Then I realized this windmill wouldn’t work everywhere. The solution would be a generator, but the problems with those is that they need fuel. I looked in different places for scrap material and starters and eventually built a generator that only needs a battery to get started.

Sometimes my ideas come during my sleep. It’s an inbuilt skill. But I don’t always use my innovation for work. Since I had seen planes as a young boy, I wanted to make one. It was a difficult challenge. Throughout the sketching I used the techniques of self-questioning. If it brakes, how will it stop? How will it move? During this process I help myself to come up with a similar but more efficient product. My dream came true when I managed to make the helicopter and was able to fly in it. Over 10,000 people come to watch. Then I sold my helicopter without the engine to a university so that they could creatively use their skills.

Dropping out of school has made it difficult to run my business. I speak little English and I've no bookkeeping skills. I go to adult education, but it's challenging to combine with the business. The growth has been progressive and I've been able to pay the tuition fees for my brothers and sisters. I dream of one day doing mass production. My product is better than what’s in the market, but scrap material costs money. It doesn’t stop me.

My drive comes from helping other people. It makes me proud when I see a client using my windmill because I know it provides electricity. It motivates me to wake up the next morning and do the same for another person. I encourage other young people to realize their crazy ideas and innovations. Together we can change Kenya and counter the challenges that Kenyans face every day. One day I'll be a big person in this country.

“My drive comes from helping other people; I’m proud of every client who I provided with electricity.”

ALEX KIPLIMO  (25)
FOUNDER & MANAGER - ITEN JUA CALI

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YOUTH ENTREPRENEURS

CHALLENGES FACED BY YOUTH ENTREPRENEURS

Gender
“It takes forever to get things done with the government. It was a challenge registering my business. I had to pay around US$200. Money I didn’t have. I had to use a lawyer and couldn’t even pay him at once; I had to pay in stipends.”

Expensive export license
“Licenses to export are expensive. It’s a cartel, how is anyone who is starting up, able to pay US$10,000 to $30,000? It’s next to impossible.”

Lack of permanent workspace
“I’m lucky I’m provided space by the government, but it’s also a challenge because the government can take it away at any point. In the past three years, I’ve already had to move five times!”

Expensive to register a business
“It was a challenge registering my business. I had to pay around US$200. Money I didn’t have. I had to use a lawyer and couldn’t even pay him at once; I had to pay in stipends.”

Bureaucracy
“It takes forever to get things done with the government. The government is not willing to help a lot of the times. They tell you, you need a license, but to apply for the license you need another license and they don’t want to give that unless you pay them.”

Lack of government support in rural areas
“When you’re a woman in business and want to do business with the government, you’re in trouble.”

Lack of government support in rural areas
“There is support, but it’s far away, especially for those residing in the rural areas. There is still a huge gap in terms of supporting young people in business. It makes the youth feel like the environment is not supportive and it demoralizes the youth.”

Partners failing to follow through
“We had found partners to work on horticulture farming. We approached farmers and got them on board, but then our partners left us hanging. We had farmers, we had produce, but no market. It was damaging.”

Not receptive to innovations
“Every time I share my idea with someone, they say, “in your dreams”. The idea is not accepted by the general public and it demoralizes me.”

Lack of finances
“Every starting youth entrepreneur faces lack of finances. Loans are difficult to get for few youth, have collateral and interest rates are high. It halts the production process, especially when you need to buy materials or fix machines.”

Unwillingness to partner
“The product I distribute is made in Kenya. But I’ve to import from China because local producers charge premium prices. Even when you tell them it’s for the lower income class and they can’t afford the higher prices, they are unwilling. They’re not interested to impact the community.”

Patent process difficult and for short period
“I created my own product, but I haven’t patented it. It’s a tedious process that takes up to a year and after that the patent will only last for five years. Even before you patent someone may create the same and sell it.”

SOLUTIONS FOR THE ROAD AHEAD

Ethics: The government has created a lot of subsidies for farmers specifically. However, these subsidies need to be better controlled so that poor farmers can benefit.

Beth: Import fees need to be cheaper. Many entrepreneurs import goods from overseas because they’re not available locally or are sold at premium prices. The high import fees are not stimulating or conducive to youth entrepreneurship.

Fridah: Agriculture needs to be promoted. Kenya is facing food insecurity and high levels of unemployment. We can promote agriculture and promote producing our own agro byproducts that we can consume but also export.

Tapwai: We need to think beyond our borders. In Kenya a tech craze is happening. The market is saturated when it comes to digital innovations. But in other countries, like Uganda, you might find that some solutions are quite new. We need to transfer technology across Africa on a wider scale. It will open the market and create more business.

Alex: There should be hubs all over the country to support youth with unique talents and drive for innovations. There is no need to rely on central industries when youth all over the country are capable.

Solutions for the road ahead

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Tweeter: We need to think beyond our borders. In Kenya a tech craze is happening. The market is saturated when it comes to digital innovations. But in other countries, like Uganda, you might find that some solutions are quite new. We need to transfer technology across Africa on a wider scale. It will open the market and create more business.

Dan: The youth fund needs to be redefined. The government does a lot, but it doesn’t reach the right entrepreneurs. Too much money goes to people who are not eligible.

George: There should be a 0% or very low interest rate for youth business loans. This will help youth scale up quickly and pay back the loan so that other youth can access funds.

Florence: Agriculture needs to be promoted. Kenya is facing food insecurity and high levels of unemployment. We can promote agriculture and promote producing our own agro byproducts that we can consume but also export.

Elisha: The government has created a lot of subsidies for farmers specifically. However, these subsidies need to be better controlled so that poor farmers can benefit.

Sabina: We need more platforms for youth. Kenya has many entrepreneurs, but they operate on their own. There should be a platform where entrepreneurs from all over the country can meet and exchange ideas.

Alex: There should be hubs all over the country to support youth with unique talents and drive for innovations. There is no need to rely on central industries when youth all over the country are capable.
Uganda has faced years of civil unrest and conflict which seriously impacted its economic growth. High inflation rates, low oil prices, national elections, protests against the government and a slowing global economy continue to hamper the economy. In addition, the instability in South Sudan has led to an increase in refugees and a disruption in the country’s major export market. The expectation of major development organizations is that, despite these challenges, the local economy will recover through local development programs.

Youth Population
Uganda’s population is one of the youngest and fastest growing populations in the world. This creates considerable difficulties for the government to provide universal access to primary education while ensuring the quality of education. In addition, due to family dependence on child labor, many children drop out of school at young ages. Those who do finish their education, have to compete with their peers for the few formal jobs that are available.

Youth Unemployment
The large youth population and the education system encouraging job-seekers leads to an increasingly over saturated job market. In addition, the arable land and natural resources are limited, providing the unemployed youth with no safety nets. In recent years, this situation has also aggra-vated political tensions within the country, which in turn has led to the indefinite closure of universities which has frustrated and disillusioned the youths more. This situation has forced many youths to become self-reliant, but due to limited training on entrepreneurship this too is a road full of obstacles.

Government Action
The current issue of youth unemployment is a headache to the Ugandan government. As a response it has taken measures to improve the country’s infrastructure and support innovation. These measures include the National Youth Policy, the Skilling Uganda Strategic Plan 2012-2022 and a National Employment Policy for Uganda, but its results have yet to be seen. The government has also established a Youth Livelihoods Programme and other youth funds, but the misuse and mismanage-ment of these funds means that few youth currently benefit. As a result, youth entrepreneurs are left to fend for themselves.

In the 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Action Campaign MY World Global Survey, Ugandans voted for better healthcare, a good education and access to clean water and sanitation as their top priorities. Better job opportunities are ranked fourth, indicating that the current social provisions in Uganda remain of utmost concern to most citizens.
Childhood inspired me to do what I do today. Both my parents died of HIV as I grew up in an orphanage where nuns took up the parental role. I've many brothers and sisters, but they all had different mothers. They also lost both their parents. Things got worse when my sister started to lose a lot of her hair and weight. People in the village thought it was witchcraft. As my sister was taken to a shrine to be cleansed of this demon state she was hit by a car. If only she had been informed that it was HIV she would probably still be alive today.

I realized that in Uganda there are many young adults like my sister who don’t have access to the right information and end up believing in witchcraft and other nonsense. My frustration about the lack of sexual education and knowledge is my motivation to work on breaking the taboo of talking about sexuality in East Africa.

But if nobody had believed in me while I was in the orphanage, I would never have started my own business. I wanted to create awareness about sexuality in East Africa. And other nonsense. My frustration about the lack of sexual education and knowledge is my motivation to work on breaking the taboo of talking about sexuality in East Africa.

So since sexuality is a forbidden topic we decided to make use of technology such as app and messaging services to provide people with accurate information. Users call and text us with all kinds of sexual related questions. Initially approaching users was a challenge, people were vulgar and disapproved what we were doing. But when we tried to explain it to them, they started to understand our solution. We don’t patronize our users. We believe in empowering them. We want them think for themselves by guiding them towards the right answers and networking opportunities. Youngsters can do is share information amongst themselves behind closed doors. But even then it’s a taboo. For example, some people believe that if you sleep with a virgin you can’t get pregnant. Or the reproductive system. But we also get more serious questions. One day a girl called us because she was raped by her boyfriend. She had nowhere else to go because she was 17 and in Uganda the age of consent is 18. We were able to help her and provide her with professional assistance.

So far we’ve prevented unwanted pregnancies, reduced the number of sexually transmitted diseases and helped people get a better sexual understanding. But it’s difficult to measure our impact. We can track how many people call in, send messages and sometimes they follow up with us afterwards. We’re also checking the statistics on topics that have to do with reproductive health.

I don’t think we could be in legal trouble because we’ve been trained and follow the Ugandan law. We also hope to work together with institutions. We don’t record any information that can identify the person, but we do record gender, age and location. We can use that to monitor. For example, if there are many topic cases in one area, other organizations and the government can go in and work on solving the issues.

I love what I’m doing and don’t care about money so much. Because of all the things that happened to me, I can now help others. I know how it feels so much. Because of all the things that happened to me, I can now help others. I know how it feels so much. Because of all the things that happened to me, I can now help others.

“Because of all the things that happened to me, I can help others.”

RUTH NABEMBEZI
CO-FOUNDER– ASK WITHOUT SHAME
ASKWITHOUTSHAME.COM

COMPANY INFO
• Social enterprise
• Founded in 2015
• Mpigi Town, Central region
• Health and Safety industry
• 2 Employees
• Growth and establishment stage

BUSINESS PROFILE
Ask Without Shame provides emergency sex education through phone or mobile application to East African youth. We offer a free and anonymous service to answer any questions regarding sexual matters without judgment or making the clients feeling ashamed. Our medical experts are available 24/7 via the app, telephone calls, Facebook and WhatsApp. Questions include amongst others HIV, sexual transmitted diseases, menstruation, contraception and pregnancy. In case of severe emergency situations we provide immediate help and psychological support.

SDG 3: Good health and well-being
SDG 5: Gender equality
SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure

SUPPORT:
• Mpigi Town
We came up with an idea to make the farmer less reliant on the middleman. Our idea won the university challenge and we got US$5,000. I’d never had more than US$50 so I took my boys and we went partying. By the end of the trip I realized that I could actually generate money from nothing and make a change. We started writing code and were creating so many products. Then a lawyer told me I should patent my ideas. I had no idea we could actually do this. He showed us how to do it and helped us create a business model. That’s when everything started to make sense.

We basically integrate a simple mobile technology system that farmers can use regardless of the phone they use. To give you an example, growing garlic can give a high return on investment, but few farmers can afford it. We help them connect to financers who will get some return on their investment only after harvest. It’s flexible and therefore a win-win situation for everyone.

We do the same with our technology. Farmers don’t need to pay upfront. But every time they sell something, we get part of the profit until the technology has been paid off. Farmers can also track what happens with their poultry or fruits and vegetables. It’s especially good for long distance farmers who work in government offices and want to monitor their farms from the office.

We’re a finisher and not a quitter. It’s like what people say, do what you love and you’ll never work. I love coding, meeting people and changing people’s lives. In five years we should be able to have a foot in 90% of the agricultural families in Uganda. The best thing is that because we deal mostly with technology it’s easy to scale up.

But for now I haven’t done enough yet. I’m still figuring things out. I give myself ten years and then the business should be self-sustainable. When I retire, my trophy is not how much money I’ve accumulated, but how much I’ve changed people’s lives. At this stage I’m already one of the most successful people in the village. It gives me the feeling that I should contribute. The only thing I can do is to tweak this product so that we can generate sustainable incomes for farmers. That’s my ambition.
Most people start spending money on their health only after they’ve gotten sick. Instead of us finding medical solutions, we need to prevent people from getting ill. I want to make Africans more proactive; I want to arm the society. If only we live a better life with less processed foods and other easily adoptable health disciplines, we’ve already won half the battle. But in Africa the health business is still in a virgin state. It’s basically only for the rich.

Initially I wanted to run my business as a not-for-profit, but quickly I realized you also need money to survive as a business. So I registered as a social enterprise. I was so determined to make a change that I invested everything I had into my company. I sold everything in my house: my plasma TV, my ATC, my couches, I even sold the car that I got from my mother as a gift. To say the least, she wasn’t pleased. But I stayed passionate, positive and focused.

I have a vision. A dream. When my projects are flourishing, I know it will have an impact on the world. Even now I’m honored when my clients believe in me and thank me for helping them live a healthier life. I feel energized to start a new day and meet challenges head on. I love what I do. Every time I reach a milestone I get more and more determined to keep going. To make my business not just successful in Uganda, but eventually I want to affect all Africans in the world. I don’t want to leave Uganda. Everything is better here, I’m sorry to say. I was born here even though my family was originally not from here. I’m proud to say I’m Ugandan and changing the world.

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“I love what I do and am determined to make my business not just successful in Uganda, but I want to affect all Africans in the world.”
When I left the company, I came to an agreement with my boss that I would help them reach the difficult accessible rural areas through my own business. Our product is imported, but we are able to reach those people large business concerns can’t. This is where my innovation lies. And because of my job, I know the market very well and what the people exactly need.

With my solution people can live the same way as they were used to, but do it in an environmentally friendly way that also helps them save money in the long run. There’s no need to buy fuel anymore and people save on future medical health bills. It’s my mission to let the community know there’s an alternative source of lighting that they can use.

It’s an uphill battle. One day when I went home, I brought a solar lamp for my mom to use. Later I found out that she put the lamp aside as soon as I left. If she knew I’m coming back she would quickly remove it from the cupboard. I told her it’s wrong, because I brought it to save her. Not me, where I live there is electricity. It was a good lesson and I use that story when I promote the lamps to other villagers.

When I talk to people in the villages, I first show them the traditional lamp and ask how many of them use it. Of course they answer all of them. Then I ask how much they spend on buying kerosene. Together we do small calculations and then I tell them, “you know with all the money you spend every month on fuel for the lamp, you can actually buy another solution which is free afterwards. One lamp will benefit 5 family members.” It has proven a very useful strategy.

Our lamps also help other small business owners. One day I met this gentleman who is a roadside chapati, an east African bread, seller. He was amazed at the light, but didn’t have the money. I told him, “ok if you can pay me in three installments, I can provide you with a lamp.” You can’t imagine the traffic he got on the first day that he was using his light. His client base increased because clients could now see what the seller was making.

To me entrepreneurship is not an option; it’s my life. It keeps me moving and staying on top of things. If your life is smooth, you don’t move. Business gives me that bit of independence I need but also pressure. If I don’t make a profit today, I need to wake up early the next morning to make a bit of money. It’s challenging, but you keep learning. I’m determined to make it. My impact will be felt all over Uganda.

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To me entrepreneurship is not an option; it’s my life. It keeps me moving and staying on top of things. If your life is smooth, you don’t move. Business gives me that bit of independence I need but also pressure. If I don’t make a profit today, I need to wake up early the next morning to make a bit of money. It’s challenging, but you keep learning. I’m determined to make it. My impact will be felt all over Uganda.

“Entrepreneurship is not an option for me, it’s my life and I’m determined to make it work.”
I grew up in the city, but developed a rural mindset. Every holiday I used to go to the village; I fell in love with the culture. When my father passed away, it was decided that I would go live with my grandmother in the village. Every day I had to walk six kilometers to school. On my way there I always passed fields of sugarcane. I admired the plantation owner and dreamt of becoming a big farmer employing over 4000 people, just like him. It was just a dream.

When I went to university I chose to study engineering, like my dad, and worked in water engineering for a few years. One day I started in the village for three weeks and found some of my friends unemployed. Many youths are idle and spend their days hanging around town. Rural youth face more challenges than urban youth. On top of that they’re often given a chance by their family to cultivate land for their personal production. Even one acre of land can help them to turn their life around.

So I sat down with two other friends and we started brainstorming how we could provide more employment for these youth. We realized that rural youth should be empowered to become the drivers for food security. But of course youth also want things that work out fast; they want money today. We found a solution in horticulture farming. Because one acre of horticultural crops generates more capital than two acres of traditional crops. The potential is huge: Uganda has 60% of the arable land of East Africa.

To test the market, we distributed packed sliced fruits and salads to professionals. My business partners were afraid to go out and do this. My mother told me, “as a leader you need to show them that it’s working.” So I bought a uniform and started selling. Within an hour we earned US$26. We were all convinced of the potential of farming, supplying and even exporting fresh produce. That’s how we started.

In order to market, you need produce. So I went to my grandmother and asked for land. She gave me one acre and I started planting Asian vegetables. When my family heard about this, they messaged me telling me that I shouldn’t be stupid by becoming a poor farmer. People think that there is no potential in farming. But they’re wrong. I’ve seen it work. Ironically, now my family comes to me asking for money.

Of course we had our own challenges. When we just started I bought expensive seed from town, but weeks after planting there was still nothing sprouting. We went to the seller, but they have their lawyers and as a farmer I can’t argue. But it was a good experience. Now I organize young farmers into producer groups, what I call, Youth Horticulture Farming Strategy. We empower them by providing them with all the tools needed: seeds, fertilizers and assistance. The system of smallholder farmers in Uganda doesn’t provide the farmers with any bargaining power. Together we are stronger; we’re providing that platform.

It’s not always easy and many youth didn’t believe in our solution at first. One day a friend approached me and said that he wanted in. So I told him: “there is a market for chili, but I need at least one acre. I’ll provide you with the seed, an agronomist and I’ll buy your harvest.” He and his friends got excited. Because he was located in a remote area, I only checked on him by using the phone and thought all was well. Then I went to buy the harvest and got so annoyed. They had not even planted half of the acre! And the client kept chasing me for chili. We keep solving problems and slowly we’re getting there. I’ve learned that words alone are not enough, but we need to provide the tools, check on the processes, give advise on pests and assist with technical support. We don’t just talk, but we’re really doing things on the ground. Patience is key, which is not always easy. But I know that every day I impact people’s lives.

“Words alone are not enough; we need to act.”
AHUMUZA RONAH
(26)
FOUNDER – AFRI-FIBRE
WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/AFRIFIBRE/

My life has not been easy, I’ve a lot of responsibilities and people to take care of. Responsibility for others has been a core pillar of my life. My parents died of HIV and I want to live with my aunt. On her deathbed I promised her I would study hard, take care of my brother who was in prison and keep the family together. Then my sister also died and left three children. The father didn’t want them, so they’re my responsibility now. I want to make my aunt’s dying wish come true.

I managed to finish my degree, but after student protests the university has closed indefinitely so I’m still waiting for my diploma. It’s frustrating because without one I can’t find a job. Everyone expected me to become a drunkard and a prostitute. But I’m determined to prove everyone wrong. I know I can do it.

My business started in 2015. The government announced a ban on the plastic bag. I was wondering what could replace it. Then I learned about the recycled paper bag which is both environmentally- and health-friendly. I went to talk to an industrial research institute, got some training, and started producing. I don’t have my own factory yet, but I use an existing one whenever they’re not producing. It’s not ideal so I also started to look at other options.

As I was working with the paper I realized that there are a lot of things we can do with it. I started experimenting with creating earrings, necklaces and paper boxes. People are always shocked and surprised that you can actually make beautiful and even useful products out of recycled paper. Especially when I go to collect used paper from offices, people wonder what I’m doing because they only see waste. So I’m not only in the business of manufacturing, but also waste management. Even better, it doesn’t cost me much, which was a prerequisite for me.

I also use my products to do advocacy. Obviously I want to create environmental awareness and attend conferences. I don’t just hand out my recycled paper bags, but also talk to the people so I can spread the message of saving the environment. I also make use of my products to spread messages. Before the elections I designed bags which had political messages on it such as “Your voice is your voice”, “Your voice counts” and “Officials are elected by good citizens who don’t have a voice”. It was risky, but it helped people to think critically.

In Uganda youth are considered lazy, noisy and evil. It’s not that they’re bad people, but because of the high unemployment rate and poverty situation, they’re lured into criminal behavior to make quick money. I want to be able to hire more young women who are struggling like me. I understand where they come from and the challenges that are ahead of them. I never had the opportunity to work, but I can provide it for them. That’s my contribution to society.

“I dream of making a difference to my family, but also to the society.”
“My life hasn’t been easy, but it has taught me to be resilient and to fight for what I believe in.”

NOLBERT MUHUMUZA (34)  
CO-FOUNDER & COO – AWAMU BIOMASS ENERGY  
WWW.AWAMU.UG

My life hasn’t been easy, but it has taught me to be resilient and to fight for what I believe in. After the death of my father I went to live with my godparents. I ate one meal a day: dinner. It was a tough time, but my godparents were generous and gave me the love I needed. Now it’s my turn to give back to society. To help people see that their suffering is an opportunity to earn a living while solving social issues.

In college I studied Computer Science, but it wasn’t until I learned about micro-gasification that I found my passion in life. I visited a friend at the Centre for Research in Energy Conservation who introduced me to cleaner cooking alternatives. Low tech stoves captured my attention. These stoves offer a lot of possibilities to low income families in Uganda and Africa.

Gasification is an old technology used by the Germans in World War II. In the late 1980s a missionary brought the technology to Uganda. But only in the 2000s was the process changed into a process suitable for domestic use. Basically, the technology can help with creating a more efficient burning of biomass for cooking purposes. I was intrigued by the possibilities it could create for small households.

Our stoves empower women by saving them the time of having to frequently fetch firewood for hours and carry it back home. We also cut down the time it costs to heat up the fire and the time it can cook for. And most importantly it reduces indoor air pollution and saves trees. Almost all Ugandan households use open fire stoves which have a tremendous impact on the lungs of everyone. Our stoves are nearly smokeless and carbon neutral!

Even better, a by-product of the stove is the creation of clean coal. When the biomass has finished burning, the coal is still hot and can be used for immediate cooking. Families can also decide to sell the coal or even put it into the soil to improve nutrients retention. Simply put, our stoves are not just stoves but value added products.

Yet, despite all the benefits, it’s challenging to explain to people how to use it. I normally compare it to the first time my mother used a phone. She called customer support to ask how she had to remove the envelope that was showing on the phone; she didn’t know how to read a text message. Now, she’s on WhatsApp and Facebook and is the problem not how to use a phone anymore, but how to keep using it. It’s the same for us, we need to educate people in using biomass fuels like maize crops, cassava stems and other agricultural products rather than cutting trees.

Interestingly enough, it’s the community around me where people are not using the stove. I guess it’s like the bible says: the prophet is famous everywhere except in his home village. So I’m always working on improving the product to make it look better, be 100% homogenous and even more efficient. I’m dedicated to not fail. In Uganda statistics show that 80% of businesses fail before their first birthday. And of this 20% that make it, only half of them will see their second birthday. I’ve passed those critical stages, but that doesn’t mean I can relax. I’m a duty to fulfill.

For me being an entrepreneur is a responsibility. There are 36 million Ugandans, I can’t create 10 million jobs. But I can create one at a time. My target is to have created 250 direct jobs by 2020. It’s a drop in the ocean, but it’s a drop. It’s not 0. It’s my responsibility to make sure the business is sustainable and creates impact at the same time. But in the end, my personal goal is to empower young people to live responsible and sustainable lives.

My life hasn’t been easy, but it has taught me to be resilient and to fight for what I believe in.
I believe in doing what you love. I would hate to have an 8 to 5 job; it would lead to a midlife crisis because I would feel stuck. I’ve always had that entrepreneurial spirit, I want to be able to work when I want to and drive innovation in industries which are considered traditional, like the motorcycle taxi in Uganda.

My entrepreneurial journey started when I was doing some part-time work at a construction site. I met one of the builders and he told me he was also a boda boda, motorcycle taxi, driver. He told me about his business, how much he earned and the challenges he faced. In Uganda people fear getting on a motorcycle because it’s considered unsafe and the drivers are seen as unhygienic. At the same time, the boda boda is the cheapest and fastest means of transport and used by many Ugandans.

So I started thinking about a business proposition which would benefit both the driver and the customer. Safety was an obvious concern because no one wants to end up in an accident with a motorcycle so that became the core value. Generally speaking, in Uganda a lot of boda drivers don’t use helmets or when they do, they don’t provide one for their customer. That was the first thing I implemented.

But then I realized that safety starts even before hitting the road. I had to focus on the motorcycles themselves. Quite a few drivers have faulty motorcycles, but they can’t afford to fix them. So I thought of a plan so not only ensure safe and rideable bikes, but also to make the boda drivers the owners of the bikes. I just walked up to the office of a big motorcycle company and by God’s Grace the CEO was there. I sold him on my vision to create a new generation of boda driven in town and he bought it. Now he provides us with a good price for bikes.

Basically what we do is this: I get the bikes, then I lend them to the drivers who will pay me a monthly rental fee, and after eleven months of rental they’ve paid off the full price of the motorcycle plus a low interest rate and we transfer ownership of the bike to the driver. We then reinvest the money and provide another driver with a motorcycle. So far I only had one driver who stopped paying and after we took the motorcycle back, he realized we were serious so we gave him a second chance.

It may sound strange, but before I started this company, nobody wanted to touch the boda boda drivers. I love what I’m doing and it’s definitely more rewarding than working in an office. When I started I just thought about the money, but as I got to know the drivers, I started to care more about the impact I would have on the community. I realized we’re making a difference so that’s what I’m focused on now.

“COMPANY INFO
• For profit
• Founded in 2014
• 1 Founder
• Entebbe, Central region
• Transportation industry
• 7 Employees
• Growth & establishment stage

BUSINESS PROFILE
My Boda Guy creates a new generation of motorcycle riders in Uganda. We run a hybrid model of purchasing motorcycles which we then sell based on a flexible payment scheme to individuals who want to become motor taxi drivers. All the drivers that we work with must pledge to follow our safety regulations such as taking trainings, having helmets and even financial literacy trainings, we’re impacting a complete economy. In two years, I want to have 4000 riders, which means 16,000 family members will be able to live a more stable life.

I look at myself as managing a community of around 16,000 people. I love what I’m doing and it’s definitely more rewarding than working in an office.”
For most of my life I followed the path my father laid out for me. He wanted me to become a doctor, but eventually I realized that wasn’t my dream. I started to make my own path, but I didn’t know what I wanted to do until I started working at a university library, where I was still in high school. Then I saw and used a computer for the first time in my life. I fell in love with computers and decided to study computer science. I loved it.

After university I got a good job in telecom. I was very excited about this. After three years I realized something was missing. I loved the work, but I was always in the background. I wanted to do more with my life and do something for society. I love to provide an intersection between technology and development. Technology by itself can’t do much, but we can design it so that it actually helps people.

To gain experience I want to work for a company empowering rural women to make their own living through selling solar lights. People challenged me, saying that it wasn’t technology, but solar energy is technology. Also we taught the women technical skills so that they know how the lights work.

For this work I spent a lot of time in the countryside and found out that most people had a mobile phone. It was so essential to them; not only to stay in contact with the family in the city, but also to receive mobile money. That was the moment I realized the phone can be a solution to local problems. It was so essential to them; not only to stay in contact with the family in the city, but also to receive mobile money. That was the moment I realized the phone can be a solution to local problems.

In Uganda 80% of the population depends on agriculture mostly driven by smallholder farmers. Most of them live in poverty because they don’t have the financial abilities to buy seeds and farming equipment. When they do get money they often end up spending it on their most pressing needs, like school fees or medical bills. As a result, they default on their loans and don’t utilize their farmlands to the max.

It’s a pressing problem that a lot of organizations try to alleviate. But these organizations face a lot of challenges themselves. They can’t measure the impact in the village in real time. They don’t know if the vouchers they provide for the farmers will actually adjust their programs to assist the farmers more. Instead of just giving them money, they also need to pay half of the costs for seeds so that they take more ownership and need to work hard in order to get return on their investment.

We’re using USSD technology. It’s the simplest technology that can be used, but the only one that works for our demographic. We start with what the simple mobile phone they have and build on that to provide a technological solution. Our social mission is an important pillar. We’re a software company that provides services to amongst others small holder farmers and refugee camps. Our “software-as-a-service” solution provides organizations with the tools to make the work of NGOs, the government and others easier through impact assessment and real time data.

Before I started, I decided I needed to focus on the question what exactly I wanted to do. I went to India for a volunteering fellowship. I helped a local social impact startup with my technological skills. We put in place processes to help disadvantaged children to study through technology. I implemented the product, met customers, potential business partners and saw the impact. It helped me to focus and prepared me to kick start my own business when I got back.

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Finding trustable partners
“Last year we worked together with a partner to export our goods. Unfortunately, the partner didn’t pay us even though he had received the shipment. There is simply no database with information on how to export and laws of respective countries.”

Access to the right tools
“I would love to use better tools that can produce products which are more homogenous. Currently the quality and production speed is lower: But we don’t have them here in Uganda and I don’t know how to import them at an affordable price.”

Difficult registration process for social enterprises
“I want to register my business, but the registration process doesn’t favor young entrepreneurs. If you’re an organization or company it’s much easier. Now I need a lawyer and a lot of money in order to register.”

Cultural attitudes
“Sometimes running a business becomes more difficult because Ugandans aren’t easy people to deal with. They’ll make appointments but not show up or promise you things but don’t do it. It’s frustrating and has an unnecessary impact on the business.”

Lack of trust and funding
“Banks don’t believe in us young people so they don’t want to give us any funding. Or they ask for very high collateral which we can’t afford.”

Taken advantage of
“Networking is a vital part of entrepreneurship, but as a female entrepreneur you need to always be careful. Even established entrepreneurs may be after your body when they tell you they want to mentor you. It’s discouraging and disappointing.”

Proper working space
“It’s difficult to find good, but affordable working space. Clients need to find you, but in my current location I’m not allowed to put up signposts.”

Wrong political affiliation
“In Uganda they always want to know what political color you are. In Uganda we identify people by color, if you support the wrong color, you won’t get any business support or grants.”

Understanding technology
“In many parts of Uganda people only recently have mobile phones. It’s difficult making them understand that technology will help their lives, let alone training them on how to use it.”

Lack of interest from financial institutions
“You go to financial institutions and ask them if you get a small loan. They say no, we can’t do it. They fear investing in small businesses and it hampers our ability to grow.”

Can’t afford high-skilled employees
“Like any business we want to hire the best of the best. But mechanical engineers are too expensive. Now we do in-house trainings to build capacity and different skills, but the quality is still lacking.”

CHALLENGES FACED BY YOUTH ENTREPRENEURS

SOLUTIONS FOR THE ROAD AHEAD

Ronald: It doesn’t work to give people money because they don’t know what to do with it or misuse it. It’ll be more helpful to invest that money into specialized trainings.

Nelson: The tax ceiling for business is too high. All businesses regardless of how much they earn should be able to get exempted from paying taxes for purchases. It’ll enable entrepreneurs to save money and they can provide cheaper products.

Sheila: We need to help youth entrepreneurs to protect themselves so that no one can impersonate them or take over their company.

James: The government should buy technologies from overseas and train youth entrepreneurs on how to use it or provide it to them for use, with an affordable payment scheme.

Benedict: Have youth representatives from their respective sectors to be part of the dialogue on all government policies. Likewise, the government officials should be part of the ecosphere of the sector they work in.

Rodney: The interest rates need to be fixed by the government so that banks can’t charge crazy rates. Also, there should be a Venture Capital Bank which focuses specifically on startups with low interest rates and flexible repayment schemes.

Carl: More of the government budgets need to be spent on innovations, on an accountable and transparent manner. Innovation is what makes countries grow and economies change. That money needs to be available to the youth and not disappear.

Charles: Youth need to be given more practical training through vocational training. Now the education system is mostly theoretical and doesn’t help youth to become independent or learn useful skills. It’s a win-win situation, as students will stop opposing the government every day.

Evelyn: Have youth representatives from their respective sectors to be part of the dialogue on all government policies. Likewise, the government officials should be part of the ecosphere of the sector they work in.

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Rwanda’s history is marked by the 1994 genocide which has significantly hampered development. Foreign aid has significantly assisted in the rebuilding of the country, but is slowly being reduced. Since the genocide, Rwanda’s growth has been driven by agriculture, manufacturing, services and construction. Poverty rates and subsistence farming remain high, but the government is taking significant steps to overcome this. The government is aiming to transform Rwanda to a knowledge-based economy.

Youth Population
Rwanda’s youth (14-35 years) represent around 40% of the total population. In the first decade of the 20th century, Rwanda significantly reduced out-of-school children in primary education according to UNESCO. This has led to questions regarding the quality of teachers and to questions of what formal employment opportunities these youths will find once they graduate.

Youth Unemployment
Rwanda’s youth bulge continues to outpace annual job creation. Most unemployed youth live in urban areas, which is further exacerbated by an increasing rural-to-urban migration. Furthermore, young women in urban areas face even more difficulty in finding employment. As a result, Rwandese youth, especially young women, opt for entrepreneurship. Currently, the government is taking action to change its economy and create more formal jobs as well as stimulate and foster youth entrepreneurship.

Government Action
In the past years the Rwandan government has adopted productivity and youth employment as one of their policy pillars. The Rwandan government was among the first governments in Africa to realize the importance of developing plans and strategies to address the increasing youth unemployment rate according to the UNCDF. The 2003 National Youth Policy was a start to consolidate all youth-related issues into one comprehensive paper. In the years since then the government has developed specific policies focusing on employment and entrepreneurship in an effort to change the country’s economic status.

The 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Action Campaign MY World Global Survey, the top priorities of Rwandan people are a good education and better job opportunities. This indicates a general concern of Rwandese youth with their chances to create a better life for themselves.
I love life and nature, watching a plant grow is the most satisfying thing to me. Working with nature makes me feel like I’m doing my job as a human being. I discovered this love when I studied biotechnology in India. I never thought I would go to India in the first place; it was my parent’s choice.

Going to India after high school was tough because the country wasn’t as perfect as I expected it to be: the culture was very different, the food unfamiliar and spicy and it wasn’t as clean as in Rwanda. But I also loved staying there. I liked being on my own and having the ability to make my own decisions. In India the society is very protective of young women and they don’t expect women to be ambitious.

The education was good, we did a lot of experiments and practicals. Once we examined earthworms converting organic waste into a nutritious fertilizer – vermicomposting. At the time it didn’t particularly raise my interest, but it stayed in the back of my mind. After my studies, I decided to go back to Rwanda for work, but before I did I sat down with two fellow Rwandans who had done the same degree as me.

While discussing what we’d learned, we suddenly realized there was the potential to introduce vermicomposting in Rwanda. Our country is developing, but agriculture is still our basis livelihood. So we thought how can we increase and improve agriculture? Farmers now use chemical fertilizers which are bad for the soil. It’ll increase the yields, but in the long run it severely damages the soil. Some farmers do use organic fertilizers, but it takes a long time to produce and it’s only done on small scale.

When we went back to Rwanda, I thought we would first find jobs to earn the startup capital we needed. But it turned out to be much harder to find employment than we’d anticipated. So we started to set things up. It wasn’t easy. I’d been away for five years and things had changed. I felt like a stranger in my own country. I had to relearn the system; where to go to register my business, who to ask for assistance and so on.

We managed the bureaucratic process, but we also had to get the right earthworms for the vermicomposting process. You can’t just dig them up and set them to work. Because we’re the first ones doing this in Rwanda it wasn’t easy. But we tracked down a coffee farmer who worked with earthworms, but he didn’t have any use for them anymore. We bought them and set them out to multiply. It wasn’t too difficult because each one of them gives birth to about four earthworms. That’s what we need.

The earthworms are essential to our business, not only because they produce the compost, but also because we want to sell them to farmers. We won’t give the farmers all our secrets, but enough to empower them. At the end of the day, the market is big enough and we can earn something from the trainings.

Sometimes people don’t understand why I wanted to make a career out of soil and earthworms while I had a master’s degree. On top of that, being a woman also led to some resistance. Most people think women shouldn’t complicate their lives with chemistry and science. Luckily there are more female entrepreneurs which makes it easier.

When we started we didn’t know if we could do it. Now I see the earthworms here and think: wow, if we’ve been able to do this without money, what else can we do? That’s what gives me the courage to continue.

“Working with nature makes me feel like I’m doing my job as a human being.”

COMPANY INFO
• For-profit
• Founded in 2014
• 3 Co-founders
• Kinigi, Northern Province
• Agriculture industry
• 2 Part-time employees
• Pilot stage

BUSINESS PROFILE
Vermi-Comp specializes itself in the production of a very rich organic fertilizer, the so-called vermicompost. We use earthworms to convert all kinds of local organic waste into a nutritious fertilizer. Besides selling the compost, we also train local farmers on the basic skills needed to produce earthworms, so that farmers cannot satisfy the entire market and to empower the smallholder farmers.

- SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production
- SDG 15: Life on land
China, but the rural population aren’t buying these products. We decided to do things differently. We used the “get out of the building” strategy. We talked to people and listened to what they really need. They need solar lights because they are cheap, work well and aren’t harmful to their health. But the current products are too expensive or too unfamiliar to them. People are afraid to try new things. Most companies listen not to understand, but to reply. We came up with a new design that the local people understand; the traditional design of a kerosene lamp but then solar powered.

Our first ten prototypes failed. We kept showing it to our potential customers until we got the design they loved. What’s even better, our products are also cheaper than what’s currently on the market. They’re made in Rwanda with love. Love for the children, love for the rural population and love for those who have nothing. We 3D-print our products with plastic sourced locally. For the moment, we only import the solar panels.

It’s a risk. No electronic company actually produces in Rwanda. I want to take the risk and be the first. People tell me it’s impossible, but I believe everything is possible. What others have done, we Rwandans can also do. We can make a good quality product that is trustworthy and durable. People insist China can make it cheaper. Maybe, but currently those products are more expensive than our intended price. And even if, we’ve our own strategy. We believe that people don’t buy what you do, but why you do it.

Our products are the first step to change the lives of small children and to realize their dreams. They should also be given an opportunity to contribute to the development of Rwanda. Now the rural population feels that technology is reserved for the urban population. It’s time this changes. I won’t stop until I’ve made a big impact in my community, my country and even our neighboring countries. Solar products are just the first step to change the lives of people living in rural communities. It’s time we do things ourselves and use what we’re good at. Science is my secret power and entrepreneurship my passion. I know I’ll make a difference one day.

“Our products are made in Rwanda with love; love for the children, for the rural population and for those who have nothing.”

ARIAE UMURINGA  (20)
CO-FOUNDER & PRODUCTION MANAGER – STARLIGHT

I’m an engineer and entrepreneur. The passion for entrepreneurship was instilled in me from a young age. My mother had a small boutique and in the weekends or holidays I’d always help her out. She taught me how to interact with customers, how to know what they want and how to convince people to buy my products.

I grew up in a rural area with no access to electricity. It was challenging, because I could only revise my studies at night using the light of a candle. I think that’s when I decided I would bring electricity to my area. I didn’t know how, but I knew I could do it. In high school I met a girl who essentially became my co-founder. We come from the same background and share the same dream.

In university we both decided to study engineering. Physics helps you to understand nature. The sun is our gift from God and we believed we should use this gift to develop something that can actually help our population. That’s how our idea started. Initially we thought about building a power station running on solar power, but it would be too expensive. So we came up with a more realistic idea.

In Rwanda only 28% of the population has access to electricity. Millions of children have difficulty studying at night. People need to walk for kilometers to find a power station to charge their mobile phones. And families spend valuable resources on buying kerosene. Our plan is to attack all these problems at once. There are other companies in Rwanda selling solar products imported from China, but the rural population aren’t buying these products.

We decided to do things differently. We used the “get out of the building” strategy. We talked to people and listened to what they really need. They need solar lights because they are cheap, work well and aren’t harmful to their health. But the current products are too expensive or too unfamiliar to them. People are afraid to try new things. Most companies listen not to understand, but to reply. We came up with a new design that the local people understand; the traditional design of a kerosene lamp but then solar powered.

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I was born in Kigali, but moved to live with my grandmother after my dad died in a car accident. Life in the village was strange, but slowly I adapted. I’d lost everything, but my grandmother gave up everything so that I could have a life. She’s a strong hardworking woman. She’s smart, but because she was born in a different time she never went to school. When I graduated from university, I told her that she’s now also a university graduate. She’s everything to me.

Growing up in a rural area, it touched me to see how people live from cultivation only; no one in our village had a formal job. But I realized that the farmers get an unfair price for their bananas. I found out that the people transporting the bananas are the ones getting the money. I was intrigued by the question how we can overcome this problem facing our community.

I developed a business plan while I was still in university. It evolved around the idea that the bad price for bananas was hindering the development of the community. I applied for a business competition and to my big surprise I won. People saw I had something in me that was going to impact the community, that feeling was amazing. At that moment it was just an idea, but with the funding I was able to start.

I started growing bananas on my grandmother’s land. My friends and family keep asking me why I’m working in agriculture when I studied biotechnology. But the two are related. I know it’s wrong to use a lot of chemicals in farming. It harms the crops and the chemicals also end up in our water system. Apart from that, we already feel the effects of climate change. Last year we had almost six months without rain; cows were starving and banana trees dying. These things impact the community. We’ve to be environmentally friendly if we still want to be able to produce in ten years.

Alone I can’t make a difference so I want to work with the community; we can help each other. But my partners need to be passionate about bananas, willing to produce without any industrial fertilizers and have a cow. With a cow it’ll be easier to produce your own organic fertilizer. I’ll give them the variety of banana seedlings we want to use, train them on how to compost and everything else. In return we give them access to the market. This was the reason that pushed me into banana farming so it’s central to my business plan.

Rwanda can grow from the youth. I want to export our premium bananas just like those South American countries. In Rwanda we don’t have gold, diamonds or petrol. We just have people and land. We’ve a good climate; the country is green. But we don’t export. Maybe the banana is Rwanda’s gold. Our name is a reference to that: bananas start green and turn into gold. One day I’ll be heading a big corporate and the whole world will eat my bananas from Rwanda.

I’m managing to negotiate a contract with a fixed price per kilogram throughout the year. So the farmers will earn a stable income even during the high season when banana prices are normally low. But that’s not the only thing I want to change. I also want to provide health insurance for all farmers I work with.

Being young isn’t always easy when doing business, but it also has its benefits. I’m informed on how to become a more successful farmer because of technology. Experience is important, but it’s not everything anymore. It’s important to build trust with the older farmers. The actions need to speak for themselves. Businessmen and government officials have come to the community and told us things, but they never delivered. I’m delivering through my training, by giving the farmers fair prices and offering them a market. It takes time, but more farmers are joining.

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I was driven by the force to give people a better childhood than I had. My family was poor, especially because my dad was absent until recently. When I finished primary school there was no hope to continue my studies so I went to the city and lived on the streets. One day my friends and I were intrigued by a Japanese lady on the street. She was an aid worker and artist. She taught us how to cut cow horns to create products like earrings, keychains and small plates. After five months she had to leave Rwanda, but before she left she found a sponsor for me to go back to school.

I didn’t do anything with the skills I learned from that Japanese lady until I graduated from secondary school. Together with a friend of mine I started looking for jobs. One day we went to a career center and were disillusioned by the crowd of applicants. I realized it would be difficult to find a job. I followed a two-month national job program offered for all secondary school graduates. It’s then that I learned about self-employment.

I remembered how the Japanese lady had taught me to create products out of cow horns and came up with a plan. When I told my parents about my plans they told me they had no money to invest. I kept quiet. It’s better to not hang on to ideas for years, but rather start working by taking small steps with simple materials. Just start operating and everything will fall into place.

Initially I started with the skills I had been taught years prior. My hands got sore from using the sand paper to shape the cow horn and it took a long time to finish all the products. One day I went to an expo and met an old man who was doing similar art crafts. I asked him if he could upgrade my skills. He was using a machine and together we finished a big order. But then the old man went back to his home town and I was left with orders that I had to finish, but no machinery.

Initially I was worried I wouldn’t be able to finish the remaining orders, but then I realized I had enough money to buy a machine of my own. With the machine I’ve tried to expand my product range with cow horn business cards, cups and even buttons. I’m learning from the internet how to do this, but it’s not ideal.

At the same time, I’m also training my employees for free to give them the skills they need so that we can produce on a larger scale. Once they’re able to produce, I’ll start paying them a fair salary. It’s important to me that I help more youth to escape unemployment. The next generation can produce the products which are needed in the community. A lot of products are imported, but we can actually make them here in Rwanda. Currently, we’re working on a project to make buttons for local designers. If this project takes off it will mean I can hire more youth.

Through my business I’m also giving my own siblings a better life. I paid for my brother’s education and fulfilled my duty as an older brother. My parents don’t have to provide for me anymore and I know they’re proud of me. One day they came to visit and I gave a bracelet to my mom and sister. My dream is to study part-time at university, but first I need to earn more to cover the costs. I know it will be a long road, but my future looks bright.

“IT’S BETTER TO NOT HANG ON TO IDEAS FOR YEARS, BUT RATHER START WORKING BY TAKING SMALL STEPS WITH SIMPLE MATERIALS.”

COMPANY INFO
- Social enterprise
- Founded in 2016
- 1 Founder
- Kigali, City of Kigali
- Art industry
- 2 Employees
- Growth & Establishment stage

BUSINESS PROFILE
Cow Horns Kigali aims to create beautiful jewelry, souvenirs, buttons, business cards and other products out of discarded cow horns. We specialize in the craft of creating products and sell on local markets, but also to corporate clients who order specialized products. One of our main pillars is also to equip unemployed youth with the skills to become designers and workmen themselves.

SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth
SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production

SUPPORT
- SDG 8: Cow Horns Kigali
- SDG 12: Cow Horns Kigali
I'm passionate, courageous and a storyteller. Not with words, but with photos. A good photo shouldn't need the photographer to explain what is going on in the photo. You can feel it, you're in the photo. I believe I can change people's minds through these photos. Even posting a picture taken on my phone online, gives me joy. It gives me a place in society.

My passion was always there, but I only discovered it recently. My brother works as a Communication Officer for some NGOs and every day he brings his camera home. I started to take pictures and from the beginning everyone told me it was great. I realized that I must do something with what I love.

So I made photography a part of my life and use it to show people what life is like for the grassroots.

In university I studied Computer Science. It's good to have the training, and I managed to find a way to merge technology with art. Technology is the way how we communicate nowadays, but it’s often communication without a soul. I want to use good artsy concepts in technology so that the message comes across immediately. Everything we do in our daily lives even the way we dress is art. And art is a universal language. So I believe we need to introduce it in technology.

Together with four friends I started Pencil Design. The very essence of a pencil is art. Every artist uses one. It's very tiny, but it creates many things. We believe technology is also art. All four of us have different skills that we bring to the table with one goal. We help our clients to communicate their style to the world and translate it into technology. We sit down with every client who, for example, need a website, a flyer or a business card. We want to really understand where they come from, where they're heading and what makes them who they are.

We're not the only ones on the market, but we're passionate and approach technology in Rwanda in a new fresh way. We're different because we're a team with each member having his own strength. We celebrate these. To be honest, even though I study Computer Engineering, I'm bad at system design. My strength lays in developing the right photo to complement what the other company departments are doing.

But it takes time to get a market share. So we came up with something we call marketing day. One day each month all four of us meet at one place and we walk through town. We visit many businesses where we introduce ourselves, show samples and discuss potential projects we can help these potential clients with. Technology is good for marketing, but people need to know about you first.

The responses are mixed. People don't always believe that we, young people, have really made the samples we showed them. They think we can't deliver good products. They can be condescending and put us down. But they don't realize yet that we actually deliver the best products in Rwanda.

Being a youth entrepreneur brings challenges, but there’re a million opportunities. Rwanda is still a “virgin” country when it comes to innovation. We entrepreneurs are taking risks, but we're a lifetime to tap into all the opportunities the country is offering. We think big. We want to grow our business and make Rwanda a technological powerhouse. Why not reach for the stars?

“I realized that I must do something with what I love to create change.”

COMPANY INFO
- For-profit
- Founded in 2015
- 4 Co-founders
- Kigali, Kigali City
- IT & Technology industry
- 5 Part-time employees
- Growth & Establishment stage

BUSINESS PROFILE
Pencil Design has the unique mission to merge art with technology in order to solve issues that other businesses and the society in general faces. We do this through artistic photography, graphics design and the building of applications and websites. But we go further than just designing and focus on showcasing the customer's stories through unique timeless designs.

SDG 3: Industry, innovation and infrastructure
The first five years I spent thinking about what I could do, now that I’ve overcome all the hardship it’s time for success.”
My family background encouraged me to go into business. I studied Finance at university and helped my father out in his business. He’s into timber. I would go with him to purchase timber, sell it and negotiate the prices. It inspired me to become a successful businessman myself. I want to be self-employed rather than a job seeker. Especially here in Rwanda there are so many unemployed youth. I don’t want to be like them; a job creator that’s what I want to be known for.

To be honest, when I was young I wanted to be a doctor, then a priest. I tried to enroll in a seminary, but they rejected me. So this carpentry business I am doing now is my plan B. But it’s for the better, I love it. While I was working for my father I sold timber to carpenters. I was intrigued by their craftsmanship and asked them to train me. That’s what they did.

While I was practicing carpentry, one of my colleagues suggested we could actually start our own business. I told him it was a good idea, but that we needed others because working together is better than working alone. I also didn’t have the capital, so I needed people to come and join us, bring a bit of money and their ideas. Eventually we started with five guys.

We had a lot of time as unemployed guys hanging on the street, but we were business-oriented. Around that time the Rwandan government was encouraging people to work into cooperatives. There was one carpentry cooperative in our area, but they were charging a lot of money to become a member. So we decided to start our own. We had no money, but we were committed. We decided to focus on carpentry because we saw a gap in the market. People need to live in good houses with good furniture. We searched on the internet and realized we should specialize in creating modern design.

We welcome anyone to join us. Regardless of whether they are in the carpeting industry or not. I go out and encourage young people to join us and become entrepreneurs. To me it doesn’t matter if you have skills or an education. As long as you can read and write. We can teach you the rest.

We dream of having a big community with more than 200 members. Of course money is important to all of us, but we also care about our reputation. I’m proud that my family and the community see me as a businessman.

Apart from making money, we also make sure we have social impact. Two of our co-founders actually came from a correctional center. They’d been drug addicts, but wanted to turn their lives around. Before they went to the center they didn’t know how, but after they learned handicraft skills they realized they had a future. So we work together with the center to take in rehabilitated youth.

Instead of becoming victims of their circumstances because of a lack of schooling or family history, we want them to come and work for themselves. I see us as a family; if one of the members has a problem, we all support him. If someone is getting married, we help him.

We believe we can learn from another. If someone learns something new, they can teach the others. We’re the only cooperative in the area which only works with young people.

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GILBERT HITIMANA (22)
CO-FOUNDER & PRODUCTION MANAGER – UNITED FOR DEVELOPMENT COOPERATIVE
My background has influenced me to be a person who I am today. My family had to flee from Rwanda before I was born because of the genocide. We ended up in Uganda. Life was good, but after a few years of prosperity my single mother couldn’t afford my school fees anymore. I had to work hard to earn money and did everything I could to survive. When I couldn’t afford my tuition fees anymore, I left Uganda and went back to Rwanda. I was looking for my family, but I ended up living on the streets.

Eventually I found my grandmother and I’ve lived with her ever since. To survive I worked in her restaurant. I served the customers, washed the utensils and I had to clean up the charcoal dustbin. This is where the idea for my business was born. I never had money so I thought there must be something I can do with this charcoal dust to earn a bit. I rushed to an internet café and did some research.

It took me three weeks to make the first briquette. I failed the first few times, but I managed to make a product that worked. I showed it proudly to my grandmother, but her response was lukewarm. Then one day she called me and told me she wanted to try my briquettes to heat up her oven. I was so happy. She tested them and became my first customer. When I told her that I was saving the money to go back to finish school, she was shocked. But she supported me and told me that with my motivation I would become a good businessman one day.

In school I told one of my teachers about my briquette business when he was explaining the process of carbonization in class. He was interested and on his day off he came to visit me to see the briquettes. He was inspired and took me to meet a seasoned businessman. This businessman took me under his wing and things started to move from there.

Right now I’m trying to improve the production process so I can sell to more customers. My life is still tough, but I’m motivated to turn things around and at the same time make a change in society. I want to inspire other youth through my story. Many of them face the same challenges I did so I visit schools to talk to the youth there. I tell them that if you’re determined and work hard you can achieve something in life. The response has been overwhelming and I’ve referred a handful of people to the businessman who helped me to kick start my business.

But not all the responses are always positive. Especially in the city, people are skeptical about using briquettes because they’re access to gas. But gas is much more expensive than my briquettes. Plus, in Rwanda most people don’t even have this access to gas. What I’m doing is offering a green solution to the people who have little choice but to cut trees and use charcoal. Luckily most people understand what I’m doing and tell me to keep going.

When people realize my briquettes are made from biodegradable material their response is positive. This shows that we need more sustainable initiatives. Most people see charcoal dust or banana peeling as waste and nothing more. It’s time that we take steps to make something productive from our bio waste. Rwanda is beautiful and green; we need to ensure it doesn’t become a desert.

I’m an ambitious entrepreneur so I don’t see myself only making briquettes my entire life. For now I need to focus on studying and perfecting the briquettes, but there are more big things that I’ve to do. Some projects I’ve already started, others are just ideas on paper. In fact, I’ve recently designed my own stove that will be the perfect way to burn my briquettes. I’m sure it will be a success if I do everything well. The spirit of wanting to create new things every day is my secret ingredient for success.

“I want to inspire other youth through my story by showing them that you can do something for yourself if you’re determined and work hard.”

MUZAMIL RUHIMBANA
FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – BAMNORAH CHARCOAL BRIQUETTES COMPANY
WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/BAMNORAH-CHARCOAL-BRIQUETTES-COMPANY-871905866214175/

COMPANY INFO
• Social enterprise
• Founded in 2014
• 1 Founder
• Kigali, City of Kigali
• Energy industry
• 2 Part-time employees
• Growth & Establishment stage

BUSINESS PROFILE
Bamnorah Charcoal Briquettes Company develops charcoal briquettes from biowaste such as banana peelings, wasted cassava powder and charcoal dust. Our product offers a cheap and affordable alternative cooking fuel to the local community. In addition, using the briquettes also helps in lowering the numbers of trees that need to be cut for charcoal production and there is less CO2 emission.

MUZAMIL RUHIMBANA
FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – BAMNORAH CHARCOAL BRIQUETTES COMPANY
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SUPPORT
SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy
SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure
SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production
When I was growing up, Rwanda was rebuilding itself after the 1994 Genocide. Many people faced identity issues, there wasn’t enough to eat and people suffered from malnutrition. I was lucky because we had enough food, but there was a lack of variety. At one point you lose appetite; you only eat to satisfy yourself. Growing up I always wondered what could be done to add value to the crops we grow here in Rwanda so people would actually enjoy their food.

Sweet potato is the most grown crop in Rwanda, but people don’t like it at all. They boil it and eat it. Each and every day. But the Orange-Fleshed Sweet Potatoes don’t only satisfy people, they’re also very nutritious. When one of my friends conducted a research on this sweet potato variety, we realized that we didn’t have to look outside the country to reduce malnutrition rates in Rwanda.

Instead of introducing different crops, my friends and I worked on adding value to the sweet potato people were already familiar with. We met a man who was making biscuits from sweet potatoes. Then it clicked; we could make other products from sweet potatoes. In Rwanda people are used to eating donuts on a regular basis, so we started developing a healthier product by using sweet potato instead of wheat flour. The first batches were too oily and not healthy at all, but we managed to improve them with practice.

People really liked the donuts and even farmers responded positively. Initially they were skeptical about the possibility of creating delicious and nutritious products out of sweet potatoes. Now we work with a Women’s Association, who liked the idea that we were creating new and interesting products out of, what they initially considered, valueless crops. We also train farmers to move from traditional farming to modern-oriented farming. This way we’re impacting lives on different levels. As we grow, more people will benefit.

We also aim to reduce child malnutrition. We sell our products for the same price or slightly cheaper than its unhealthy counterparts. We supply them to different schools so that the children who go there are provided with healthier alternative meal plans. For children in the neighborhood we provide smaller donuts at a very affordable price.

When we first started I was still a student. In Rwanda usually we don’t follow our passion because we believe it can’t feed you, and we’re always hungry people. My parents thought I would find a job upon graduating. But I don’t want to depend on someone else. I want to be free and plan my life in my own way. Though it wasn’t easy to convince them.

In a few years, we’ll become a brand, not just in Rwanda but also in neighboring countries. We want to introduce new products from sweet potatoes. In fact, we’re already working on creating a sweet potato pasta. It’s a good time to be a young entrepreneur right now in Rwanda. There’s a lot of support from banks, investors and the government, especially for female entrepreneurs. This is encouraging and it motivates us to keep going.

Growing up I always wondered what could be done to add value to the crops we grow here in Rwanda.”
able to see a doctor. I felt it as my responsibility to do something about this.

In my first year at university we received some training about running businesses. I had a lot of ideas, but none really worked out even on paper. Then I remembered my childhood village and the challenges those people faced when accessing health care. Someone can spend over two weeks waiting for treatment in Kigali. If that person is a mom, she can’t take care of her children or the household. If that person is a father, the entire family will suffer as there is no money coming in. I realized it’s the waiting that is the most urgent bottleneck impeding the process.

I decided to modernize the medical sector by introducing technology. People can make appointments with any hospital or doctor they want to, by using their mobile phone. But it’s not as simple as it sounds. Only 27% of Rwandans has internet access. Not only do we want to provide to those people with access, but especially the millions living outside the big urban centers. Our approach targets the most vulnerable communities who have no internet through USSD technology. So that when people get to the hospital, they can get a convenient service.

It’s a new model in the country so it’s not easy to implement. Especially because we’re dealing with medical services, we need to follow all the rules and regulations. It took a long time for the Ministry of Health to listen to us and understand our idea. But now they’re open to assist us. Rwanda’s healthcare policies are still based on an era before mass communication was popular. It’ll take time and effort to influence those so that our innovation can impact the country.

We’ve got many other ideas, but those need even more policy changes. For example, we also want to improve the process of pharmacists. Not only those prescribed by doctors, but the pharmacies that are in charge to get too. For example, a guy may feel ashamed to buy a condom in a place where there are people, but the condom will actually stop the spread of STIDs and even save lives in the case of HIV.

MeLife, my business, means myself. When I think about MeLife, I feel it’s my journey to do something. I can get a well paid job like my classmates, but I would feel that I’m abandoning my community. I want to help build something that will last, even when I’m no longer there. It’s not just a company; it’s a movement and hopefully an inspiration to my fellow countrymen.

“I want to help build something that will last, even when I’m no longer there.”

Jean de Dieu HABAGUHIRWA (24)
CO-FOUNDER & CEO – MELIFE LTD
WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/ MELIFE-LTD-849854641774254/
SOLUTIONS FOR THE ROAD AHEAD

Ruhimbaza: We need to empower the youth and ensure that they have access to information, hubs and funds. But things don’t stop there, the youth must also show the returns and report on their outcomes.

Jean de Dieu: There are students who have that entrepreneurial spirit but don’t study business. Universities should create a place or corner where interested youth can go to learn the needed skills, receive mentorship and potentially even apply for finances.

Jean Luc: Trainings and mentorships need to be more practical. Entrepreneurs don’t learn from mentors who have zero experience in business. Having a mentor who has gone through the same experiences is much more valuable.

Gilbert: The government needs to spend more time with the youth to fully understand their struggles on a daily basis.

Clarisse: Technical assistance is much needed for young entrepreneurs to produce more innovative products and to deal with finances in a good manner.

Vicky: The government and other organizations are providing great resources for youth entrepreneurs, but the youth don’t know how to access them. Create a more transparent information system so that more youth can become successful.

Ariane: Tax authorities need to differentiate between young companies and older companies. Now a lot of potential entrepreneurs are scared off by the high taxes.

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Affordable good machinery

“Machinery is essential to business, but it’s difficult for starting entrepreneurs to buy high-quality machinery for an affordable price. What’s available on the market isn’t good enough to produce high-quality products.”

Packaging

“Rwanda has a strict policy on plastic, but there are few affordable packaging alternatives for young entrepreneurs with limited capital. It also creates unfair competition because outside companies don’t have to follow the same packaging rules.”

Not taking youth entrepreneurs seriously

“In Rwanda businessmen all have cars, they’re old and have a belly. So when we market ourselves, people are skeptical because we don’t fit this image. They feel we’re young people who can’t do these things.”

Distrust of “Made in Rwanda” brand

“People don’t trust products made in Rwanda. They prefer products made in the US and even China.”

Inaccessible loans

“In order to get a loan from a bank they request that you can give them all the incorporation papers. But how do I start a business when I’ve no capital? It’s a challenging process.”

Outdated policies

“Young entrepreneurs who are working with innovative solutions run into problems when it comes to existing policies. The current bureaucratic infrastructure does not account for the introduction of technology in our everyday lives. The government is too slow adopting to change.”

Difficult to entice coders

“As a startup we don’t have many funds. Yet, in order to attract tech talent, we need funding. Employees will just leave when they get a better offer and we need to start from scratch again.”

Electricity infrastructure

“We need electricity to run our machines, but because we’re in the countryside, there’s no electricity here. We could install it, but it costs so much money we can’t afford it. So now we have to do everything by hand which is very time-consuming.”

Copyright is too expensive

“I’ve registered my business, but to also patent my design is too expensive. It’s 500,000 Rwandan Francs (US$650), which is a large amount of money for a starting entrepreneur like me.”

No legal distinction between corporates and startups

“In the legal framework there is no distinction between small and big co-operations. It’s easy to set up a business in Rwanda, but the regulations after that are so challenging that very few startups can meet the requirements.”

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The road, literally and figuratively, to Nairobi was not always easy. In 40-degree heat with a non-air conditioned minibus, we had to avoid the occasional pothole, goats crossing at random and push the bus when it got stuck, all the while balancing group relationships. We had no idea what each and every day would bring. Perhaps we were ill-prepared for the adventures awaiting us. Or maybe we should have known to expect the unexpected. Nonetheless, what remains in our memories is the power youth entrepreneurs have in creating positive change on the African continent.

We thought it would take a tad long to visit 80 youth entrepreneurs by bicycle so in this second Building Bridges project, we opted for a minibus. It would allow for people within the country to hop on and off while we visited selected youth entrepreneurs countrywide. We did not want to focus only on the urban centers because, if anything, those in the rural areas face many more obstacles. They have fewer possibilities to access finance, to attend startup events, to establish networks, and to access the market. But that does not mean that their businesses are not impacting their local communities or have no potential to grow. We witnessed that passion and drive can get you far, very far.

The entrepreneurial journeys you have read are only the tip of the iceberg. There are hundreds of thousands young people on the African continent who are drivers of change by creating innovative solutions for local problems. The one thought we were left with is that it is time to change the Africa narrative. When thinking about successful entrepreneurs like the Mark Zuckerberg’s, the Jack Ma’s and the Bill Gates’, few of us will name a successful entrepreneur from the African continent. But we have seen the potential and are sure that the next entrepreneurial heroes will come from the African continent. Who knows, maybe it is even one of the entrepreneurs we visited.

The Road to Nairobi project could not have been possible without all the enthusiastic youth ambassadors and their national teams. Without them the impact of the project would not have been the same. They worked tirelessly both before, during and after the core team visited their countries. Many took time off to be on the road with us, leveraged their personal networks and negotiated with stakeholders.

It was not always easy to handle the stressful environment of a hot bus, cultural differences and diverging interests, but together we made sure the voices of those young entrepreneurs were heard.

During the country multi-stakeholder events, various individuals, governments, embassies and NGOs acknowledged and committed to working on the issues brought to light by the entrepreneurs. At the Second High-Level Meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation, we presented our research findings and discussed ways forward. Thank you for all of those who partnered with us to make this possible. Minister Ploumen, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Dutch Embassies, GPEDC, UNDP, Ye! Community and many more without whom this would not be possible. We trust that this project will lead to concrete action!

This book celebrates the entrepreneurial spirit of young people. Evidently, we were honored that all youth entrepreneurs took their time to share their stories with us. We shared laughter, shed tears and discussed dreams. With this book we want to spread the message that Africa’s youth are key to a bright future for the African continent. Young people are the drivers of the future they want; a just and sustainable world.

Jilt van Schayik, Bukhosi Moyo, Samantha Ndiwalana and Annemarelle van Schayik