

BOOSTUP

STARTUPS

AS
THE
NEW

SUPERHEROES

Vol.3

Entrepreneurship as a Tool
for Making a Difference



BOOSTUP

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The BOOST UP 2020 Scale Up Pitch Competition took place live online, and was livestreamed from five countries to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 travel restrictions that were in force at the time. The event brought together startups, investors, and other ecosystem players from across Africa, Finland, and the rest of the world.

SAIS 2 would also like to acknowledge the creative work done by Clara Mupopiwa-Schnack in designing this publication and Philip Chris Kemp for the language edits.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Startups as the New Superheroes Vol 3

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INTRODUCTION



In Africa, as with the rest of the world, innovative startups play an important role in fostering economic development and job creation. They are also crucial in the work to meet the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Entrepreneurship can be a powerful tool to make a positive impact on society, especially in the societies such as some members of the SADC Region, where youth unemployment is a major challenge.

At the Southern Africa Innovation Support (SAIS 2) Programme and the Southern Africa Innovation Collective (SAIC), we believe inspirational role models are important to anyone considering the entrepreneurial path, and for startup ecosystems to flourish. This publication follows the first two volumes of *Startups as the New Superheroes*, which were published in 2019 and 2020.

In this volume, we present 14 startups that formed part of the BOOST UP 2020 cohort, all role models and thought leaders in startup entrepreneurship. The knowledge and experiences that they have to share can have profound value in building new

businesses and startup ecosystems alike. SAIS 2 is therefore proud to showcase these 14 startup role models, all of which are addressing societal challenges in Southern Africa: NovFeed, Hydro-IT, Nature's Nectar, Coachpedia, SOG Water Solutions, Huduma Smart, First-Aid Counselling, Leverage Point, Uku'hamba, Agelvipa Online, Medikea, Aquatech Solutions, Doctors E-Consult, and Dawa Health.

These startups are national finalists of the BOOST UP startup support programme in 2020, which was organised by SAIS 2 and SAIC. Each finalist participated in the BOOST UP Scale Up incubation programme, which culminated in a live bootcamp in each partner

country (Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zambia). The bootcamp ended with the BOOST UP 2020 Final Pitch Competition, which was livestreamed from all five countries to went on to attract an audience of over 1,500 viewers.

We hope these startups' stories will serve as an inspiration and a learning tool for other early-stage entrepreneurs or people curious about becoming an entrepreneur. The startups' experiences can also provide insight to funders, sponsors, and policymakers on the challenges faced by early-stage startups in Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zambia.

ABOUT



THE SOUTHERN AFRICA INNOVATION SUPPORT PROGRAMME

The Southern Africa Innovation Support Programme (SAIS 2) is a regional initiative that supports the growth of new businesses. This is done by strengthening innovation ecosystems and promoting cross-border collaboration between innovation role players in Southern Africa. SAIS 2 focuses on early-stage enterprises and young entrepreneurs, connecting innovation ecosystems, and promoting innovations serving socially or economically disadvantaged people. SAIS 2 is supported by the Government of Finland in partnership with the ministries responsible for science, technology, and innovation in Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zambia as well as the secretariat of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).



THE SOUTHERN AFRICA INNOVATION COLLECTIVE

ABOUT THE SOUTHERN AFRICA INNOVATION COLLECTIVE

The Southern Africa Innovation Collective (SAIC) is a network of organisations assisting innovators and entrepreneurs across Southern Africa. Originally founded as the Connected Hubs by the Southern Africa Innovation Support Programme in 2017, it serves as a community promoting learning and cross-border cooperation in five SADC countries.

NOVFEED

	<p>WEBSITE</p> <p>www.novfeed.com</p>	<p>SDG</p> <div>      </div>	<p>COUNTRY</p> <p>Tanzania</p>
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**Diana
Orembe**

WHICH PROBLEMS DOES YOUR STARTUP LOOK TO ADDRESS AND WHY?

My startup is looking to solve two problems at once: The first problem is waste management in Tanzania, starting from Dar es Salaam city and the second problem is the protein problem for animal feed formulation. My company NovFeed recycles organic food waste by using biofactories such as black soldier flying larvae to produce protein rich fish feed.

I was raised with my uncle who is a fish farmer. For decades he was struggling because he invested a lot of money in his business, but the return on investment was not good as the fish feed was expensive. I studied microbiology in university and learned how to recycle organic waste to produce larvae, which is a good source of protein. I started doing research and found out that fish feed is expensive because of

the protein ingredients that are used to make it, which are either fish or soybean. They are expensive because they are competing with human food. So, I started thinking if we can use these maggots to tackle this problem.

I visited other fish farmers to realise my uncle was not the only one struggling. In Tanzania, over 76 % fish farmers are struggling with the high-cost and low-nutrient content of the fish feed. Fish feed needs to be high in protein. The current fish feed available in Tanzania is either not nutrient-rich or it is not sustainable or it's very expensive. Most of it is imported. If your target is to farm fish to ensure food security, it does not make sense feeding the farmed fish with fish from the natural waters. At NovFeed, we are using food waste that would otherwise go to landfill to produce high protein maggots for farmed animals.

WHEN DID YOU REALISE THAT YOU ARE ONTO SOMETHING BIG?

It was 2018. In 2017 I got the idea of producing the black soldier larvae, when I was studying, but back then it was just an idea, and I had a lot of doubts. After finishing the studies, I visited one accelerator here in Tanzania and I met another person who is currently the co-founder of NovFeed, and he was doing his research on alternative ingredients for fish feed and other animal feed. We started discussing if we can work on the idea together and solve the problem. They were two people, one economist and one aquaculturist. They were very interested. I started working with my team and I started to realise we are working on something big. We started doing our research. We did a survey to more than 150 fish farmers all over Tanzania, to ask what their current problems are,

what they think make the fish feed expensive, and if they are interested in an alternative affordable protein, will you be ready to feed your fish with maggots? From the 150 fish farmers, over 90 % were very positive and interested in buying the product. After these results, I believe that my startup is making a big difference and I was, and am still, very excited. Some of those farmers are still calling and asking for our product but we do not yet have the capacity to produce for all of them.

HOW DID YOU BUILD YOUR TEAM AND HOW HAS YOUR TEAM GROWN DURING YOUR STARTUP JOURNEY?

So far it has been a great journey with my team. We currently complement each other in incredible ways. We have very different skills: Otaigo Elisha (co-founder) knows the financial part very well because he is an economist, I know the microbiological part of the maggots and a bit of the production, and Stephano Karoza knows the production perfectly, he can measure the nutrient analysis. We were three from the beginning and then we added one more team member.

WHAT TYPE OF ENVIRONMENT IS YOUR STARTUP OPERATING IN?

Dar es Salaam is a good location to operate in. We have fish farmers near us so the cost of logistics is not too high. It is difficult to be a startup in Africa in general. We have successful entrepreneurs, such as Tony Elumelu, who were born in Africa and successfully doing business in Africa. In every country and in every region, there are challenges. We entrepreneurs, we were born to solve the challenges, not to run away from them, whether

the environment is supportive or not. Tanzania is supportive, the government is supporting industrialisation and is encouraging youth to move from seeking jobs to thinking of employing themselves.

WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE FOR STARTUPS LIKE YOURS IN YOUR COUNTRY?

Policies are favoring startups since Tanzania is striving to become an industrialised country and supports youth and anyone who would like to become an entrepreneur. In terms of funds, it is still a challenge and we do not have a lot of investors. Government is allocating support to startups by providing soft loans¹, but in order to get it, there are certain requirements you have to fulfill. There are a few competitions, for example, the Stanbic Entrepreneurship Challenge. COSTECH (The Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology) gives out grants, but they are not so many, since some grants and competitions might be directed to a specific sector. So, you might only be eligible for one or two.

WHAT SKILLS HAVE YOU GAINED DURING TRAINING, MENTORING AND OTHER SUPPORT ACTIVITIES ALONG YOUR JOURNEY?

I have learned a lot of skills; one thing is time management skills. By participating in these competitions, talking to mentors, I must be very time conscious. The other thing is leadership skills, how to manage people and how to manage a team so that they are working together. But also marketing skills, to market the product. When you are a CEO of a startup you have to play many parts,

“ I have learned a lot of skills; one thing is time management skills. By participating in these competitions, talking to mentors, I must be very time conscious. ”

you have to be the CEO, manager, production part, marketing part - so I had to learn how to do the marketing.

WHAT FEEDBACK HAVE YOU HAD SO FAR FROM YOUR CLIENTS, END-USERS OR PARTNERS?

Very impressive feedback. So far, the one customer who we are working with who is buying in bulk, his response was very positive. Since he has started using our products it takes a maximum six months to grow the fish when it used to take him eight months. This reduces the cost of production. Our maggots have very high protein content compared to other fish meals; this high protein content makes our feed more sought after.

WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE YOU HAD IN BRINGING YOUR PRODUCT TO THE MARKET?

We can't meet the demand; the demand is big. People see us on social media and reach out to us, but we cannot deliver. Production capacity is a problem. Another big issue we have had is that after graduation I didn't look for a job and needed to use

¹ A loan made on terms that are favourable for the borrower.



savings to do the validation phase of the business, the surveys and the R&D as well as a farm trial. We went bankrupt and it has delayed our progress. We need to invest in the production facilities to be able to scale up and reach more farmers and potential customers. If we are able to produce it in a larger capacity, we are expanding to animal farmers in general who are struggling with the same challenges. The market is huge. The problem is the scaling up and what is hindering us is funding.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE IS THE BEST PLATFORM TO NETWORK IN YOUR LOCAL STARTUP ECOSYSTEM?

Mentorship programmes, such as the BOOST UP programme, allow you to meet different people you would not otherwise get to meet. Participating in competitions or organised training sessions, such as the ones for fish farmers for example, those are the places where you can network and meet different people.

WHAT ARE THE FUTURE PLANS FOR YOUR STARTUP?

For the near future, the plan is to be able to scale, at least next year around June we will be able to recycle five tonnes of waste per day and produce enough protein to reach more farmers. Currently the

model we are using is collecting waste from the restaurants. We at NovFeed are so much interested in creating employment, especially for the marginalised people. So, by next year we are planning to involve the community of marginalised women and youth to collect the waste and they will receive refunds. The plan for the next five years is that by 2025 we are selling beyond Dar es Salaam, and that we are able to capture 10 % of the market share of the fish meal industry.

Sign a contract with big companies who have so many workers that they are producing a lot of waste. If you get a contract with those companies, waste can be collected in a very easy way. We will also have marginalised women and youth to grow their own maggots and sell it to us to create jobs.

IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR AN INVESTMENT OR HAVE SECURED SOME, WHO IS YOUR IDEAL INVESTOR?

For us right now, based on the knowledge we have learned during the BOOST UP Bootcamp, at this moment we need an impact investor. We are open with conversations for any investors. We have had some conversations with potential investors. I had a chance to travel to Paris, the Embassy of France in Tanzania funded us, and I had a chance to meet with the President of AfricInvest and he linked us with a potential investor, but unfortunately, they only invest in bigger companies, not startups.

WHAT CAN YOU PASS ON TO ENTREPRENEURS AND FOUNDERS LIKE YOURSELF WHO NEED SUPPORT?

Understand that an entrepreneurship journey is not a smooth road at all. It is a journey that is full of challenges. But those challenges are the ones that make us entrepreneurs. Never try to avoid them or quit because of them. Rather keep on working on achieving or attaining your goals.

HYDRO-IT



Hydro-IT

SDG



COUNTRY

South
Africa



Gareth
Gericke

WHICH PROBLEMS DOES YOUR STARTUP LOOK TO ADDRESS AND WHY?

My company, Hydro-IT, is focused mainly on reducing the amount of water loss through water leaks, specifically in the municipal and private sectors. In South Africa, at the beginning of 2018, we were facing a water loss crisis and it hit many major cities like Cape Town, where they were really, really close to running out of water. Then I started doing a bit more research on it and I found out that South Africa wastes a lot of water every year through leaks and other problems, at an average 39% of the water that the municipality provides before it even gets into your home. We realised that there is no existing technology to communicate and control this problem. So, we tried to find a solution where we

could not only detect it, but give the municipality direct control of where they can instantly decide to switch off the water and localize it. We realised there are different leak categories. When a major leak happens, you have no water in your pipes. So, we would rather switch off that water instead of wasting that water, because you would not have water anyway. With the minor leaks we could easily alert the municipality, give them the GPS location and reduce the time of fixing the problem.

WHEN DID YOU REALISE THAT YOU ARE ONTO SOMETHING BIG?

A friend of mine who studied with me owns a business that has done government contracts before. He was approached that the government wants something

“
Direct
communication is
the best form of
networking.
”

like my solution, so we signed up a partnership. We knew there was an initial market here in South Africa, but we also realised that there was a larger market globally. There were one or two competitors, but they offered solutions for mega cities like Washington DC. And we were entering the market with a cheaper solution and a novel idea. Through my partnership, we are now in talks with a marketing firm and a lot of the global municipalities and countries work through them to source resources or products

HOW DID YOU BUILD YOUR TEAM AND HOW HAS YOUR TEAM GROWN DURING YOUR STARTUP JOURNEY?

So, everyone I initially started the company with are all people that I have studied with. We are four main members. We are kind of doing that classic student movement where the business is your side job, but it still takes up a lot of our time. Two of us, myself included are still studying and the other two are almost finished studying and looking to get into the workforce. But our startup could be our main source of income when we get enough traction. We are also looking to take in a couple of interns, and we would give them well completed designs and they would have to assemble some parts to help us out. The partner we signed the contract with is also helping us with marketing and finances. It was easier for the team since I had been working with them before and knew their dedication, strong points and weak points.

WHAT TYPE OF ENVIRONMENT IS YOUR STARTUP OPERATING IN?

When I first registered the startup, the process was quite amazing and quite cheap. South Africa is looking to invest in startups and entrepreneurs and it's the direction they want to go to. In terms of the actual market, it is a bit trickier, since the government has certain boxes they want to tick in terms of, for example, empowering certain ethnic groups. But when we get into those meetings we can stand by our technology and say that we're solving a social issue.

WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE FOR STARTUPS LIKE YOURS IN YOUR COUNTRY?

During the whole global pandemic, it's been quite difficult, but I do feel that we are entering the market correctly and smartly. We can purely focus on development and fully launch the company and the product once we see an opportunity of profit. Through competition, such as BOOST UP and the SA Innovation Summit Pitch Battle, you become aware of new opportunities and can access new markets. Like one university was looking to collect data and they were looking for existing technology. So that's one area you can automatically go into. At the student competition, we got to meet with quite many investors. Even if you do not currently consider having an investment, in the future, you know what they are looking for. There are resources available there and you always must be on the lookout for them. It's extremely hard in the beginning, just getting your amazing product developed. Once you have some traction it's easier and there you have more opportunities, but it's the very early stage that it's challenging to push through that.

WHAT SKILLS HAVE YOU GAINED DURING TRAINING, MENTORING AND OTHER SUPPORT ACTIVITIES ALONG YOUR JOURNEY?

I would say the most important skill is related to the ability to make smart business decisions. It seems easy to do what makes you money, but it is not as black and white as that. Through the process of attending, not only the workshops, but also the competitions, you get to see what other companies have struggled with, whether it has to

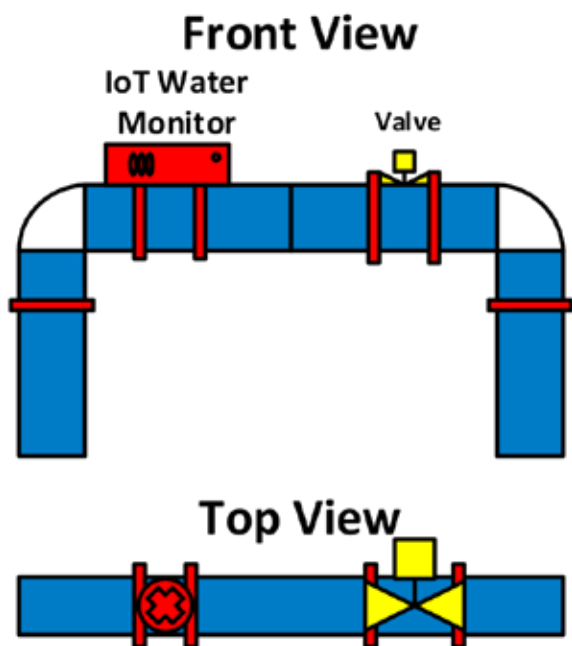
do with the business side, product development or market. Knowing their struggles and the decisions they made, you get a lot more intricacies in that, and if a similar situation comes, you are able not to make the exact same decision, but the decision that benefits you more. That's something that must be taught through experience, it cannot be taught in a book.

WHAT FEEDBACK HAVE YOU HAD SO FAR FROM YOUR CLIENTS, END-USERS OR PARTNERS?

If you look at our municipal customers, they all want some specific integration for communications. Some might want to be alerted by email, another one wants email and an SMS. The different preferences do bring a lot of different requirements, but once it's done, it's done. The users can pick features for themselves based on their requirements and the customers will come for that.

WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE YOU HAD IN BRINGING YOUR PRODUCT TO THE MARKET?

From a business to government model perspective, the biggest challenge has been the legalization of the product or the installation since every country has their own standards. That's why we made the smart decision to partner with Hellerman Tyton where the countries can then also look for us and we are aligned to legislation. That does not take out the point of following the correct legal process, but it does shorten it and it does offer certainty to the country that yes, we can supply this product and we can supply it correctly. For the private consumer model, which includes private businesses and private homeowners, the challenge



is mostly just the variety of the requirements and the initial setup. Every customer might want it in a little bit of a different way, and we could offer them different packages to choose from.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE IS THE BEST PLATFORM TO NETWORK IN YOUR LOCAL STARTUP ECOSYSTEM?

Direct communication is the best form of networking. The hard part is analysing who are the people in your network who really want to sit down with you and think of ways you can benefit each other. Making a phone call or sending a direct email to a customer or a business partner has more impact, you can put so much more effort. Communicating directly is the only way to really understand the other person and make sure that the relationship is mutually beneficial. Most of our customers come from direct marketing, we go and look for them on the municipal side. We know who we want to target and how we want to help them. If we are looking for investors and other stakeholders, we use more traditional marketing, such as events.

WHAT ARE THE FUTURE PLANS FOR YOUR STARTUP?

Currently we are growing the startup. Our short-to-medium term goal is to find an investor that fits our requirements. Someone who can help us achieve our goals more effectively. We are also trying to expand the stakeholder network for the startup to ensure a more sustainable startup.

IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR AN INVESTMENT OR HAVE SECURED SOME, WHO IS YOUR IDEAL INVESTOR?

We are looking for an investor, but we are looking for something more than traditional capital investment. Our investor would have to bring more to the table in terms of access to certain markets or access to the hospitality industry, since that's one industry we are currently trying to focus on.

WHAT CAN YOU PASS ON TO ENTREPRENEURS AND FOUNDERS LIKE YOURSELF WHO NEED SUPPORT?

This process is a trying process. There are a lot of places where it can go wrong, but even if it goes wrong, it does not mean it is the end of your company or you as an entrepreneur. There are multiple founders that have failed with multiple businesses and succeeded later. Companies often paint a picture of the perfect road, but fail to show the struggles they have gone through. South Africans are quite the opposite, which I like, since they are not afraid to show that this is what I have struggled with but look what I have become. This is quite inspirational. Even if your first idea or second idea does not work, if you believe in it, pursue it - pursue being an entrepreneur. In the long run, it is definitely worth it.

“ There are a lot of places where it can go wrong, but even if it goes wrong, it does not mean it is the end of your company or you as an entrepreneur. ”

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NATURE'S NECTAR



SDG



COUNTRY

Zambia



WEBSITE

www.naturesnectarzambia.com



**Katherine
Milling**

WHICH PROBLEMS DOES YOUR STARTUP LOOK TO ADDRESS AND WHY?

Our main focus is to help create a more sustainable way of producing honey in Zambia. Addressing this encounters a lot of problems. The way honey is produced now, traditionally, is destructive to local forests, it is very destructive to bees themselves, and it does not include very many women in the practice. We are working to create a more sustainable and inclusive way of beekeeping that does not hurt local forests, creates a premium market for farmers and is inclusive for all community members, whether young, old, male or female. We saw the demand for honey rising and we saw the growth in the honey production within Zambia, but it is slowly destroying the forest that the honey is being produced in. So, if we do not create a sustainable way to produce

honey, this practice will disappear in the next generation or so.

WHEN DID YOU REALISE THAT YOU ARE ONTO SOMETHING BIG?

When we started specifically researching the Zambian honey industry namely, how much honey is being produced and where it is being sold and where the demand is, we saw that the demand for honey worldwide is growing every year, while production worldwide is decreasing. That was the opportunity we saw. Considering that Zambia produces an estimated 2,500 tons to 3000 tons, we believe that with the forest capacity, we think that can produce upwards of 10,000 tons a year. The demand is there and when we saw that there's an opportunity to really help preserve the forest that brings value to farmers while

addressing the market demand for honey we decided to pursue it. You know, we need to not only just do this to help protect the honey industry in Zambia as a whole, but also to create the best value for the farmers that are producing it.

HOW DID YOU BUILD YOUR TEAM AND HOW HAS YOUR TEAM GROWN DURING YOUR STARTUP JOURNEY?

We started in the beginning of 2018 with my husband and a third co-founder. We were all working for this other honey company, and we were not seeing the results that we wanted to see, so we decided to do it on our own. With our model, we really do not need a huge amount of people, but we have grown to two full-time staff members that we have hired since we've started. We were really

lucky with our first hire, Davies. He has been with us since mid-2018 and he is the backbone of our operation. He is really great at communications and has been involved in beekeeping since he was a teenager. He is from the area where we are based here in the Northwestern Province so he has helped guide us in best approaches with community members.

We have also had quite a few part-time guys that we use to help with our data collection. We have 800 farmers that we work with our 8,000 beehives that we have distributed over the past three years. We have our zone leads, who are the ones that are doing the kind of hands-on management of the hives and are trained by us to do the harvesting. They are paid a commission based on production, and we have seen their income increase by over 50% annually since they started working with us.

Right now, it is just myself, my husband and our two full-time staff, the third co-founder exited the business last year. So, we are a small team, but we are making a big impact and we will be hiring quite a few people more as we grow.

WHAT TYPE OF ENVIRONMENT IS YOUR STARTUP OPERATING IN?

Our core operations are based in the village. Our challenges are based around the fact that we are out in the most rural areas because we wanted to be on the ground with the people that we are working with to really understand the wants and needs of these communities. We have useful partnerships and relationships with the people we work with, but it makes it a bit more difficult for us to get connected to other outside resources and networking because we are so



rural. We have challenges of not having a cell network where a lot of our farmers are based. So just the general organisation and logistics of planning meetings and finding farmers and day-to-day communications are a lot more challenging because of that rural setup. That is where we are working with people, so we just find ways to create the best means of communication and reaching those places. It is difficult to find transport and vehicles that want to even come out in this area to pick up our products or people. So, we have unique challenges because of how we operate and where we operate and that's just because in Zambia, I think 40% of the population or more, is based in these rural areas.

WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE FOR STARTUPS LIKE YOURS IN YOUR COUNTRY?

There is quite a large community now that is trying to help get companies like ours more connected to the resources we need. There is now a lot of attention going towards conservation efforts, climate change and female inclusion. There are many resources, especially for a female entrepreneur. I have been very proactive in seeking out those

types of resources and it is kind of challenging at times, just to find things that are posted on the internet. You do have to start finding the right people that can link you to these environments and networking opportunities. It is a pretty exciting environment here in Zambia. There are many new organisations that are here to help with programs geared towards acceleration to help you get connected to more market linkages, to help you plan out your business strategies and training.

Lusaka is the main hub where most people in programs are based. It is generally challenging to find supplies in Northwestern Province, but with COVID, it's definitely changed the approach of those organisations and how they reach people now. There is a lot more attention being focused, if we want to make an impact, we have to be inclusive of all of these communities, whether you are in Lusaka or out in the bush. So, it is shifting, but those types of resources are mainly in Lusaka or the Copperbelt.

WHAT SKILLS HAVE YOU GAINED DURING TRAINING, MENTORING AND OTHER SUPPORT ACTIVITIES ALONG YOUR JOURNEY?

The biggest influence we have had was when I sought out other businesses and people that are doing similar work to ours, but are a few years ahead of us, to learn from their processes and what would they have done differently at the stages that we are currently in. Those types of connections and mentorships have connected me to all these different resources and programs, like BOOST UP. I was a part of a seed accelerator program in 2019 as well. I always think the best part of those programs is meeting other entrepreneurs and learning from them and their journey. My biggest need was understanding all of the types of documents and processes that are necessary when we are seeking an investment from bigger impact investors.

Learning the types of investment structures that are out there and what to expect from different investors, what they are looking for, how to tell our story in the most effective way that shows our impacts, and the financial returns. I have done a lot of pitching competitions, which are really fun and help me get a lot more comfortable speaking to anyone, anywhere, about what we do, whether that's in a minute timeframe or three minutes. I have learned how to be able to pitch the business to a variety of people. That has been really exciting.

WHAT FEEDBACK HAVE YOU HAD SO FAR FROM YOUR CLIENTS, END-USERS OR PARTNERS?

The main feedback is that we just need more, like we are at a point where the buyers we are engaging with are looking for much higher production. The farmers we are working with want more hives and the buyers want more product. So, we are just trying to expand in a sustainable way so that we do not expand too far too quickly.

WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE YOU HAD IN BRINGING YOUR PRODUCT TO THE MARKET?

The honey industry is very challenging. In the first few years, it was really challenging finding new clients. Recently there has been fraudulent honey that has entered the market where suppliers/ producers are putting other types of sugars or syrups in honey and diluting it. It has been really hard to gain clients' trust and ensure that not only are you producing a quality product, but also that you can keep up with the demand. These buyers, especially for wholesale export, do not want just a single order, they want 10 or 20 tons a month. So, they want to make sure that we are able to provide them with those quantities and also the same quality every single time that they order. It has been challenging to create those new relationships. How do we gain the trust of these people in the EU or in South Africa when they have never met us? They have never been here, they just received some samples. Now that we have had three years of operations and we can demonstrate a track record; that has definitely been beneficial.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE IS THE BEST PLATFORM TO NETWORK IN YOUR LOCAL STARTUP ECOSYSTEM?

There is an organisation called SheTrades. They have programs in multiple countries all over the world, and there is a specific, SheTrades Zambia platform and they do all kinds of training for different types of sectors. They break it up into sectors. It has been really nice to connect with more women that are in the honey sector. They also have many opportunities to meet with different partners within Zambia. They do meetings with the Bureau of Standards and they do training in partnership with different certifying bodies so you can get your processing plants certified properly. They are a really good resource for networking. Impact capital Africa has been another great one here in Zambia. They are linking startups to local and regional investors that are looking to invest specifically in Zambia. They also do a lot of training to make sure you are investment ready. That has been a really beneficial network as well. It has businesses that are in their early startup stages and also businesses that have been around for maybe five or eight years and are in their growth stages. Those two, I think, have been our largest platforms for getting connected within the entire ecosystem for funding opportunities, meeting other entrepreneurs and training.

WHAT ARE THE FUTURE PLANS FOR YOUR STARTUP?

For this year, we want to finalize all of these new partnerships in the different production areas and we want to set up our own processing facility. In the past, we have been outsourcing our processing, which has saved us a lot of money and

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Mentorship
is such an
important part of
entrepreneurship.”

helped us in our growth. Now we are at a point where we really need to be able to control all of our processing and make it more streamlined and efficient. Those are our main targets for this year. And then as far as the five-year plan, we want to reach our goal of 50,000 beehives and 5,000 farmers so that we can produce 400 to 500 tons of honey annually. We have talked about expanding into other production areas as well, such as Tanzania, Malawi, and Botswana. However, we want to make sure that all of our processes and targets within Zambia are met first. The we can start making those strategic plans of expansion from a solid base.

IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR AN INVESTMENT OR HAVE SECURED SOME, WHO IS YOUR IDEAL INVESTOR?

We have been in discussions with a few different investors. Our challenge right now is we are still a bit too small for these types of impact investors that want to make a large investment. Our ideal investor is someone that is hands-on and really involved in our growth strategy. Someone who works with us to create those targets and has resources locally. Now that we are

growing, we need more human resources, accounting, payments, that type of day-to-day help is really something that we need. If we can bring someone on that already has a structure in place with those types of resources, that would be excellent. Also one that is already somewhat involved in some part of what we do, so they should either have experience with other food companies, marketing and sale of food products, someone who has processed food products and knows about regulations and what is necessary and the types of certifications available, or someone with a lot of experience in getting attention and traction for our environmental and social impacts and telling that story and getting investment from that angle. So really, someone who is aligned in one way or another of our business components.

WHAT CAN YOU PASS ON TO ENTREPRENEURS AND FOUNDERS LIKE YOURSELF WHO NEED SUPPORT?

Surround yourself with people that always teach you. I think having mentors around that are successful and have been around doing similar work in the past - having their insight and their constant guidance has been really instrumental in our growth and how we have structured how we work. Mentorship is such an important part of entrepreneurship. Find the people that are doing what you want to do and surround yourself with them because it is not easy. There are a lot of lows in the process, but there are also a lot of highs. So, make sure that you are with people and surrounded by people that are going to constantly build you up, constantly teach you and give you the support that you need to continue reaching your goals as an entrepreneur.



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COACHPEDIA



WEBSITE

www.coachpedianam.com

SDG



COUNTRY

Botswana



**Festus
Malakia**

WHICH PROBLEM DOES YOUR STARTUP LOOK TO ADDRESS AND WHY?

Our startup is trying to solve a three dimensional problem: Efficiency of learning - there is so much interruption going on in remote learning. Secondly, how can we make it easier for people to learn on their own. Thirdly, education can be quite expensive, learning things that are relevant for them in a cost-effective way. I was looking at the problem from my own perspective - learning can be hard, you can always google but the information is not well-organised. Finding relevant things is hard. We were already doing different trainings

and workshops in Windhoek and people all over Namibia were asking for those opportunities. People are willing to learn on a virtual platform and they are hungry to learn.

WHEN DID YOU REALISE THAT YOU ARE INDEED ONTO SOMETHING BIG?

This idea has been around for some time, but last year when the first lockdown was initiated, I was participating in a lot of virtual sessions. It got to me that the school learners spent almost four months without going to school. The government was trying to make it easier for the learners to get an education without going to

school. It was the right time. We had already tested our trainings, so taking them online was a smarter way to scale this thing.

HOW DID YOU BUILD YOUR TEAM, AND HOW HAS YOUR TEAM GROWN DURING YOUR STARTUP JOURNEY?

We are a team of four now, when we started we were two. Other team members have skills set we were lacking. We were bringing in people with different skills and as we grow bigger, we will have the need for a new skill set. Two of the team members I know beforehand, they are also fellow entrepreneurs and we met through Dololo. One of

them is a software developer who is the first member I recruited and the other guy is an IT graduate, but more into business development, admin and marketing. The third one is with a marketing background, but also has a background in education.

WHAT TYPE OF ENVIRONMENT IS YOUR STARTUP OPERATING IN?

In Namibia, entrepreneurship is still in its infancy stage, the ecosystem is new and things are starting to pick up. Due to the high unemployment rate, a lot of young people are coming up with innovations. Because the ecosystem is still young, there are many challenges that are not supposed to be there and institutional support is lacking. But we are ready to compete on an international level. Since the Namibian market is very small, we are making solutions targeted for the whole continent. There are innovations coming out of Namibia and it is only a matter of time before we will be competing with big ecosystems like Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa.

WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE FOR STARTUPS LIKE YOURS IN YOUR COUNTRY?

In terms of mentorship, we are getting there and have a lot of support available in Namibia. We have institutions helping startups to get office space and we have co-working space. However, there is a blockage between corporates and startups - in terms of collaboration, we are not there yet, and that, the collaboration between corporates and startups could contribute to the funding gap. The biggest challenge is the funding gap. Namibian startups are over-mentored, every second day you see a mentorship

programme - which is not a bad thing - entrepreneurs need that knowledge. But it seems like the institutions organising the mentoring programmes are sceptical about funding the projects they are mentoring. NABAN (Namibia Business Angel Network) is good but is still looking to support more established startups who are already generating revenue. Pre-seed funding stage is hard.

WHAT SKILLS HAVE YOU GAINED DURING TRAINING, MENTORING AND OTHER SUPPORT ACTIVITIES ALONG YOUR JOURNEY?

I think one of the most important skills is trying to understand the problem and whether your solution is really relevant to solve the customers' problems. That might take you back to the drawing board asking yourself questions such as "is this the right market?" I learned to create a specific checklist, which will help in planning and implementing - when will each activity be performed and by who. I have definitely learned project management skills.



WHAT FEEDBACK HAVE YOU HAD SO FAR FROM YOUR CLIENTS, END-USERS OR PARTNERS?

With the sample we have used for testing, we are receiving positive feedback. They are able to navigate through the platform easily and we have incorporated some things. They like the interface and signing up. Most of the suggestions for improvement, such as a chat room, we already have on the back log.

WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE YOU HAD IN BRINGING YOUR PRODUCT TO THE MARKET?

People will be sceptical to think that it's just another kind of platform and it will take us time to attract the audience. Another problem is internet connectivity. We are trying to come up with different ways how we can navigate around that. We are looking at collaborating with internet providers and incorporating the app in a package, where you also get a SIM card loaded with internet data for a month. We are also thinking about



tablets with pre-installed content. We are still trying to find what is the right way for us.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE IS THE BEST PLATFORM TO NETWORK IN YOUR LOCAL STARTUP ECOSYSTEM?

The most effective platform is business seminars. Dololo is doing a good job in terms of that and you always meet people there. Besides traditional networking events, LinkedIn is a good platform if you want to network with people. There are a lot of professionals there. When you introduce yourself via LinkedIn, there's trust there. People usually respond and you are able to even schedule a meeting. But to benefit from the platform, you have to make the effort.

WHAT ARE THE FUTURE PLANS FOR YOUR STARTUP?

In the short-to-medium term, we are looking at setting more collaboration with institutions of higher learning, like University of Namibia (UNAM) and Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST). Collaboration with respected institutions will be helpful. The Freemium model is one of our business models, so we provide the service for free to a certain extent and gain feedback and can look into monetising it.

. IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR AN INVESTMENT OR HAVE SECURED SOME, WHO IS/ARE YOUR IDEAL INVESTOR(S)?

We are looking out for any investment opportunities. We have applied for a couple of them. Most of them are grant-based. We are looking to bring in more corporate investors. We want to go to organisations that support

“ You need to be determined. You have to be educating yourself, researching other businesses and understanding how other businesses operate. ”

educational initiatives and give them an opportunity to sponsor a number of students.

WHAT CAN YOU PASS ON TO ENTREPRENEURS AND FOUNDERS LIKE YOURSELF WHO NEED SUPPORT?

If you really need something, it's really up to you, you have the means. If you can come up with an idea, you can feed through. You need to be determined. You have to be educating yourself, researching other businesses and understanding how other businesses operate. I always study big businesses that are out there - how did they start, how did they make it happen. Put yourself out there and attend networking events and seminars. Invest in yourself. What matters in entrepreneurship is the people. Invest in yourself and it becomes much easier to meet new people and build your business.

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SOG WATER SOLUTIONS



WEBSITE

sogwater.co.za

SDG



COUNTRY

Zambia



**Keenan
Lawrence**

WHICH PROBLEM DOES YOUR STARTUP LOOK TO ADDRESS AND WHY?

The problem we want to solve is water scarcity. Rapid urbanisation and climate change are contributing to that problem. I've been involved with atmospheric water technology through other companies I've been involved with. In South Africa there are not many black-owned businesses in this technology, in terms of manufacturing, we are

actually the only one in Africa. Strategic-wise that made sense. I come from the Eastern Cape, which is one of the poorest provinces in South Africa and I know the hardships of people and the huge disparity between rich and poor and how the natural resources are limited to the poor people, so it was not just a business decision, but also a need to help the people I know that do struggle with this.

WHEN DID YOU REALISE THAT YOU ARE INDEED ONTO SOMETHING BIG?

The marketing of our business is water scarcity. The Eastern Cape dam water level is at 4%, which means that the situation is really bad and the risk of running out of water exists. You don't have much winter rains in the eastern parts of the country, there is a shortage of water and restrictions in place for water usage. There is a huge need

for our solution. If a hotel runs out of water, the cost of bottled water is huge. Also, from the sustainability point of view it's a huge opportunity. Climate change affects the air humidity level and the air is actually getting more moist. When we started the business, there were a lot of droughts. Our technology is going to be the cheapest for the hospitality industry. There are also a lot of schools that don't have access to clean drinking water and trucking water is a huge cost.

HOW DID YOU BUILD YOUR TEAM, AND HOW HAS YOUR TEAM GROWN DURING YOUR STARTUP JOURNEY?

It's quite a nice story, my previous company was also doing atmospheric water.. I met with my business partner when I closed a deal with Siemens, he is a German guy, about the same age as myself and we had a lot of similarities. We formed a good relationship and when I was telling him about starting my own company, he wanted to join. Just prior to the pandemic we were planning to set up a factory and have more people onboard and really start growing - and then COVID-19 pandemic hit. It was quite lucky that it was just the two of us. I took the risk and am working 100% for our startup, my business partner is still also employed with Siemens. Besides our core team, through our networks we have indirect support from university professors, young scientists and chemical engineers.

WHAT TYPE OF ENVIRONMENT IS YOUR STARTUP OPERATING IN?

From a technical point of view the environment is good. We want to be an African business supplying to Africans in Africa in terms of



water security in future. What is a huge challenge, had we been in Nigeria or Kenya, there would have been much more support available in terms of investments, marketing and sales, South Africa is still behind. Our technology is an opportunity for South Africa, considering the droughts and surely investing in a South African solution to this problem should be supported, but there is little support available. There are large companies such as Coca Cola and SA Brewing organising pitch competitions, even with some small cash prizes, but it's stopping there. It is a challenge for a very early-stage startup to grow the business and get in sales and revenue.

WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE FOR STARTUPS LIKE YOURS IN YOUR COUNTRY?

For most startups, the first funding is a grant fund. IDC, DTI, I've tried with so many government entities, but haven't received a grant. Also, startups don't have financial statements to prove they can pay back a loan. For a grant or a loan, I would need an offtake agreement, and to get offtake agreements, you'd need equipment, tooling and people. Platforms such as BOOST UP are great platforms, but the next step is broken. Startups need support in marketing, sales, and accounting, even offering half

a year's accounting services for a startup would be so valuable.

WHAT SKILLS HAVE YOU GAINED DURING TRAINING, MENTORING AND OTHER SUPPORT ACTIVITIES ALONG YOUR JOURNEY?

BOOST UP is by far the highest value in terms of how we project our business, how we sell our team and solution. BOOST UP was amazing, the support we got in pitching from Walid. The journey was so good in terms of timing, too. We were learning, implementing and rechecking. And the programme was professionally executed. We have attended some other competitions. We for example came second in the Creative Business Cup South Africa.

WHAT FEEDBACK HAVE YOU HAD SO FAR FROM YOUR CLIENTS, END-USERS OR PARTNERS?

We have Cape Nature Reserves as our client, they are the biggest entity responsible for nature reserves and wilderness areas in the Western Cape and second biggest in South Africa. They have lodges and accommodations and we've concluded another deal with them. They love our product. Before they had to buy bottled water. Our project is a once-off sale at the moment, but we want

to work on a rent-to-own basis. Some opportunity feedback we've received is related to the power cost i.e. the cost of generating a litre of water. It is much cheaper compared to bottled water but expensive compared to municipal water. We are pushing to get the energy consumption to 50%. There is some other feedback related to features such as incorporating IOT data driven solutions. We do have the know-how to add it in the future, but it requires investments.

WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE YOU HAD IN BRINGING YOUR PRODUCT TO THE MARKET?

What we need is to have nice premises with staff and products displayed where people can come in and try the water. We've got the product, but we need the brand experience and we need to be able to put it in the market. The need for the solution is in the market, we'd need financial support to scale up and invest in sales, marketing and branding.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE IS THE BEST PLATFORM TO NETWORK IN YOUR LOCAL STARTUP ECOSYSTEM?

I use LinkedIn quite a lot. There are a lot of CEOs, sustainability directors etc. As a one man's show, being the only person working full time for the startup, LinkedIn is the best platform. People who are interested in what you do show their interest. People that are interested in saving water, renewable energy, you can have those discussions and take it offline. The value I've gained through LinkedIn is manifold compared to many other platforms. So many networks I am part of I lose a track of them.

WHAT ARE THE FUTURE PLANS FOR YOUR STARTUP?

We need funding, but we are also pushing for sales. We are also looking at setting up an entity in Germany, which is going to be our R&D entity. In Germany we have more support available and better access to funding opportunities, universities and other startups. We are aiming at improving the efficiency of our product and reducing the amount of electricity used when making water out of air. The aim is to have the cost per litre to be very close to the price of municipal water. The risk of not supporting startups within the African countries is that in the future, our business might not be in Africa. Even if South Africa suffers from drought and the market is there, but if the support is not.

IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR AN INVESTMENT OR HAVE SECURED SOME, WHO IS/ARE YOUR IDEAL INVESTOR(S)?

We are open to equity. We are looking for someone who would invest and be our support system. Investing 3 million and be happy with 25 % equity and support with sales and marketing, assisting with the sales pipeline in terms of their networks, support from a business point of view. We want someone who owns a business, getting somebody who is going to help us financially and business wise.

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If you believe in it and are passionate about it, keep doing it.

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WHAT CAN YOU PASS ON TO ENTREPRENEURS AND FOUNDERS LIKE YOURSELF WHO NEED SUPPORT?

Just hang in there, it's tough. You'll have people that know you, who don't know you, who love you, all to say you don't know what you are doing. But it'll pass. If you believe in it and are passionate about it, keep doing it. Also, a large part of the work is thinking and strategizing, not necessarily getting anything on paper, but taking a walk in the park and thinking. And it's okay. Don't feel bad about not doing much sometimes. Everybody is going to have these tough experiences, that make you question what you are doing, you just got to hang in there. And add value. Constantly do what you believe is right, keep doing it.

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HUDUMA SMART



SDG



WEBSITE

www.hudumasmart.co.tz

COUNTRY

Zambia



**Balbina
Gullam**

WHICH PROBLEM DOES YOUR STARTUP LOOK TO AD- DRESS AND WHY?

The problem we are solving is the physical and sexual abuse that is happening in the domestic work sector where domestic workers are the victims. They are not being paid on time or sometimes not at all or less than what you deserve. We are also tackling issues around the lack of professionalism of the domestic workers by training them to become good at what they are doing and adding value to what they do. We help them with contracts and to avoid issues with abuse. I started

the business after I came to meet a person who was a victim of all those things. After hearing her stories I started to do research and found out that so many people face the same problem.

WHEN DID YOU REALISE THAT YOU ARE INDEED ONTO SOMETHING BIG?

Ever since I was young I have seen myself as a heroine, someone who is outstanding, who would do incredible things in her community. I wanted to be a social entrepreneur. I did well with petty businesses such as selling seeds,

baobabs, and sweets to support myself when I was in primary and secondary school. I knew how passionate about entrepreneurship, but I was afraid of standing out as an entrepreneur because I grew up in a community where children were supposed to go for careers that their parents and the communities define. Entrepreneurship, especially for girls, was not regarded as outstanding professionalism. This ideology tortured me until after I had finished high school and decided that I would pursue entrepreneurship as my profession. I decided I would focus on establishing an enterprise that will



“ The problem we are solving is the physical and sexual abuse that is happening in the domestic work sector where domestic workers are the victims. ”

allow me to combine my passion for technology and entrepreneurship to create a significant social impact in my community. During this period of transformation, a lot of things changed, including my perception of entrepreneurship in my nation and in Africa as a whole. I realised the power of entrepreneurship in the creation of decent jobs in Africa, and development in Africa.

HOW DID YOU BUILD YOUR TEAM, AND HOW HAS YOUR TEAM GROWN DURING YOUR STARTUP JOURNEY?

Our team was built first by recruiting people who are passionate about domestic work, people who are eager to make social impacts in the sector as well as build business. I am the sole founder and I have six people in the core team who are experts in communication and public relations, strategy, software development, finance, training, and marketing and sales. I was working alone at first with the idea and prototyping. It was hard at first, but as I kept working hard on my idea and talking to people and showing them that this is what I've done so far. That was how I was able to attract the right people with

the same vision. Four people out of the six were with me from the beginning. I had people who were passionate and they didn't do it just for the money. Working with them was not easy but it was worth it. They knew what they were doing. It was a social business from the beginning so all the team members needed to be into creating impact in the community and making a profitable business. The team members we recruited started as volunteers and based on their performance, we recruited them as employees. If we see that you're bringing something in the company, you're working hard and are passionate, we employ you.

WHAT TYPE OF ENVIRONMENT IS YOUR STARTUP OPERATING IN?

Tanzania is a good country for a startup to establish themselves and to build your company. I am based in Dar es Salaam, I would describe Dar as a busy city, a city with many people. It's economically and technologically advanced, a good place for a tech startup. Electricity is reliable and there are people and resources, technology and power. It's a great place for a tech startup.

WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE FOR STARTUPS LIKE YOURS IN YOUR COUNTRY?

For young startups, there are funds and investments. They are categorised in two categories, the first one is the government support. COSTECH is working on supporting innovation and social businesses in the country. With such institutions, young innovators are able to get access to funding and competitions and they are able to win prizes. On the other side, there are institutions that are private, which are for incubation and acceleration. It's all about getting yourself out there and spreading the word about your work. Most of the time, if you are doing something incredible and serving the people, people will eventually get to know about you and your project will attract support. It's not hard to get support in this country as long as you're doing an incredible job.

WHAT SKILLS HAVE YOU GAINED DURING TRAINING, MENTORING AND OTHER SUPPORT ACTIVITIES ALONG YOUR JOURNEY?

I started as a mentee at Apps and Girls, which is a non profit organisation that bridges the gender gap in technology. I was incubated there and taught coding and programming. I also attended an entrepreneurship training with nLab Innovation Academy, that's where I was mentored about entrepreneurship. Those were the two organisations that helped me to become the CEO and founder of my own company.

I participated in The Anzisha Prize, which is a prize given to 20 youngest entrepreneurs in Africa under the age of 22, so I was lucky to be selected as one of the finalists and we received an award in 2019, the prize was given in South Africa. Then I participated in BOOST UP and I really enjoyed it. I also have a mentor, the CEO of Apps and Girls, she is my mentor and she is also an expert in business. I get so much knowledge from her. I've learned business management skills that have helped me to implement our business strategy and helped me run the business as well as cooperate well with my teammates.

WHAT FEEDBACK HAVE YOU HAD SO FAR FROM YOUR CLIENTS, END-USERS OR PARTNERS?

Clients like the monthly follow-up from the company, our health insurance policy, and friendly customer support. They also like that system gives a chance to choose a worker by writing your requirements and the qualifications you want her to have. Customers have requested us to also get

workers educated so that they can assist kids with homework and can speak basic English.

WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE YOU HAD IN BRINGING YOUR PRODUCT TO THE MARKET?

The biggest challenge is the stereotype in the community about the domestic work sector that domestic workers are mostly considered as failures in career life. In this case, most domestic workers are not respected, and they're treated as homeless people. Thus, they face a lot of sexual harassment and abuse in their work areas. So for us to come up with Huduma Smart we had to first work on changing people's mentality about domestic work and change the mentality of our beneficiaries themselves to understand that they are important and deserve to be treated well. Also being a young 19-year-old lady and a mere high school student, working as a founder and CEO of Huduma Smart, people would not believe in you but that's not the worst. The worst is not getting the opportunity to show what you have worked on.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE IS THE BEST PLATFORM TO NETWORK IN YOUR LOCAL STARTUP ECOSYSTEM?

Apps & Girls have coding programmes for schoolgirls and they support girls in starting their own enterprise and using technology. They also have something called Girls Entrepreneurship Summit, there is a summit at the end of the programme, where girls from secondary and high school are being incubated including ideation, prototyping and how they can produce their own startup. The programme takes three months and

“ Being in entrepreneurship requires one to be surrounded by positively thinking people who will be there for you during the downs. ”

at the end they have the summit and the winning startup gets prizes. They also have other programmes where they take young women who finished school but were not able to go to university and teach them about coding. Niwezeshe Innovation Academy had a programme I attended that helped me develop the whole idea of Huduma Smart. COSTECH Commission for Science and Technology (Tanzania) have different events for business minded people. They get to meet and connect with you and you get to know about different opportunities for startups. Apart from the events, they tend to collaborate with other companies and institutions and competitions and exhibitions where young entrepreneurs can compete and get to learn business skills. Examples of such competitions is Makisatu, a competition for science and technology and businesses by COSTECH. It's one of the biggest competitions in the country. They also get into partnership with banks and other institutions and help young entrepreneurs to support themselves.

WHAT ARE THE FUTURE PLANS FOR YOUR STARTUP?

In a year, Huduma Smart is going to develop a chatbot system by using artificial intelligence to create an easier way for domestic workers to reach us since most of them are



technologically backward and from disadvantaged populations that they can't afford using smartphones and other modern tools to access our platform. So far, we are working with clients in six regions in the country, our plan is to expand to four more regions by 2022. We also want to expand to commercial cleaning services.

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR AN INVESTMENT OR HAVE SECURED SOME, WHO IS/ARE YOUR IDEAL INVESTOR(S)?

We are currently looking for an investment, this time a venture capital or incubator backed seed funding investment worth at least \$10,000 in return of capital for it to help us in our regional expansion plans, key hires, product development and venture extension lines particularly our cleaning services and cleaning detergent production. My ideal investor is one who is focused on both the business part and the creation of social impacts in the community.

WHAT CAN YOU PASS ON TO ENTREPRENEURS AND FOUNDERS LIKE YOURSELF WHO NEED SUPPORT?

They should get things done, use what they currently have, and not stay idle waiting for big support without proving how well they can utilize the small things they have in their hands. They should knock on as many doors as they can reach and attract the support they want. Being in entrepreneurship requires one to be surrounded by positively thinking people who will be there for you during the downs, we all can get up on our own after a fall - but not always. Sometimes we do need people to be there for us.



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FIRST-AID COUNSELLING



WEBSITE

www.facounselling.com

SDG



COUNTRY

Botswana



**Kesego
Mosime**

WHICH PROBLEM DOES YOUR STARTUP LOOK TO ADDRESS AND WHY?

The problem we are solving is the access to mental health. Often people are suffering in silence and hiding behind closed doors. There is still a lot of stigma around mental health issues and seeking counselling is hard. The other problem we are addressing is time – even if you are brave enough to seek counselling, it might take a long time before you are able to get help. People need emergency services. Our online platform is convenient and accessible, we guarantee 100 % privacy and

anonymity. It is affordable and available in English as well as the local language Setswana and sign language.

WHEN DID YOU REALISE THAT YOU ARE INDEED ONTO SOMETHING BIG?

It's been a unique journey for us. We started by pitching our idea to a large telecom company Orange. I was showing them the presentation and they were so excited about the idea that they joined us as a partner. We were one of the Botswana Innovation Fund winners out of 395 applications and received a 33,000 dollar grant receiving

media coverage from winning. Ours is Africa's first instant mental healthcare platform

HOW DID YOU BUILD YOUR TEAM, AND HOW HAS YOUR TEAM GROWN DURING YOUR STARTUP JOURNEY?

My business partner is a social worker with 10 years' counselling experience. We have content developers with degrees in psychology, who have assisted hundreds of people. Other skills we have in our team are a translator who translates the content to the local language Setswana, software development, UI/UX design,

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“ You need to be obsessed with your idea and innovating - innovation never stops. ”

human resources expert helping in recruiting, graphic design, marketing team and quality assurance. Our core team consists of eight full-time employees, and we have outsourced the app development, UI/UX design and quality assurance. It has been an interesting journey of hiring and firing. Crucial part in hiring new people is that all the employees need to believe in the vision and be a part of it. If someone doesn't buy our philosophy, they are not the right fit. We need people who understand the vision and understand the values, who are passionate about normalizing counselling.

WHAT TYPE OF ENVIRONMENT IS YOUR STARTUP OPERATING IN?

The environment is peaceful and stable, Gaborone is the hub in

the country and there you have access to anything and everything. Business ecosystem allows to be innovative and there are organisations such as Botswana Innovation Hub. The government is supporting digitization. Africa is a fertile ground for innovation and solving grassroots problems. It is a good environment to “grow your baby” until it's big enough to move to other, bigger markets

WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE FOR STARTUPS LIKE YOURS IN YOUR COUNTRY?

During the past two years, we have seen an increase in startup support. There is for example a new Angel investor network. Botswana Innovation Hub provides funding through its innovation fund as well as incubation facilities for free. Their work is very vital. There is Citizen Economic Development Agency (CEDA), a parastatal, that offers loans to innovators. Then there are companies, like Orange, who invest in supporting entrepreneurs. Now is the right time to be an innovator.

WHAT SKILLS HAVE YOU GAINED DURING TRAINING, MENTORING AND OTHER SUPPORT ACTIVITIES ALONG YOUR JOURNEY?

I have attended many global entrepreneur events such in Russia, countless innovation programmes, in Belize, Croatia, Nepal and Ghana. I have attended a Global Entrepreneurship bootcamp in Nepal, YALI entrepreneurship programme, the BOOST UP programme, Ali Baba e-fellowship programme. I have learned about the company vision and mission, how to build a good organizational structure, and how to solve

problems. BOOST UP was remarkable for the entrepreneurial me.

WHAT FEEDBACK HAVE YOU HAD SO FAR FROM YOUR CLIENTS, END-USERS OR PARTNERS?

We are currently doing the beta testing within the team. There is a lot of excitement – people long for instant gratification, the idea of getting counselling services online is quite mind blowing.

WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE YOU HAD IN BRINGING YOUR PRODUCT TO THE MARKET?

An issue we have is that people easily compare us to the counselling centres. Our service is a digital service complementing traditional counselling services, the intent is not to replace them. It takes time to educate the target audience about this kind of new type of service.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE IS THE BEST PLATFORM TO NETWORK IN YOUR LOCAL STARTUP ECOSYSTEM?

Before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, it was the coffee sessions with Botswana Innovation Hub (BIH), roundtable sessions with investors and entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial shows. Some events, such as the Global Expo Botswana has been organised completely online.

WHAT ARE THE FUTURE PLANS FOR YOUR STARTUP?

For us, the most important efforts are around marketing. We are trying to gain as much exposure as possible. We are also looking into potential collaborations with African Union or European Union. In



the next five years, we are not only planning to grow locally but also expanding to other markets such as South Africa and Nigeria through digital marketing.

IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR AN INVESTMENT OR HAVE SECURED SOME, WHO IS/ARE YOUR IDEAL INVESTOR(S)?

Our ideal investor is a venture capitalist. However, currently we are waiting to launch first and see what needs to be improved in terms of our service. A venture capitalist would help us in spreading throughout Africa, to grow and innovate aggressively. We are looking into launching teletherapy, expanding into diagnosing patients, creating a mental health game to educate people and adding virtual counselling rooms that are accessible via laptops or smartphones.

WHAT CAN YOU PASS ON TO ENTREPRENEURS AND FOUNDERS LIKE YOURSELF WHO NEED SUPPORT?

Taking the first step is the most important thing. Many people have great ideas, but it is important to get started somewhere. You need to be obsessed with your idea and innovating - innovation never stops. Know your idea better than anyone else and know your industry, and always stay ahead of competition. Go out there, sell your idea. Aim for the stars! Crazy people will eventually change the world.



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LEVERAGE POINT



SDG



www.leveragepoint.co.bw

COUNTRY

Botswana



**Motshidisi Kenneth
Setimela**

WHICH PROBLEMS DOES YOUR STARTUP LOOK TO ADDRESS AND WHY?

Small businesses in Southern Africa have a big challenge in terms of managing their entire business operations. The majority of them struggle with tax compliance because they don't have all the information about their businesses. The purpose of our software solution, BusinessPoint, is to automate the business processes for any type of business, which includes sales, accounting, inventory, and employee management. Many small businesses are not able to perform their operations effectively and this might result in them being closed because of legal or tax related

issues. The software development industry in Botswana is in its infancy. Most of the software solutions are imported and small businesses can't afford them. Because those software solutions are made for other markets and are meant for large enterprises, they need to be customised for small businesses to use them and that requires a large investment. A large portion of the population in Botswana are working for the private sector, generally small businesses.

WHEN DID YOU REALISE THAT YOU ARE ONTO SOMETHING BIG?

When we started developing the software for small companies we

started seeing an appetite from people asking for features "can you please do this?" Then we realised that we can actually change this instead of implementing it for individuals, we can make it a software as a service (SaaS) and go to more people. So, the moment when we realised that this solution can actually work for everybody is when we realised that this could actually be a game changer in Botswana's market.

HOW DID YOU BUILD YOUR TEAM AND HOW HAS YOUR TEAM GROWN DURING YOUR STARTUP JOURNEY?

We started Leverage Point with just the two of us. As is often the case in IT, we had small projects

on the side while we had our day jobs. Over time we started getting bigger projects that required more effort. First, we would bring in resources for a short period of time to deliver the project. However, we realised that doing projects and delivering on them is not the most sustainable business model. We kept on thinking we needed to have a flagship product. Based on some of the projects, we developed what we now call Business Point. What has been a bit frustrating has been finding the talent, especially as a startup company. Sometimes the talent is there, but the challenge is that you need to be offering packages that are commensurate with their skills. When you are a startup you are always worried about overcommitting in that department. Sometimes we'd find the talent and train them and then somebody comes and poaches them. But we are looking into changing the model so that employees could become shareholders to engage them to stay with the company.

When we entered the BOOST UP competition, we had a team of six. The team has grown and now we are 12 team members. We were recruiting because of a project we just had. But based on the 40 clients that we have already enrolled, we knew that we are going to need more people to support the system, because technology adoption in Africa is not the same as in Europe. People need extensive training for them to adopt and use the solution.

WHAT TYPE OF ENVIRONMENT IS YOUR STARTUP OPERATING IN?

First, from the cultural point of view, if you look at what we do, BusinessPoint is quite a fresh thing on the market. The majority of the

software was imported, so it's quite a new thing that a local company is building the software. People are still taking this with a pinch of salt, which is understandable. Generally, people are used to buying off-the-shelf software.

I have been privileged to have worked in a corporate, bringing that experience to a startup. You have to be patient and build the company slowly. Most of the time the startups think they can just come to the market and flourish. We brought two products to market that didn't succeed but we didn't give up. It was a learning curve for us. There is still a lot to learn to be successful on the market.

At the moment, the President is pushing digitalisation of so many industries in the country and he's pushing a knowledge-based economy. There are quite a lot of opportunities around software development and mobile application industries. There is a big push from the government. Botswana is well-developed in terms of electricity and the government has done a lot of investments in fiber and internet throughout the country and even trying to make sure that services offered to the citizens are also digital. There is a big transition that is happening in the country. We are going to see a lot of growth even beyond Business Point. Since SMMEs are the largest employers in the country, we are going to see a lot of policies supporting the digitalisation of SMMEs.

WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE FOR STARTUPS LIKE YOURS IN YOUR COUNTRY?

We have first steps venture (FSV), the BIH programme. We have quite

a lot of government initiatives around youth funding, but that is up to a certain age, about 35 years. There are other programmes like the ones of Local Enterprise Authority. LEA supports small businesses, it doesn't really matter what sector you're in. What has also been exciting is the CEDA, they are responsible for development finance. Recently they released new guidelines that are supporting startup companies without asking security from them. The biggest challenges are that Botswana does not have venture capitalists and there is not a lot of research funding. Even when people have good ideas that are commercial they are not able to scale up and take the ideas to the next level. There are governmental programmes for funding and corporate social investment programmes assisting startup companies. Majority of them want to come in when the startups are advanced, never at the experimentation stage.

WHAT SKILLS HAVE YOU GAINED DURING TRAINING, MENTORING AND OTHER SUPPORT ACTIVITIES ALONG YOUR JOURNEY?

What I really appreciated was the scaling up of the project. It's one thing to have a market viable product, but having to scale up is a totally different dynamic. The second part was the ability to grow a team and seeing the advantages of having a larger team. That's why when the opportunity came, I was inclined to build a larger team. Only with a larger team, you are able to grow the product and reduce dependencies on yourself. You are able to focus on growing the company in a better way. Also, we are always inclined to think that funds are only within your country, but given the opportunity



to interact with people from Cape Town and the likes it started giving us that opportunity to realise that the funding and support doesn't have to necessarily come from within your borders. Interacting with other startups was also an eye-opener. We realised that we had common challenges and were able to help each other to come up with better things.

WHAT FEEDBACK HAVE YOU HAD SO FAR FROM YOUR CLIENTS, END-USERS OR PARTNERS?

Some of the feedback is related to functionalities, people are asking for development of more features. As they come in, we prioritise them based on the amount of clients requesting. Other feedback has been requesting to have people available in different places around the country to assist the clients around the country. It's a bit of a challenge since you have to manage people that are in other locations, but it is something we are currently looking into. The last suggestion has been around developing a call centre specific to the product. The clients want more support and frequent trainings. The differentiating factor that we have is that we want the technology to have a face. The human touch is only possible when you're in touch with your clients.

WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE YOU HAD IN BRINGING YOUR PRODUCT TO THE MARKET?

The challenges have been around having to grow the team. It required a bit more financial investment. The second big challenge is around being a new entrant in the market. One has to do a lot more work, but I think it's natural and part of what happens when you are bringing in a new product and when you are a startup company. Those are the two major challenges that have been there. I think also from a financial point of view it has been the challenge to be able to register the IPs and ensure that there is protection of some of our intellectual property.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE IS THE BEST PLATFORM TO NETWORK IN YOUR LOCAL STARTUP ECOSYSTEM?

BIH has provided that opportunity because they are facilitating and trying to open doors for us. It has been a good platform for networking. Second one has been involvement in community-related works. Sometimes I write or participate in forums. For me, it's a bit different since I have experience from the corporate world and have those networks. BIH and Local Enterprise Authority are good starting points for a wider network. Sometimes you need to go to different places to introduce your service, if you go to 20 maybe one or two will take you forward.

WHAT ARE THE FUTURE PLANS FOR YOUR STARTUP?

Next year we will do quite a lot of marketing for the product. We are targeting both corporations that have a pool of SMMEs and we are also targeting individual companies directly. We are also

going to grow Business Point in Malawi through partnering with a local bank. The bank is providing Business Point to their customers as an additional service. Next year we are trying to push and have as many people listed for Business Point as possible. We are also hoping to partner with Local Enterprise Authority who have a pool of customers to secure a larger number of customers. Next year is going to be scaling for us.

IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR AN INVESTMENT OR HAVE SECURED SOME, WHO IS YOUR IDEAL INVESTOR?

We are not really looking for an investor who is making a financial injection, we are looking for an investor who will help us grow and become bigger. We are looking for the right investor from that point of view. Somebody who will be part of the journey, help us transition. I see myself as a social entrepreneur, I care more about the growth of people, I hope I can appeal to someone around that space who is also passionate about development.

WHAT CAN YOU PASS ON TO ENTREPRENEURS AND FOUNDERS LIKE YOURSELF WHO NEED SUPPORT?

Patience, patience, patience - and the will to learn. Learning means having to appreciate that we are a part of the bigger sphere in terms of the world. Many people have different skills and it is on the basis of collaboration that people can eventually continue growing. I always say that some of the best innovative countries are because of their immigration policies. They allow people to collaborate and it didn't matter which country they came from. It's good to have that worldly view and be part of the innovation ecosystem.

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UKU'HAMBA



SDG



WEBSITE

www.ukuhamba.co.za

COUNTRY

South
Africa



Sibongile
Mongadi

WHICH PROBLEM DOES YOUR STARTUP LOOK TO ADDRESS AND WHY?

I chose to found Uku'hamba based on a personal experience interacting with an amputee in a health facility south of Johannesburg who wasn't able to access a prosthetic limb. I tried putting myself in her position and to understand what are some of the challenges she's facing as an amputee. She has not been able to access a prosthetic limb despite waiting for five years. Getting one from a private hospital can be expensive. In the public sector, you can access it for free, but the wait can be long. A surgeon in the hospital explained to me that not all hospitals produce prosthetic limbs. It is a challenge for those

who produce them, since every hospital needs them and they outsource some parts and need to rely on import and export. I started to do more research in the industry and realised that clearly there is a problem and started to look into how I could best solve this problem and produce prosthetic limbs in a quicker and more cost-efficient way. That's how I founded Ukuhamba.

WHEN DID YOU REALISE THAT YOU ARE INDEED ONTO SOMETHING BIG?

I don't have any educational background that has to do with medicine. Most people would assume that you have such an educational background. From that personal experience I knew that I clearly have that strength to

solve this problem. I used to pitch with no product or prototype. It was a huge challenge, it was very hard to convince people. I was told that it's never going to be done. I had my science and mathematics background from high school. Due to financial restrictions, I wasn't able to further my studies and go into medicine, but I took courses in entrepreneurship and innovation management. I was able to sketch it on a piece of paper. In 2018-2019, people started to see that this child can actually do this. 2019, I made my first prototype. That's when I also won the GAP Innovation Competition.

HOW DID YOU BUILD YOUR TEAM, AND HOW HAS YOUR TEAM GROWN DURING YOUR STARTUP JOURNEY?

Ukuhamba is founded by one female, which is me. In 2018, I founded another company with my friend. I resigned from the corporate space, she was still working full-time. I was showing more hunger, so I founded my own company. Uku'hamba works with young innovators. I collaborate a lot. We have five undergraduates who work as volunteers on a part-time basis. We have a board of advisors advising us in terms of technology, quality assurance and compliance. We have an advisor who works in orthopedics who produces prosthetic limbs using a traditional method. And we have a person helping with marketing. She was the person who advised us to make sure our products are locally manufactured.

She also created our logo. Finding these people to collaborate with has all been through hard work. Networking is so important for entrepreneurs. I met them for example through workshops and hackathons. We need to understand the importance of mentorship. I'm looking into hiring interns and paying for them, but firstly, Uku'hamba needs its own office space.

WHAT TYPE OF ENVIRONMENT IS YOUR STARTUP OPERATING IN?

I'm based in Soweto, Johannesburg. It is a big thing since I am a female startup entrepreneur. It is going to be one of those startups you are going to read in a book. Especially when you come from a low income community. It gives hope to others that it can be done. I want my story to be relatable

to others, especially if there are young females out there who want to study science and technology, to inspire them. It might be that Uku'hamba is the first female-led company who is producing prosthetic limbs in South Africa.

WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE FOR STARTUPS LIKE YOURS IN YOUR COUNTRY?

Uku'hamba was self-funded. It's still a challenge, not just in South Africa, but for most startups, we don't have much support in place. In order to have most of the equipment we have today, it was through the seed grants we got through pitch competitions. What keeps me motivated is to remove the word "impossible" and replace it with "possible" where I see a challenge I turn them to opportunities. For me the strongest support system has been my family, even if I am the first entrepreneur in the family, I come from a family of eight children, I am the sixth child. When I struggle, I can ask for help from my family. Support structure from home is so important. I always create opportunities for myself. I've always been a hard worker because I understood that nothing comes easy. I was incubated by the Innovation Hub. I came across the BOOST UP competition via social media and applied. Same things with the hackathons and trainings.

WHAT SKILLS HAVE YOU GAINED DURING TRAINING, MENTORING AND OTHER SUPPORT ACTIVITIES ALONG YOUR JOURNEY?

Skills development is the most important thing of them all. I did my grade 1-12, I loved science, but wasn't able to further my studies. I studied entrepreneurship and

In terms of the next three to five years, we want to have our own local manufacturing producing cost-effective prosthetic limbs.

marketing. From there, trying to find myself as a person. In 2019, I self-taught myself about 3D printing. Through all these programmes I have participated the most important skills have been leadership skills and boosting my confidence. Also, innovation skills through the hackathons. They are most exciting. You have a very short time to come up with a solution. You are in one space with strangers for days. You will understand your own strengths as a person as well as how to be a team player. For me hackathons have helped to expand in terms of innovation.

WHAT FEEDBACK HAVE YOU HAD SO FAR FROM YOUR CLIENTS, END-USERS OR PARTNERS?

We have users and we are working closely with one. When we gave him the prosthetic limb he was very excited because of the weight and the colours. He gave us eight out of ten. We are seeing more interest, especially in the health sector. There is interest in the health sector to have us pitching the product to them. The University of Technology advised us on the

use of materials, how to make them even more durable. Currently we are still in product development and trying to get it right. Now we have around ten users using our product.

WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE YOU HAD IN BRINGING YOUR PRODUCT TO THE MARKET?

I am not saying it is a challenge. We produce this product locally, and not outsourcing it internationally. We are custom producing them meaning we are designing them according to amputee specification. It's not a challenge, but we are taking it slow to make sure we can provide it cost effectively while maintaining the quality. That's why we have spent so much time with product development.

There is this body where you register in order for you to get all your compliance documents and manufacturing certificate for medical product devices. You need to take your product for testing to check the performance and the quality of the product. We have not done it yet. We still want to invest more in terms of the actual product. We are collecting more data from the amputees to improve the product. The only challenge we have is due to COVID-19, we were just about to get our office space and consulting room in one of the local hospitals in the public sector. But currently no luck there, but the private sector is the most promising. We need to schedule a meeting with them. If we have our office in one of the hospitals, people will trust us more.



WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE IS THE BEST PLATFORM TO NETWORK IN YOUR LOCAL STARTUP ECOSYSTEM?

Where I am based, offline has worked in terms of conferences and seminars. You can check who is part of the panels and speakers. You are able to meet the people face to face, you can exchange business cards and you can make use of it. When I was starting my business, I met the female CEO of the Transport Education Training Authority in South Africa, so for me it was an inspiration to see a female leading in a male-dominant sector. I was brave enough to ask for her business card. I made use of the business card and she is still part of my group of mentors. But not everyone will say yes to you.

Online, of course social media is the thing, but you have to use it right. Social media can help you to attract more people and enables you to send direct messages. I ended up finding one of my mentors by sending her a direct message on Facebook. Social media is very powerful as well.

WHAT ARE THE FUTURE PLANS FOR YOUR STARTUP?

In terms of the next three to five years, we want to have our own local manufacturing producing cost-effective prosthetic limbs. The idea is to expand to Africa. There are so many medium-income countries where people don't have access to affordable prosthetic limbs. We are starting locally to serve our people and there we will be expanding to the continent. We see ourselves working with more young innovators. I believe that young people are brilliant and innovative, we just need to start believing in them and give them that space. I was given that platform to express myself. We want to give other young people a chance.

Another part of our strategy is to have employees that are amputees. If we have them onboard, they will be more innovative. Let's not look at disability as a liability. We want amputees to overcome disability on a psychological level. That's where we see ourselves. What I understood from the interview with amputees is that they have low

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Don't forget your
'why'. Remember why
you started.

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esteem, they would see themselves as less human and that's what we are trying to change. It's just not us making money, we want to give them respect.

IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR AN INVESTMENT OR HAVE SECURED SOME, WHO IS/ARE YOUR IDEAL INVESTOR(S)?

Yes, one is looking for funding. But for now, we don't have a specific investor in mind. Maybe when we are in the stage of commercialisation, we will have a better picture of who we'd like to have on board as an investor.

WHAT CAN YOU PASS ON-TO ENTREPRENEURS AND FOUNDERS LIKE YOURSELF WHO NEED SUPPORT?

If it is possible, access mentorship. I would encourage every entrepreneur to take that route. It is good to have someone to relate to. For me it was important to be mentored by a woman who works in science. If he or she can do it, that means you can do it. Sometimes we go through so much as entrepreneurs, you are stressed, depressed. Then it's good to have those people you can go to when you did not do well.

Put in the work. Let's not give up. It's not about being smart, you have to stay focused and be committed. Also, find something that excites you. For me, I play my music and I keep pushing. Find a hobby - exercise or read a book, whatever keeps you motivated.

Put in the work and always trust the process. Don't forget your 'why'. Remember why you started. For every female entrepreneur, remember why you started. The journey is not easy, but you just need to soldier on, eventually it will unfold. I always say start unknown, end unforgettable.



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AGELVIPA ONLINE



SDG



WEBSITE

www.agelvipa.com

COUNTRY

Namibia



**Victoria
Haihambo**

WHICH PROBLEM DOES YOUR STARTUP LOOK TO ADDRESS AND WHY?

We actually realised that there is a limited market for startups and microbusiness, especially vendors and traders. They existed in isolation. Confined to one area in an open market, and they only traded in their community and not in a national market. This prevented them from getting access and exposure to other potential customers. They are given business management training, but it is not practical for vendors. We want to take the goods to market through the sign up of vendors to the online platform. We also want to give them

the training on the online platform so that they understand it. Giving training and guidance on running their businesses, online and in person.

WHEN DID YOU REALISE THAT YOU ARE INDEED ONTO SOMETHING BIG?

In December 2018 I took part in an online competition, I received an email that I was the winner from Namibia. I even forgot that I had applied, but I was the winner. It was a Women in Africa competition. They choose 54 women from 54 African countries each year in different categories, and I was in the tech category. At that time, I did

not have a fully developed website, I was using one of those free website designers. So, I had to push myself to design my website, put on products etc. for the conference where I would need to present. At first it was just an idea and then I saw people's interest during the conference, people were really impressed with the product. That is the first thing that made me to really pursue it.

HOW DID YOU BUILD YOUR TEAM AND HOW HAS YOUR TEAM GROWN DURING YOUR STARTUP JOURNEY?

I was already doing consulting services before I came up with the

online platform. I had a partner. I am a business accountant, but I am not qualified to sign off books. So, we were working together and he signed off on the books when we were done. He is on my team as well; we can also give affordable accounting services to SMMEs so he is number one on my team. Then we have a lady working for us, she is our administrative officer, she is working on the online shop as well. Then we have a part-time software engineer. He has done most of software development. He is willing to do a lot of troubleshooting and sorting of issues for free. He will go and check what the issue is so he will sort it out for us, he is quite affordable and accessible. Then we have a lady working on the mobile payment platform and she is from Zambia, so we have been bringing people onto the online platform and providing training. She is a volunteer team member. Then there is another lady from Zimbabwe. She is also involved in a women's empowerment platform for business and she's studying towards international economics. She also gives training. Most of my team is built on networking. I met the lady from Zimbabwe via a referral from a lady I met in Zimbabwe. Recently I hired two online interns and they are there just to market and do marketing and to sign up vendors etc.

WHAT TYPE OF ENVIRONMENT IS YOUR STARTUP OPERATING IN?

Rental the costs are not too high, but to find a place where your business can be exposed and the premises is situated by the road those ones can become quite pricey. There is also the chambers of commerce and industry, but they are more focused on SMEs and on businesspeople and not entrepreneurs. Sometimes you



invite them to attend the events and they do attend, but they do not appreciate networking events. There is support available but it is directed more towards SMEs. Most of the support I have received so far has been international. There are a lot programs in Namibia but they are mostly online. SAIS, Dololo etc. In 2018 there was no support for people like us in Namibia, and then at the end of 2019 and in 2020 there was suddenly lots of support, but most of it was online, but still it was now accessible in Namibia.

WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE FOR STARTUPS LIKE YOURS IN YOUR COUNTRY?

Mostly accelerator programs, how to pitch to investors, how to run your business and how to do marketing. Grants too, but they are very limited and mostly focused on SMEs. There is seed funding, but it is very difficult get in Namibia. Angel investors are slowly becoming more available. That is basically the support that we are now getting in Namibia. There are competitions and then there are programs like BoostUp that are more practical and quite helpful.

WHAT SKILLS HAVE YOU GAINED DURING TRAINING, MENTORING AND OTHER SUPPORT ACTIVITIES ALONG YOUR JOURNEY?

During the BoostUp I learned how to attract the right talent for business and how to build your team and the different fundraising possibilities. There are a lot of

resources, family friends and family. We learned about business scalability and business growth. The two must not be confused. Sometimes it can be a disadvantage for the startup to scale too fast. The expenses increase too rapidly if you scale too fast. We know how to pitch and how to tailor your pitch based on the investor profile.

WHAT FEEDBACK HAVE YOU HAD SO FAR FROM YOUR CLIENTS, END-USERS AND PARTNERS SO FAR?

Most of the feedback that I have received is that they find the platform quite interesting; they see it as an opportunity to grow their businesses through access to additional customers. They also see it as an opportunity to expose their businesses and some of them say that using the platform reduces operating expenses. So, they just want to list the product on the platform after they make it and they then do not have to go and find a place to sell the product and incur those costs.

We have now opened an account with DHL to import and export with them. We have some suppliers in Zambia that are now making products, rice, beans, soaps for the face, cosmetics. We hope that everything will go smoothly. Our vendors sign up mostly through Facebook, if I make it through this competition and I get funding a huge part of the budget will go to marketing. Where we have to educate the potential vendors on using the platform. We just allow them to list the product and we

upload it on our store. We will visit the vendors who do not know how to use the internet. We help them in that way. The rest can track their inventory through the app, so that they can let us know when they are running low on stock. Currently, I have 13 suppliers.

WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE YOU HAD IN BRINGING YOUR PRODUCT TO MARKET?

The cost of marketing is a big concern. To introduce your business to the market you are limited to word of mouth and social media and the further challenge of people not being convinced of the use of buying online. You have to convince people to trust online shopping. Sometimes you can find somebody who is willing to help, but you do not have the right funds to pay that particular person. I am actually thinking about taking on an additional founder to give me more access to capital. I have sent him a proposal and I gave him a proposal to develop an online app and help us with the marketing.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE IS THE BEST PLATFORM IS THE BEST TO NETWORK IN YOUR LOCAL STARTUP ECOSYSTEM?

The best platform for networking due to COVID is through social media and platforms like Whatsapp. It made it possible for us to reach out to the people and to ask them how they are doing and to reach out and seek collaboration. There is GEN Namibia and others that they have included me and the Zoom-sessions are also a good way to network. Also, there is NCRST which helps with this. There are several platforms and programs that make networking possible. Trade fairs and exhibitions are also very popular. Though they are

now on hold due to COVID, but they are wonderful because people will often reach out to you afterwards and ask about the business or how they can get involved. It is important to get the team out there, to keep marketing and to keep social media activities alive.

WHAT ARE THE FUTURE PLANS FOR YOUR STARTUP?

The short-term goal is to sign 200 vendors and 20 000 newsletter subscribers by the end of this year. It's also a goal in the coming months to start importing and exporting with DHL. And to ensure that the suppliers in Namibia meet the suppliers from Zambia and Zimbabwe so that they can start buying from each other. We do want to connect vendors with end users only, but also vendors with vendors so that they can supply each other if possible. Bulk buyers will help us more effectively keep the business afloat. Import/Export was a long-term goal, but I was not expecting DHL to respond so fast.

Another long-term goal is to get micro-vendors in at least ten countries or at least the whole SADC Region and get them to buy from each other using our platform. Jumia in Nigeria sells electronics, but they focus on bulk and not end users. There is one in Namibia that focuses on selling international products. We however are looking at empowering local small businesses. The whole plan is to empower micro-vendors.

IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR AN INVESTMENT OR HAVE SECURED SOME, WHO IS/ARE YOUR IDEAL INVESTOR(S)?

My ideal investor would be an angel investor or they can be an equity investor, but then they

should have the same goals. They should consider the impact that the platform is looking to make. They must be focused on the impact that the investment can have. Yes, I am looking for an investor in order for me to scale up. I will need an investor because I need money for marketing. The idea is just to grow the platform through continued marketing.

WHAT CAN YOU PASS ON TO ENTREPRENEURS AND FOUNDERS LIKE YOURSELF WHO NEED SUPPORT?

They should build their network. With your network you can get support because working in isolation can actually be very depressing. You can fail at some point if you can't go to someone for advice or for possible collaboration. So that when you are pitching the people are interested in knowing who the team are, they will want to know the people are capable of building the team. It is also important to empower yourself through building the knowledge, I can testify to this having been part of BoostUp. There are a lot of accelerators out there that can help you build your skills. Last, but not least, you need to set goals for your business and have smart goals and put them into a plan and put those into daily, weekly and monthly goals. Then you need to monitor those goals and the achievement thereof.

MEDIKEA

m⁺edikea

SDG



COUNTRY

Tanzania



WEBSITE

www.medikea.co.tz



Dr. Elvis
Silayo

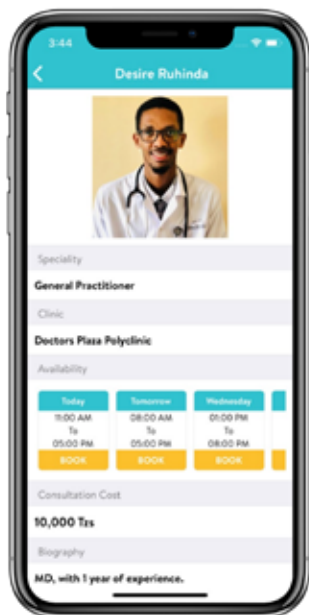
WHICH PROBLEM DOES YOUR STARTUP LOOK TO ADDRESS AND WHY?

Medikea wants to solve is to revolutionise access to healthcare. It is the biggest problem we want to address. Our primary vision is to help Africans live longer, healthier and happier lives. Accessibility to healthcare is key to this. I am a medical doctor by profession and over the course of practicing I was frustrated by the congestion at hospitals and the delay for patients in accessing healthcare. To consult a specialist, they would have to wait, they cannot book overnight, they wait weeks for an appointment. So, it actually affects the health of people,

because of the inconvenience of looking for healthcare. When people get sick they do not want to go to the hospital. This is one thing that made me realise why this is a problem that actually matters. The delay to get care, means that people develop health complications. With hypertension going untreated they increase the risk of stroke. If they do not get healthcare, it becomes even more expensive to manage the condition. It will remain a problem if we are not going to tackle it. There is a need for us to manage and provide access to healthcare, making it more convenient and faster to benefit patients. To do this Medikea is going to play a key role in solving this problem.

WHEN DID YOU REALISE THAT YOU ARE INDEED ONTO SOMETHING BIG?

I would say that Medikea was not the original idea that we came up with. We wanted to start an online subscription pharmacy for people to get their medicine. After doing some patient interviews, we realised that most of these patients are actually using insurance. So, we realised we would have to partner with the insurance companies. Which is hard when you are just an early-stage startup. It's hard to be taken seriously by these companies. It's hard to gain any traction and at the end of the day you want to partner with the insurance companies straight away.



We interviewed over 100 patients and if you could see their reaction you could see that it's a service that they want, but 95% of these patients want insurance. After doing the interviews people started to call us asking about doctors, asking if doctors are available or something like that. They don't want to go see their doctors and continue their clinic appointments. So, in a day we would get lots of phone calls, so we realised there was an opportunity here.

So, we went to the clinics to see how the clinics managed their appointments. Even the big hospitals were doing it manually. It quickly became clear the manual system was very inefficient. So, if there are automatic reminders patients will remember their appointments as well. No shows and last-minute cancellations reduce revenues, 30% of their appointments end up as no shows. The application can help clinics and doctors to make last-minute appointments with other patients. The reception was good, there were initially 42 doctors, and if patients are looking for a doctor to work for friends and family, they can use the platform to find a doctor and book an appointment and still get automatic reminders. So, for the clinics and the doctors that are

always looking to increase revenue a place where patients can discover them is desirable. If we create a marketplace, then patients can actually discover them and book an appointment.

There was another problem though. The appointments coming from patients from Medikea traffic and the patients still calling in to the clinic, so you find that they have to manage what's coming from the Medikea traffic and the pen and paper system. So, we had to adjust our system to allow them to input telephonic appointments in our system and patients can get an SMS notification that their appointment is booked and a reminder the day before the appointment. We had to solve that problem too and it's been helpful for them and for us. It's helpful because they are still using our system and we are getting more data in the way of the SMS system.

HOW DID YOU BUILD YOUR TEAM AND HOW HAS YOUR TEAM GROWN DURING YOUR STARTUP JOURNEY?

The team is still run by the co-founders, the three of us. It's me, Desire and John. You understand it is a startup now and the project is very big. The team is very small. What we are looking for now is at least some interns to work with us and help us on the marketing aspect. It's important to grow the team, but not hire people per se.

Desire and I worked together at medical school where we initiated a sports club which is still exists. We started like a youth empowerment hub in the medical school. We thought we could build something like that outside school. Then, I studied with John at secondary school. He was a year ahead of

me, but we used to play basketball together. We were good friends and he wanted to study computer science. So, I had a beer with John. I told him about the idea and he loved the idea. And when he saw our vision he said he wanted to work on this full time instead of just being a freelancer.

WHAT TYPE OF ENVIRONMENT IS YOUR STARTUP OPERATING IN?

I would say it's hard. It's hard because creating software in a market that is not used to it is difficult. Doctors can use digital tools, but our doctors have a hard time adapting to technology. Modern doctors may but our doctors no, it's hard for them. Also, the consumers are not used to this. The consumers here, people only go to hospitals when they are sick or they must go to hospital. Instead of just doing marketing, first you have to educate the consumers and then you have to tell them what you are selling to them. That is one of the challenging parts. When we were starting out the people were telling us that the market is not ready for this. We felt that if we waited for the market to be ready the competition is going to be greater and then it would be more difficult. So, I would say the adoption of digital is very hard because we still need to educate the community. We believe that if one patient benefits then there will be word of mouth with time. Over time you can achieve success. So, what I can say just to summarize if you come with a digital solution and expect to be successful in a year you are wrong, it will be at least five years before you will be a success.

WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE FOR STARTUPS LIKE YOURS IN YOUR COUNTRY?

The Tanzanian startup ecosystem is gaining recognition. The Tanzanian startup association has been launched. Then the government added a ministry, the ministry of science and technology and we believe the government is now trying to make a worthwhile investment that tech startups can benefit from. The way that I see the environment now, it is starting to grow, the government is starting to focus on it. The environment being shaped by hubs like Seedstars. The HDIF and the UNDP are all looking into supporting startups. Going forward the ecosystem will be growing and right now it's how building an ecosystem like other African countries like Nigeria and South Africa. How can we attract capital to our markets, right now it is about putting the Tanzanian ecosystem out there internationally to gain investors from the likes of the Silicon Valley in the USA.

WHAT SKILLS HAVE YOU GAINED DURING TRAINING, MENTORING AND OTHER SUPPORT ACTIVITIES ALONG YOUR JOURNEY?

We participated in the Alibaba Global Competition, which was a worldwide competition. It was over 8000 startups and they shortlisted 10, and we took second place in that competition. What I can say is BoostUp, the Alibaba Global Competition, these are good because they helped take us from the idea stage to the market. It is important for a founder to at least have those opportunities. You do not even know what a pitch deck is. You do not know the market size, you come with a small

market size and they point out that investors want to see a much a larger potential market size. These competitions make you familiar with the startup market. They help you to acclimate to it as fast as possible. We also used the Startup School, it has good courses. These dealt with how to raise money, how to market etc.

WHAT FEEDBACK HAVE YOU HAD SO FAR FROM YOUR CLIENTS, END-USERS AND PARTNERS SO FAR?

I would say that the people who liked our product the most is not even the doctors, but the clinic secretaries. They have to call patients with reminders and take phone calls. They like our product the most because we make their lives easier. We have gotten good feedback from patients who had to call to book an appointment and then had to call again to make sure that the appointment was confirmed, the fact that they can now just get an SMS confirming that their appointment is on that particular day and then an SMS reminder a few days before appointment is convenient.

WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE YOU HAD IN BRINGING YOUR PRODUCT TO MARKET?

I would say that one of the biggest challenges that we are facing in bringing a software product to the market is pricing. You need to be flexible on pricing. Clinics with many patients want subscription fees, while those with limited traffic want a commission-based fee structure. So, it's a pricing structure that is based on the size of the hospital and the desired model.

On the sales and marketing side it has been very challenging for us, because the decision takes time. Once you go you do the presentation you have to a follow-up, so onboarding new customers is an expensive process. The verification process with the doctors takes time as well. The acquisition cost does take a bit of time, once you close one or two of the big players it makes getting the rest of the players, even smaller players, easier.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE IS THE BEST PLATFORM IS THE BEST TO NETWORK IN YOUR LOCAL STARTUP ECOSYSTEM?

I have just been here in the ecosystem for a few months now. I cannot comment much on that because with the COVID-19 pandemic. Most people are working from home and we are working from home too. With the competition everyone is scattered and making it hard to network with everyone working remotely. The fact that much of it happens online makes networking difficult. Still, Startup School does have weekly updates and the online community is made up of a bunch of founders from all over the world.

WHAT ARE THE FUTURE PLANS FOR YOUR STARTUP?

The future plans are currently to launch the telehealth solution and the current global situation has forced us to go ahead of the envisioned schedule. The biggest priority was the creation of a low-tech channel, a call centre, where patients who do not have reliable internet access or have other access limitations could still book appointments and order medications online. This channel



aims to accommodate people who do not use smartphones for instance.

Also, the question of how we could use technology, AI and machine learning, has also emerged. The doctor to patient ratio is actually very small. So, the lack of doctors and lack of facilities can be supplemented with technology and can raise the capacity of the resources that we currently have available at least 5 to 10 fold.

The immediate future plans are to work on the product and to get the platform working to use technology to supplement and augment existing resources. Then we want to bring in pharmacies and create a digital healthcare ecosystem by including those. With that I would say that we are going to get at least enough data to help us create new products. Products like micro health insurance products. Or subscription products and venture into the corporate world. We want to use technology to actually crack all that.

IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR AN INVESTMENT OR HAVE SECURED SOME, WHO IS/ARE YOUR IDEAL INVESTOR(S)?

We are currently looking for investors and our ideal investors would be investors who have invested in digital healthcare applications before. Currently, we are looking at Ping An health insurance, a Chinese company which is the biggest digital healthcare provider in China. In terms of benchmarking that is one of the companies we look up to. If you asked me what we are building here I would tell you, we are building the Ping An of Africa. Ping An is investing in healthcare companies in Southeast Asia and Japan. So, when you get investment

from them you are not just getting money you are also getting experience and advice because they extensive experience in this industry.

We are also looking at Babylon Health, they have launched a digital healthcare solution in Rwanda (teleconsultation) and they partnered with the government as well. We are looking for investors in the healthcare industry because we believe it is not just about money it is about advice, expertise, and resources that can help us succeed.

WHAT CAN YOU PASS ON TO ENTREPRENEURS AND FOUNDERS LIKE YOURSELF WHO NEED SUPPORT?

Yeah, I would say the biggest piece of advice I would share with them is they have to move fast, they just need to get started. So, I think the best advice I can give is to just get out there and get started. Even to do potential interviews with their clients. Because it will help to validate the idea that they have before they even go into the market.

The biggest asset that they have is the users. Talk to your users to get some insight and iterate because there is no company that gets it right with the first release of the product. The moment that they start to find the product market fit, talk to users and write code. Sometimes you have to do things that won't scale so you have to go out and you should not be afraid of going out and learning what the users want and meeting the needs of the users.

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AQUATECH SOLUTIONS



SDG



COUNTRY

Zambia



**Chipo
Moyo**

WHICH PROBLEM DOES YOUR STARTUP LOOK TO ADDRESS AND WHY?

Currently we only use 1% of all the water that we have on our planet. And it is being depleted because of high pollution. Constantly monitoring water quality may help to combat the levels of pollution. We realised here at Aquatech that we do not have a smart way of doing it and we haven't harnessed technology for doing something as important as this. In the Copperbelt here in Zambia people have such a challenge accessing clean drinking water in their homes. Very often there will be acid spills that will enter the distribution systems. When we

did our survey it became apparent that this is quite a problem. So, we decided to implement our real-time water quality management system. You can monitor it on a phone or a laptop or desktop. So now, immediately when a pollution incident occurs you will know, and you can act on it very fast before a lot of aquatic life or human life is affected.

WHEN DID YOU REALISE THAT YOU ARE INDEED ONTO SOMETHING BIG?

I studied electrical engineering. My teammates studied engineering as well and one of our friends, he is our group's environmental specialist. He studied

environmental engineering. It started as an interesting project while we were in school. We did it out of interest. We did a survey to see how much demand there was. We explored whether it was feasible. So, we realised that it was feasible, and we formed the company and have been working on it ever since.

I personally saw an advert that was looking for business innovation, or some technological innovation. You know how it is when you are scrolling through the internet, you just want to see what it's about. So, I thought, let's see what this is about. Let's try our project because there might be a market. We took part in the

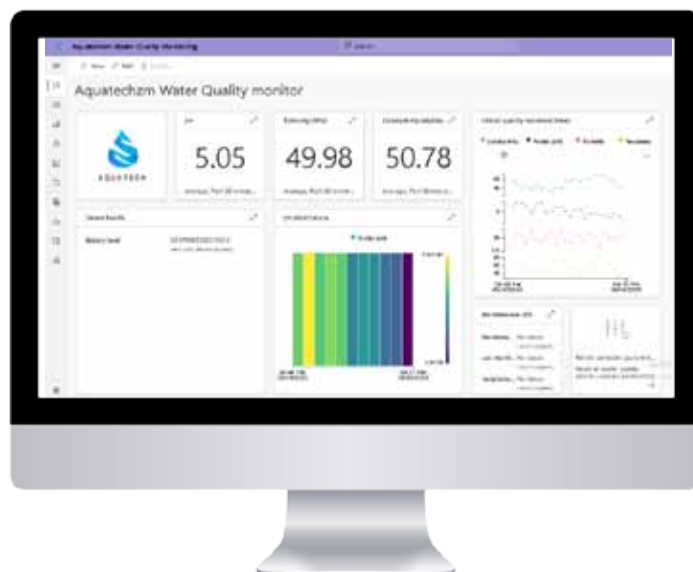
first BoostUp competition, but we were unprepared, it was just to get out there. Then there were people coming to us saying this is really good, this could really be something amazing. So, we thought let's go back and refine it. It was the response we got from the first BoostUp competition that told us it had potential.

My dad works for an NGO, or he used to, for CRS, building boreholes in communities. So, we asked them if they would be interested in something like this, and we know that when you drill boreholes it is necessary to monitor water quality. So, they would collect the water samples and send them off for analysis. After all this we realised it is something that can be used industrially, and I realised it was actually needed.

Then we ended up talking to as many people as we could. People from the breweries and the mines were consulted and we asked if it could be useful for them. This was when we realised that it would be something big. One of our potential customers would be government monitoring bodies and I spoke to them during the survey. I asked them if they would be interested, and they also said that it would be of interest to them.

HOW DID YOU BUILD YOUR TEAM AND HOW HAS YOUR TEAM GROWN DURING YOUR STARTUP JOURNEY?

Four of us are the founders. Two are my friends and I have always discussed business ideas back in school and even when we did this project back then, we did it together. When we decided to do it as a business, we made the decision together. Then the fourth founder, our colleague who is the



environmental engineer, brought the technical part that we would not be familiar with. He took care of the technicalities like pH, and we took care of the electronic side. We outsourced some software development just to help us properly develop the software that will display the information that we track. Originally, we pursued it out of interest. We contracted out the technical side of the application. What we need though is business mentorship or we might bring on another person who is an expert in business.

WHAT TYPE OF ENVIRONMENT IS YOUR STARTUP OPERATING IN?

With personal experience I do think that there is support from things like the BongaHive which has been really great. And recently I saw an advert for UNDP who wants to do an accelerator (UNDP Accelerator lab). I think in the past that it wasn't as readily available as it is now. There is an awareness of how important entrepreneurs are to the market. The way the market is now, people are realising the importance of entrepreneurs and supporting them. Before people were not receptive to technological advances, but people have opened their

eyes and they are more receptive to it. With the hubs and with competitions that are consistently running it just helps to create a supportive environment. So, I do think that the environment is now really good and supportive.

WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE FOR STARTUPS LIKE YOURS IN YOUR COUNTRY?

The biggest form of support currently available is incubation acceleration and some grants, but currently support for startups in Zambia is limited. Greater collaboration should be encouraged to ensure that startups have increasing access to appropriate support.

WHAT SKILLS HAVE YOU GAINED DURING TRAINING, MENTORING, AND OTHER SUPPORT ACTIVITIES ALONG YOUR JOURNEY?

Before my first competition because I didn't know what I was doing. I didn't understand the importance of entrepreneurship and how much I actually cared about it. After experiencing my first competition I realised that it is something that I want to pursue for myself. It

“Competitions like BoostUp create an environment where we can discuss ideas. Even though you do not win there is so much you gain from an experience like that.”

opened my mind to some of the monitoring and business activities that have to happen. I was very oblivious about how to plan or the importance of tracking you know everything. It opened my mind to a lot of processes that go into a startup. It has just helped me to find my passion. So also, taking part in these teaching competitions, has given me the confidence to talk in front of people, to be assertive and to be straightforward. It is one of the most important skills that I have learned in this process. It helped develop the confidence for the elevator pitch when you see someone who might help and could add value.

WHAT FEEDBACK HAVE YOU HAD SO FAR FROM YOUR CLIENTS, END USERS, OR PARTNERS?

The people from CRS told us that the solution should allow you to monitor water quality in real-time. They are part of the government organisation. They need reports and to create presentations. I think talking to them helped us to understand what else we could do with the software, creating reports from the dashboard, and the need for geographical sensor nodes that indicate where the sensor is. It made us realise that our software

can and should cater to the needs of the end user.

So, from that research we found out one of the major problems was monitoring was done manually. The mines are still doing it manually. The municipalities are still doing it manually; they told us one of the main ways of doing it was to manually collect water, we offered them a solution that would save money and time. That is why the Lusaka water and storage company is extremely interested in the product. We realised that a lot of places still do it manually.

What we want to do with our partnership with the Lusaka water and storage company is to develop the concept with them. We will be testing it with them and further developing it with their input. They will technically be our first user. For the development work we carry the cost, but once we start providing the service they will start paying for the service.

WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE YOU HAD IN BRINGING YOUR PRODUCT TO MARKET?

In Zambia we do not have a lot of manufacturing companies, so we rely on imports to get our components for development. So, with the COVID-19 pandemic it became difficult to get our components on time, or at all, to continue development. Most of our sensors and microcontrollers are procured from abroad and then installed into the monitoring device. We do get the components and we do the assembly and the programming of the device. That was one of the main challenges. We have just been discussing the feasibility of manufacturing some of the components ourselves. We wanted to print some of the circuit

boards instead of having to import all components.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE IS THE BEST PLATFORM TO NETWORK IN YOUR LOCAL STARTUP ECOSYSTEM?

Competitions like BoostUp create an environment where we can discuss ideas. Even though you do not win there is so much you gain from an experience like that. Just by discussing what's going. There are some events that are hosted when it comes to business, that teach us things, even if it's just how to manage your finances. Attending things like that and surrounding yourself with environments like that. You can just strike up a conversation and you never know. It's just about being interactive and being out there. Now it's virtual so it's a bit harder. You cannot just walk up to someone and ask if they want coffee and then discover they are a manager somewhere and they can help you.





WHAT ARE THE FUTURE PLANS FOR YOUR STARTUP?

For us the most important thing is just to finish developing the sensor nodes. Once we have finished developing the product our main goal is to install as many sensor nodes as possible in Zambia so that we can get as much data as possible and analyse it. We will start with Lusaka and then Zambia and then the rest of Africa. That is really our main goal, to collect as much information as possible from as many places as possible. To monitor water quality and analyse trends more effectively. With that strategy we can reach a great many people, that will help us penetrate the market. It is really crucial that we get the product done as fast as possible to fill the gap in the market.

IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR AN INVESTMENT OR HAVE SECURED SOME, WHO IS/ARE YOUR IDEAL INVESTOR(S)?

Of course, we are open to investment. The investment would come ideally with expertise. A good network of people that can help in our particular industry. Someone that is well affiliated with industry and can help with market penetration. Someone who is interested in making money who will help us to execute our strategy more effectively.

“ You know the saying that if you do what you love you will not work a single day in your entire life. ”

WHAT CAN YOU PASS ON TO ENTREPRENEURS AND FOUNDERS LIKE YOURSELF WHO NEED SUPPORT?

Passion. Entrepreneurship is not easy. You know the saying that if you do what you love you will not work a single day in your entire life. If you really do have passion and you love what you do you will have the passion to drive through any difficulty. I would encourage other people like myself to push for opportunities like BongoHive. Like BoostUp, it was a very good experience. It really just broadens your experience and seeing how others work towards their startups. Seeing how supportive people can be. A lot of entrepreneurs are faced with most of the challenges that relate to not having a lot of support, it is very discouraging. I think opportunities like BoostUp are great because you get exposure and support and you even get to meet potential investors. Also, it can really do a lot having a mentor like we did. The important thing is to build a network that can help you grow and can give you support. You will put in a lot of work and must be prepared to give up your social life.

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DOCTORS E-CONSULT



SDG



COUNTRY

Botswana



**Loatile
Nkala**

WHICH PROBLEM DOES YOUR STARTUP LOOK TO ADDRESS AND WHY?

As Doctors E-Consult we recognized a number of problems in the healthcare sector. Which includes the overly congested healthcare system, the lack of access to healthcare services and the huge travel costs patients usually incur when consulting a specialist doctor. As Doctors E-Consult we help to significantly cut down these travel expenses when accessing a specialist doctor as one can get a consultation from the comfort of their own home. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, congested areas play a role in the spread of the virus. Therefore, the Doctors

E-Consult application allows anyone to consult a doctor wherever they are without leaving their homes. This subsequently contributed to the decongestion of healthcare facilities. The pandemic actually propelled us to continue and now vigorously tackle the challenges in the healthcare space.

WHEN DID YOU REALISE THAT YOU ARE INDEED ONTO SOMETHING BIG?

COVID-19 brought us to the realisation that we need to improve our healthcare services by leveraging innovation and technology. Doctors realised that we were onto something big when countries started going into

lockdown and a huge realisation hit that we now cannot access healthcare services. We then approached the BIH with our innovation and they showed a keen interest and they subsequently funded us. When major innovation hubs wanted to fund the project we realised we were onto something big. We got further validation that we were onto something big, when we were called to a television engagement on Botswana TV to find out how the public felt about our innovation and most people expressed that they are so delighted that something like is being brought to Botswana. Some missed their doctor appointments and others said they have been waiting six months or more for an

“ In a few years we also plan to expand into Africa. We’ve also received great feedback from the Northern part of Africa. ”

appointment to see a specialist doctor. So, they further validated that what we were trying to do was actually big and that we should continue to push. We also had feedback from doctors who were also indicating that it’s been strenuous on them trying to see everyone, juggling hospitals and clinics. That further cemented our realisation that we were onto something big.

HOW DID YOU BUILD YOUR TEAM AND HOW HAS YOUR TEAM GROWN DURING YOUR STARTUP JOURNEY?

The Doctors E-Consult team is made up of five young individuals. We are all dynamic and we are all from different fields and all hardworking. We are a group of friends who decided to start this great innovation. Among us is a lawyer, someone who has done marketing, graphics and design, programming and finance. Basically, we decided we had enough of the health crisis in Botswana during the lockdown when no one could move. We had a video call and decided that it was now to put our plan into action. Luckily, we are all visionaries and we decided that it was time to do this. The Doctors E-Consult team share the same vision, we may not see eye-to-eye, but we have the

same vision. And we build on that and from that.

Our medical advisor is older, he is the one who guides the mobile application, guides us to comply with health standards, he is the one who helps us. We met Doctor Malaudi and we pitched him the idea and he was very enthusiastic about it. He believed this was a great innovation, but that a medical advisor was necessary. He volunteered for it, which is very rare. We were fortunate to find someone who understood the vision.

WHAT TYPE OF ENVIRONMENT IS YOUR STARTUP OPERATING IN?

Botswana’s startup environment is developing quite well, but I do think it has its pros and cons. We have new funding opportunities becoming available, often as a result of COVID-19. We have opportunities now like the BIH, we have received funding from them. We also now have the citizen entrepreneurship development agency. They are also funding tech startups. The tech industry has now been listed as a special sector and we are receiving special treatment. Funding is a little easier to get if you are in a special sector. So, I do think that it is developing quite well, although Botswana does still have its flaws.

WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE FOR STARTUPS LIKE YOURS IN YOUR COUNTRY?

We have the BIH. We get help with funding. We get mentorship and networking opportunities. The BIH also helps with market penetration. Then the BIH offers incubation support amongst other services.

Another support organisation we have here is CEDA, with CEDA it is purely funding for tech startups. CEDA funds almost everything, what they did this year is that tech was not actually under the special sector. After tech was included in the special sectors Botswana now has four sectors. We as tech entrepreneurs now have the benefit of being in a special sector. Interest rates are a little better in the special sector.

WHAT SKILLS HAVE YOU GAINED DURING TRAINING, MENTORING, AND OTHER SUPPORT ACTIVITIES ALONG YOUR JOURNEY?

During our BoostUp journey we gained extensive knowledge about surviving as entrepreneurs. We learned about time management. We also learned about pitching, how to create an effective pitch, and it helped us to know that you need to deliver a pitch to a judge in a specified time. We learned, while pitching with Walid, to own our ideas, to pitch with confidence.

We also learned how to work as a team. I think one thing we learned at Doctors E-Consult, we had to learn how to work as a team so that we are always able to timeously complete deliverables. We also learned the value of structure in a company. We learned the value of having a structure in a company and I think after that we regrouped ourselves and created a solid structure in our company. We also learned a lot from the mentor we had in the BoostUp competition. Our mentors helped us refine our pricing strategies.

With BIH we first learned how to write a pitch deck. BoostUp took it a little further, but at BIH I learned the basics of a pitch deck. With BIH

I also learned a lot about teamwork. I attended seminars about investment opportunities.

WHAT FEEDBACK HAVE YOU HAD SO FAR FROM YOUR CLIENTS, END USERS, OR PARTNERS?

We have gotten great feedback from our stakeholders. As I said, some of the doctors are actually applauding our innovation. They see our innovation as vital and are very eager to join our mobile application.

We do have doctors who are beta testing the app. They are very excited about this innovation. And then the patients themselves have shown that they are so excited about the app. The one reservation that they do have in Botswana is that the internet costs are too high. Getting the app on the My Social Package here in Botswana means that the data costs are reduced a little. A better alternative is getting the app zero-rated which will mean the data costs are free. Right now, what we are doing is trying to get that done, with the help of the BIH we have trying to get the app to be a little more accessible in terms of internet and the related costs. One thing that the doctors want is for the confidentiality to be upheld. They were enquiring about the security of the mobile app, and we have shown how we make the app secure. Our development team has assured the doctors that the security of the app is not going to be compromised at all. That is some of the feedback that we have received.

WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE YOU HAD IN BRINGING YOUR PRODUCT TO MARKET?

One of the biggest challenges we actually faced as a company was bringing our product to market in terms of finding the best technical expertise. Finding programming expertise was one of the biggest challenges we have ever faced. We could not find anybody who shared our vision for building our mobile application. We overcame that when we met an acquaintance. When we told him about the idea he was so enthusiastic and he said he will join our team. Thus, after months of looking for a programmer to code the app without compromising on security or quality we found somebody. That was the biggest challenge we have faced.

E-health is new in Botswana and is minimally regulated. We actually approached the ministry of health and the ministry is guiding us on how the mobile application should be built even though in some cases there are no regulations. Basically, the ministry is guiding us on how to develop the application.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE IS THE BEST PLATFORM TO NETWORK IN YOUR LOCAL STARTUP ECOSYSTEM?

I think I'll focus more on tech startups, startups like myself. We do not have places where tech startups can network. I think one of the obvious places that I know of is the BIH. This is a branch of government, it's a parastatal geared to create an environment for tech startups. This is where most of the networking happens in the tech field. It's focused around the BIH.

WHAT ARE THE FUTURE PLANS FOR YOUR STARTUP?

An integral part of our future plans is getting Doctors E-Consult to get the mobile application to every region in Botswana. To get everyone in Botswana using this application. Intensive marketing will be necessary. We are planning to intensively market it in various health facilities. Through the doctors' word of mouth, we will be able to onboard the patients. We will also be using social media campaigns and billboards. We will create meaningful partnerships to aid us in achieving our goals and we have already started with the ministry of health.

In a few years we also plan to expand into Africa. We've also received great feedback from the Northern part of Africa. We got a call from a guy in Egypt asking if the app is available in Egypt. And we





said no, it is not available in Egypt. He said that we should make it available in Egypt because there is no such application in Egypt.

IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR AN INVESTMENT OR HAVE SECURED SOME, WHO IS/ARE YOUR IDEAL INVESTOR(S)?

I would say that we are not necessarily looking for an investor, but we are open to the idea. Our ideal investor would be involved in e-health or digital space. We would be looking for someone who wants to invest in the health industry. We got 200 000 in seed funds from BIH. Which we are using to develop the application.

WHAT CAN YOU PASS ON TO ENTREPRENEURS AND FOUNDERS LIKE YOURSELF WHO NEED SUPPORT?

I would say the entrepreneurship journey is not an easy one. I would tell them that the greatest thing that we should do as entrepreneurs is always focus on the customer. We should focus on the problem and pinpoint a specific problem and develop a solution for the problem. I think that is one of the big reasons why many startups do not make it is that they do not adequately solve the problem. A lot of research is needed to validate your idea. That is what we learned during the BoostUp competition. We realised that validation actually makes or breaks your idea. I would tell them to do a lot of research and a lot of validating of their ideas.

Finally, I would tell entrepreneurs like myself that we must take it one day at a time. Rome was not built in a day. We must take the challenges as they come, you cannot go from zero to 100 in one day. What I will also say is that doors remain closed if you do not knock.



DAWA HEALTH



WEBSITE www.dawa-health.com

SDG



COUNTRY

Zambia



**Tafadzwa K
Munzwa**

WHICH PROBLEM DOES YOUR STARTUP LOOK TO ADDRESS AND WHY?

Dawa health is trying to close the gap for mothers who do have immediate access to healthcare. More than 70% of mothers in Zambia don't have access to maternal health services. This leads to preventable deaths. More than 50 mothers are dying daily from preventable deaths: from avoidable pregnancy complications. This is problem we are addressing. We feel if we bring maternal healthcare into the home, to where you are - that being your point of care, we will be able to mitigate a lot of these complications and eventually mitigate deaths from pregnancy related complications.

WHEN DID YOU REALISE THAT YOU ARE INDEED ONTO SOMETHING BIG?

When we got accepted into the BongoHive, one of the biggest accelerators in Zambia. We thought that they could possibly see potential in what we were doing. The help we got there enabled us to get into the Zambian communication technology incubator and from there we got into SAIS, after that everything just started scaling, we have been able to partner with the likes of VNBP, UNFBA, and we are working with Oxford University now. We have been accepted into the SB 6 accelerator, so I think the critical move was getting accepted into BongoHive. Everything since then

has just been upscaling and we are just growing from strength to strength.

HOW DID YOU BUILD YOUR TEAM, AND HOW HAS YOUR TEAM GROWN DURING YOUR STARTUP JOURNEY?

The initial concept started with my childhood friend, we just wanted to build a hardware device. We have a common vision and passion for building technology related solutions for people. From there I think the main thing we did was to identify the right people, the right fit for the team. People who were passionate, who would do their work and not give excuses. That is how we found the other two founders. From there, with

help from the likes of SAIS and BongoHive, our team has grown from four to nine, but we are planning further expansion.

WHAT TYPE OF ENVIRONMENT IS YOUR STARTUP OPERATING IN?

Dawa is based in Zambia, I think we are a low middle-income country and the startup environment is really starting to grow, but it's not yet comparable to other East African markets like Kenya or Nigeria. It's still relatively small when compared to South Africa. The momentum is in the Southern Africa Region. The healthcare industry is highly regulated, but with the right partners we will be able to navigate this. A highly regulated environment needs many partners.

WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE FOR STARTUPS LIKE YOURS IN YOUR COUNTRY?

Incubation acceleration is the most available support. There are a few grants available, here and there, from the likes of NTBC, and BongoHive does have some grants at times. What is needed now is collaboration with corporate partners. Perhaps we should have accelerators that are able work with big corporate partners. That needs to be done more in our ecosystems. Scaling becomes easier when partnering with big corporate partners. They already have the infrastructure to assist.



WHAT SKILLS HAVE YOU GAINED DURING TRAINING, MENTORING AND OTHER SUPPORT ACTIVITIES ALONG YOUR JOURNEY?

I've gained many skills. Now I can do a bit of programming. When I started I could not programme. I now understand financials and account management. I have been trained on a lot of things. I was trained on selling ideas, you know sales. That is the most important thing when it comes to startups, selling yourself. It is the most important thing when it comes to startups, selling yourself and your idea to potential partners. That is one of the biggest skills that I have gained over the years. Now I have that mental framework where I can build and sell that idea effectively and concisely.

WHAT FEEDBACK HAVE YOU HAD SO FAR FROM YOUR CLIENTS, END USERS, OR PARTNERS?

The most important thing has been navigating the data protection act. So, I don't think we have any official work in the ecosystem yet, it protects that data security. They

want to make sure that we are compliant. We don't have a system as such, but it is important to be compliant with data security. So, of the feedback we have gotten so far is the importance of building solutions that are accessible, even to poorer communities. Some of our partners and customers have requested that we add sign language to our systems, to include more marginalised individuals. We must make sure that we include everyone across the social and economic spectrum.

WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE YOU HAD IN BRINGING YOUR PRODUCT TO MARKET?

One of the biggest challenges was working with corporate partners. I think we have been able to build that trust. We have been able to partner with UN agencies that are big here in Zambia. These partnerships are taking us to the next level. That was one of the biggest challenges. If we had accelerators that were already attached to such agency partners, it would make it easier for startups to market themselves and then building corporate partnerships. We have been lucky to partner with such programmes.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE IS THE BEST PLATFORM TO NETWORK IN YOUR LOCAL STARTUP ECOSYSTEM?

We have a community here, which is being facilitated under the Jacaranda hub and ITC from Geneva and it's like a social network for entrepreneurs and investors. I feel like we need local gatherings, obviously the pandemic has affected that, but I feel like gatherings are better in person, where we have networking events, and we have these technology

hubs. Anywhere where startups and investors can gather. I feel this would help to build the environment.

WHAT ARE THE FUTURE PLANS FOR YOUR STARTUP?

Right now, we are raising funds in our seed round, we want to scale up, possibly into South Africa and Tanzania. Those are our biggest potential markets. We are on the growth path. It might be possible with the partners we have on board. The next step is to move into other Southern African countries.

IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR AN INVESTMENT OR HAVE SECURED SOME, WHO IS/ARE YOUR IDEAL INVESTOR(S)?

So, the kind of investors we have secured so far are like Startup Bootcamp. They are accelerator programs. The kind of investors we are looking for now are social impact driven investors. So, we have gotten requests from social impact funds. Now, we are doing the due diligence to ensure that we are ready for those funds. These are the kind of investors we want. Long-term investors with the possibility follow-up rounds. Investment is more than cash, it is a commitment from the investor's side to provide not only financial capital, but access to networks too.

WHAT CAN YOU PASS ON TO ENTREPRENEURS AND FOUNDERS LIKE YOURSELF WHO NEED SUPPORT?

I think my advice to aspiring and upcoming entrepreneurs is to not give up easily. It takes a long time to bring your idea to market, that's one thing that is certain. Another is when you start you have many assumptions that will be proved wrong and you will need to change

“ In a few years we also plan to expand into Africa. We've also received great feedback from the Northern part of Africa. ”

your assumptions and you will figure things out along the way. So, be open minded and listen to programs that are available to help you. Those are some of my words of encouragement to upcoming entrepreneurs, put in the work, send the emails, and reach out to partners. Don't be shy.



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