

In Brief:  
**INNOVATION  
AT NCRST**

NCRST Programme for Innovation Support Booklet  
Volume 1  
2023

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The National Commission on Research, Science and Technology (NCRST) was established in terms of Section 4 of the Research, Science and Technology Act, 2004 (Act no 23 of 2004). The Innovation and Technology Development (ITD) department within the NCRST is committed to furthering innovation and technology within the Research, Science, Technology & Innovation (RSTI) funnel. The Innovation & Industrial Research (IIR) division is one of the three divisions within the ITD department, with an overall objective of creating and managing linkages and platforms that promote industrial research, innovation, startup support, value addition, and technology transfer.

The overall objectives of the NCRST are to;

- Ensure the co-ordination, monitoring and supervision of research, science, and technology in Namibia;
- Promote and develop research, science, and technology in Namibia;
- Promote common ground in research, scientific and technological thinking across all disciplines, including the physical, mathematical and life sciences, as well as human, social and economic sciences;
- Encourage and promote innovative and independent thinking and the optimum development of intellectual capacity of people in research, science and technology;
- Ensure dedicated, prioritized and systematic funding for research, science and technology application and development in Namibia;
- Promote linkages between Namibia and international institutions and bodies on the development of research, science and technology.

The NCRST programmes/projects implemented within the IIR division have impacted individual businesses in many ways including:

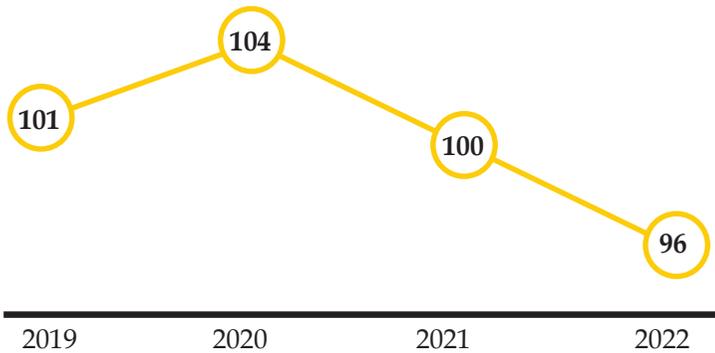
- Improved business operations
- Improved business ideas
- Improved product quality
- Expansions of product ranges and service offerings
- Better customer development and financial management
- Business growth (increased revenue, new business partners and joint ventures)
- Better fundraising techniques including pitching
- New networks established
- New jobs created (permanent and non-permanent staff)

The main aim of this booklet is to inform the public on some of the innovation programmes and activities within the NCRST and to showcase some of the innovators that benefited through various programmes. This booklet also acknowledges the various partners that contributed to the implementation of the different innovation programmes.

## 2. INNOVATION FACTS IN NAMIBIA

Rankings for Namibia (2019-2022)  
Global Innovation Index (GII)

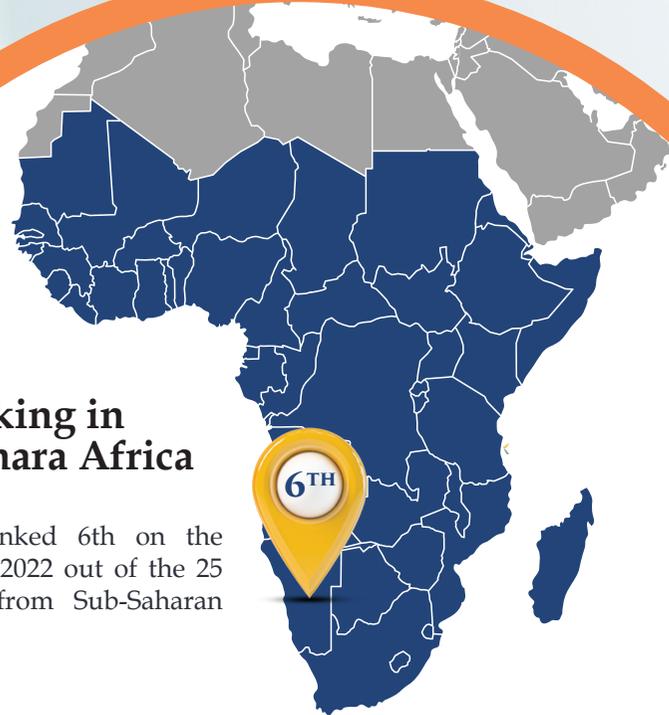
GII rankings out of  
132 economics



In 2022, Namibia improved its GII ranking to 96 as compared to 2021 when it was ranked 100.

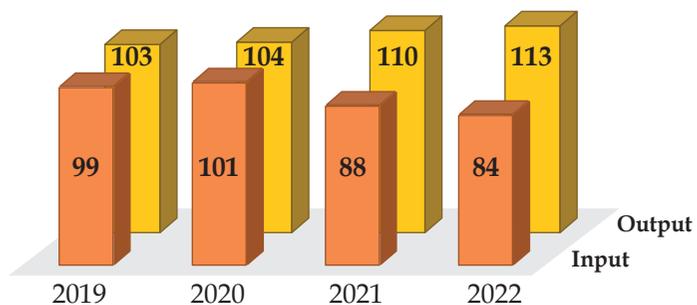
GII ranking in  
Sub-Sahara Africa

Namibia ranked 6th on the  
GII rank in 2022 out of the 25  
economies from Sub-Saharan  
Africa



In 2022 Namibia was leading worldwide in Expenditure on education (1st) and performed well above the sub-Saharan regional average on Human capital and research.

## Innovation inputs and output on global ranking (2019-2022)



- In 2022, Namibia produced less innovation outputs relative to its level of innovation investments.
- As for innovation outputs, Namibia ranks 113th in 2022 and this position is lower than 2021, 2020 and 2019.

Source:

Dutta, S., Lanvin, B., Wunsch-Vincent, S., & León, L. R. (Eds.). (2022). *Global Innovation Index 2022: What is the Future of Innovation-driven Growth?* (Vol. 2000). WIPO.

Dutta, S., Lanvin, B., León, L. R., & Wunsch-Vincent, S. (Eds.). (2021). *Global innovation index 2021: tracking innovation through the covid-19 crisis*. WIPO.

## Rankings in the seven GII 2022 areas



Namibia performed best in institutions and its weakest performance is in knowledge and technology outputs and creative outputs.

### 3. GETTING TO KNOW NCRST'S INNOVATION SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

#### 3.1 The National Innovation Challenge for Women (NICW)

The NCRST launched the NICW Programme to support female startups/entrepreneurs with technical and entrepreneurship skills and create opportunities for startups to engage with funders, potential partners, and customers. The NICW Programme was designed to address gender inclusiveness in the mainstream economy and employment creation which has been identified as a priority for the 5th National Development Plan (NDP-5). Namibia, in response to global and regional policy directives such as Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDG) particularly goal number five that speaks to gender inclusivity.

The NICW Programme supports female startups/entrepreneurs working on innovative products and/or services in energy and water, agriculture, nutrition, and food security, value addition to natural resources, health, ICT/technology, cosmetics, and waste (upcycling). The programme aims to strengthen the participation of female startups/entrepreneurs in the national innovation ecosystem. The programme is implemented in partnership with a network of stakeholders from the private and public sector, and training organisations to address national priorities and gender inclusivity. The programme is run in a series of trainings and boot camps, coupled with mentorship support as well as networking opportunities and funding.

##### Funding through developmental vouchers

The NICW programme runs for 18 months which is called a season and at the end of every season, the participants publicly pitch, judged and the selected winners receive developmental vouchers and/or trips to international pitching events such as the South Africa Innovation Summit (SAIS) and the Africa Women Innovation & Entrepreneurship Forum (AWIEF). Since the inception of the programme, 16 participants who have been selected by a panel of judges received financial assistance in a form of a developmental voucher for their businesses. For the four years the programme has been running, a total of N\$ 2,980,000.00 was spent to support the 16 winners in various sectors. In 2018/19, seventy percent (70%) of the funding was spent on businesses from agriculture, nutrition

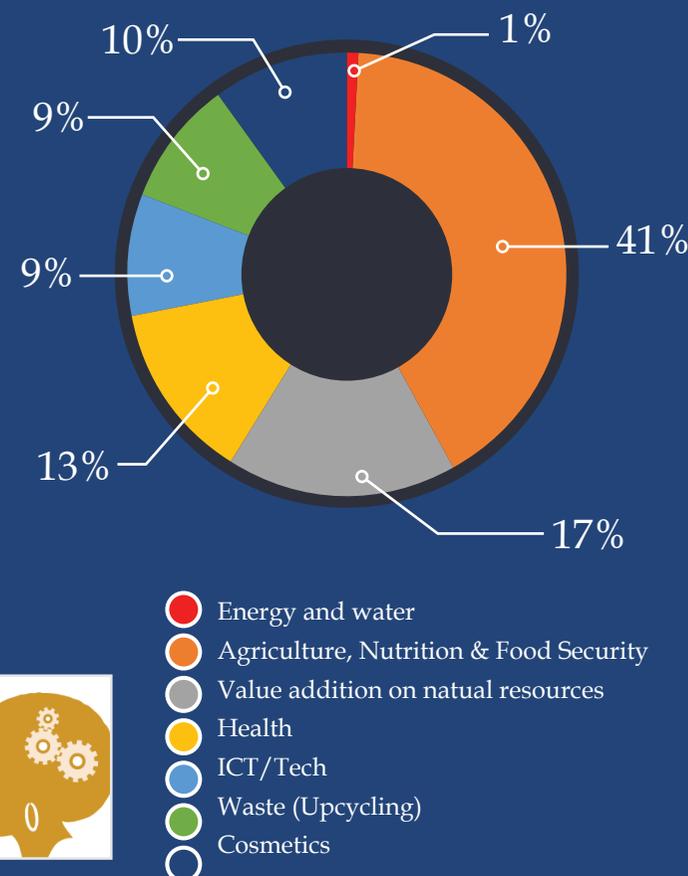
#### National Innovation Challenge for Women

"Catapulting women - nurturing our economy"



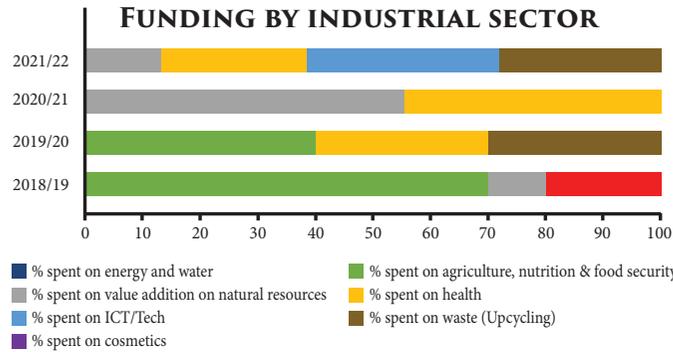
### PARTICIPANTS BY INDUSTRIAL SECTOR

The NICW programme have been running for four consecutive years and by 2022, the programme had reached over 1256 women and have trained over 128 women across all 14 Namibian regions. Of these, 41% were in agriculture, nutrition & food security, 17% in value addition to natural resources, 9% in waste (upcycling) as well as 9% in ICT/Technology and only 1% in energy and water.





and food security industries. In 2019/20, sixty percent (60%) was spent on health and waste (upcycling) combined. The “value addition on natural resources” industry in 2020/21 absorbed 56% of the funding. In 2021/22, thirty-three (33) of the funding was spent on businesses from Information Communication & Technology industry. No funding was spent on businesses in the water and energy industry over the four years of the programme. This calls for an increased awareness raising in the two sectors.



“NCRST funding helped me with researching market trends, establishing weaknesses/strengths and eventually securing inventory, thereby establishing a working chain of custody for my clients.”

**Leya Mwenza**  
GenetixMetazoa  
Windhoek

“Through the NCRST funding, we are now capable of acquiring machines that we could not get as it was too expensive. we can now manufacture products faster as we previously did everything by hand.”

**Una Ferreira**  
Bold Creation CC  
Windhoek

The female entrepreneurs received various support, including:

- Business model development
- Financial management training
- Pitch training
- Media coverage and marketing opportunities
- Business expansion for employment creation
- Funding through developmental vouchers
- Linkage creation
- Peer to peer support and entrepreneur networks



### Partners



## 3.2 BOOST-UP Programme

The NCRST launched the BOOST-UP programme to support early-stage startups that use technology to solve societal problems by helping entrepreneurs gain practical tools to package their business ideas and develop their pitching skills. The BOOST-UP programme was designed to ensure sustainable infrastructure in terms of information and communication technology as a priority for Namibia's 5th National Development Plan (NDP-5), in response to regional and global policy directives such as the 17 SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals).

The BOOST-UP programme supports both male and female early-stage startups working on products/ services based on technology to solve societal problems as outlined in national documents. BOOST-UP Programme comprises of the Set-Up training events, Stand Up national pitch competitions and the Scale Up incubation programme and bootcamp. Finalists are usually selected at national pitch competitions held in Botswana, Namibia, Tanzania, South Africa and Zambia to participate in a Scale Up. The Scale Up culminates in national winners attending international pitching events such as SLUSH where the finalists from the countries mentioned above pitch against each other to be crowned the overall winner of the competition. BOOST-UP was initially supported by Southern African Innovation Support (SAIS) 2 programme, connected hubs and the National Focal Points. As a continuation, it is now run under the Southern African Innovation Collectives (SAIC) and funded by a focal point at country level. NCRST is the focal point for Namibia.



The BOOST-UP programme has been running for five consecutive years and at the end of 2022 the programme had reached over seventy-eight male and female early-stage startups. In terms of beneficiaries, the BOOST-UP 2018 series trained 10 startups and of which one attended Slush 2018, while for BOOST-UP 2019, 10 startups were trained, and two attended Slush 2019. For BOOST-UP 2020, six startups were trained, and three National winners won a laptop each while three startups attended the online Bootcamp and regional pitching competition. No international pitching trip was undertaken due to COVID 19. For BOOST-UP 2021, 12 startups were trained, and three National winners won a laptop each, while two startups attended the Bootcamp & Slush 2021. For BOOST-UP 2022 under SAIC, 14 startups were trained, and two National winners attended the South African Innovation Summit.



The early-stage BOOSTUP startups received various support, including:

- Coaching and business mentorship
- Linkage creation
- Financial management training
- Pitch training
- Media coverage and marketing opportunities
- Peer to peer support
- Regional entrepreneur networks
- Internationalization



**Demetrio Mowes from Namibia pitched Solve Namibia on the Slush stage as part of the Top 10 in 2018.**

“Improved our performance since we got an extra laptop.”

**Festus Malakia**  
*Unique Empowerment and Employment Initiative Foundation (Trading under Coachpedia)*  
 Windhoek

“Participating in the NCRST program was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to expand our skill sets, get expertise in a variety of functional areas, and undertake a great deal of responsibility.”

**Paulus Indongo**  
*Cloud Computing Inc.*  
 Windhoek

**Partners**



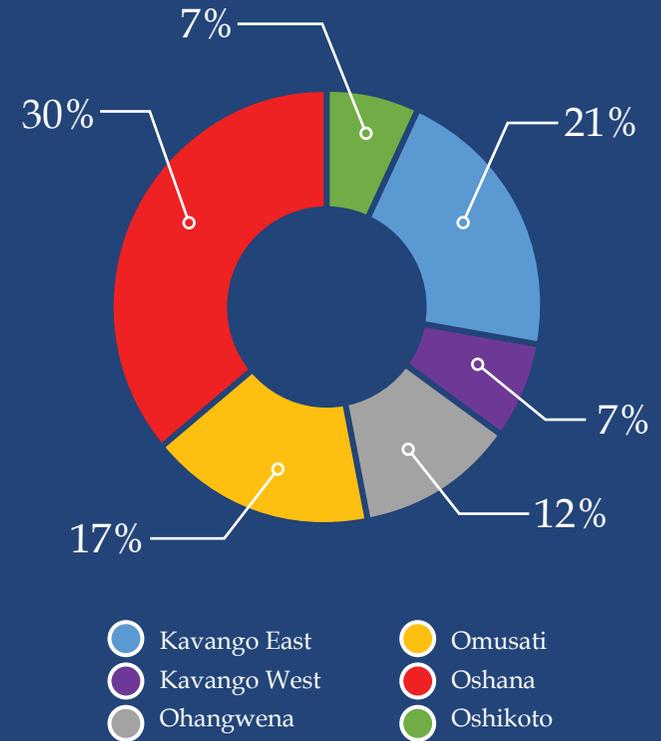
### 3.3 Grassroot Innovation Programme (GIP)

The NCRST established the GIP prompted by a low response rate to NCRST calls from certain regions. This was an indicator that the innovation that originates from ideas developed by some regional startups lacked voice and velocity, since they are the least likely to have access to resources. This keeps most of these regional innovations contained within their community and unable to achieve inclusive, sustainable, and equitable economic growth. This is the gap that the GIP wants to bridge.

The GIP a subcomponent of the Innovation Fostering/ Support Platform that was designed to promote and encourage innovations, technologies, and products from the grassroots communities to the market for Namibia to achieve inclusive, sustainable, and equitable economic growth as outlined in the 5th National Development Plan (NDP-5). As part of the GIP a needs assessment survey was conducted in Kavango East, Kavango West, Ohangwena, Omusati, Oshana, Oshikoto and Zambezi regions to sensitize local startups on various NCRST programmes. On the survey, 107 participants indicated that they needed training in Design thinking, Business Model Canvas and Product Marketing just to mention a few. The GIP will be scaled to all 14 regions depending on financial resources available.

The GIP started in 2022, and so far, it has reached over 172 entrepreneurs from different regions. In response to their training needs, 72 startups were trained in Social Innovation, Design Thinking, Business Model Canvas and Pitching in Rundu and Oshakati. Of these, the majority (36%) were from Oshana region and 7% were from Oshikoto and Kavango West region.

## PARTICIPATION PER REGION





The Grassroot startups received various opportunities including:

- Enhanced opportunity to participate in various NCRST innovation support interventions
- Business development, pitching & design thinking training
- Business coaching
- Innovation opportunity identification
- Opportunities to turning social challenges to businesses
- Linkage creation
- Peer to peer support and entrepreneurial networks



### Partners

None, currently exploring partnerships with different Government Ministries that work with rural communities.

“After the NCRST programme - I have gained more self-confidence, updated my product label to ensure that it is up to standard, and I have also improved my marketing strategy. The GIP have opened my eyes in terms of ways to go to look for funds. The pitching part really helped me believe in what I do. Meeting up with different business people during the programme made me think out of the box and came up with some new innovations.”

**Ndakuta Tyeni**  
TTIC  
Rundu

“I learnt more about how to validate ideas and turn them into a business. I learned more about Prototype checklist and importance of prototype as well as prototyping as an experimental process where design teams implement ideas into tangible forms from paper to digital.”

**Hendrina Natangwe**  
Ebenezer Guava Tea leaf bag  
Oshakati

“After the training, I managed to market the business to our potential customers and people are buying our products, using the marketing techniques that were taught during our 5 days training. I also started reaching out to the big supermarket and lodges so that we could sign agreements with them to supply them with our product.”

**Robert Thifura**  
Phura's Quest  
Rundu

“Since the training, my business has been progressing and has created job opportunities for at least five members of the community. The business managed to buy a 2-door glass fridge for cool drinks. It was awarded a certificate of franchise membership by Metro.”

**Haisindi Petrus**  
HJPI and NGK Trading Enterprises (Joy Mini Shop)  
Rundu

### 3.4 The WALK-INS

In view of strengthening innovation capacity in Namibia, the NCRST runs the Walk-in programme. This programme is designed to create a conducive environment/platform for innovators to pitch their ideas or innovation and receive tailor-made assistance from the NCRST to enable them to develop their innovations or ideas into tangible products. Walk-ins include a form that innovators fill in to request for a meeting so they can pitch their idea to a panel of selected experts.



# 4. THE JOURNEY OF PROGRAMME/ PROJECT BENEFICIARIES

# Agelvipa Online

Founder & CEO: Victoria Haihambo

Agelvipa is a Namibian-owned ecommerce platform that connects local businesses to the market through a multi-vendor ecommerce platform while simultaneously empowering women through the Women E-hub capacity-building initiative. Our mission is to help micro vendors in Namibia and throughout Africa showcase their products to a larger market, expand, and sustain their enterprises.

Agelvipa Online had a brilliant digital platform with the potential to grow but lacked the digital marketing skills needed to roll out the platform to end users, as well as the skills needed to profile the business and pitch it to potential investors and partners.

The BOOST-UP programme taught Agelvipa Online how to develop a business pitch deck and pitch the business confidently. Agelvipa Online also learned about several business methods that a startup may employ to get started, expand, and eventually scale. The business also learnt how to market its concept through the NCRST programme, and the mentor assigned to the business coached the business throughout the programme. Lastly, the business has become good at 'pitching for Funding' and as a result the business partnered with an organization to train startups on how to pitch their business for funding.



## Agelvipa Online's Achievements after NCRST intervention:

- Got a developer to develop a mobile APP for Agelvipa for free (Now Agelvipa has a Mobile App and a Website)
- Won a seed Grant from Impacther Africa
- Extended the platform and now by offering online training for vendors from website
- Increased my social media followers
- Was nominated for the World Ecommerce Award (Newcomer- Competition ending at the beginning of March 2023)
- Further Extended Agelvipa Ecommerce Service to an Author Hub (A site that profile, market, and sell the work of African Authors) Website development and social media presence established



# Tetranologie-mobility

Founder & CEO: David Mbudhi

## Tetranologie-mobility's Achievements after NCRST intervention:

- Two various adult's helmets models completed, and they will soon be available in local stores
- Seven various kids helmet models in developmental stage and they will soon be available in local stores
- In discussions with cycling equipment resellers
- Helmet Technologies partnerships secured
- Strategic partnerships formed
- Product packaging and catalogs completed
- Developed a new business model for the business
- Website development and social media presence established

Tetranologie-mobility is manufacturing a wide range of helmets. We believe that safeguarding users' heads and ensuring maximum safety is important. Our goal is to manufacture helmets that come with great technological features to be used for sports, micro mobility, recreational activities and dangerous work activities to safeguard users' heads and ensure maximum safety.

Tetranologie-mobility was struggling with getting together financing for our business. As a result, we could not prototype our business idea. We needed guidance on how to approach potential funders.

The BOOST-UP programme equipped Tetranologie-mobility with the skills to pitch to an audience such as potential funders. Thanks to NCRST, the exposure we received during our trip to Finland was an awesome experience. Potential business contacts were also made during our trip to Finland to attend Slush.

# Awana Food Trading Enterprise CC

Founder: Sara Iyaloo S. Ekondo

Awana Food Trading Enterprises CC is producing Hibiscus syrup, lemonade concentrates as well as tomato sauce, green pepper, and chutney. We are helping bridge the gap between over-abundance and lack of food by ensuring that producers are not vulnerable to food wastage and spoilage on their farms. We believe that adding value to food products by various means will prolong its shelf-life, make it more attractive to the buyer and prevent food wastage. Our goal is to continue sourcing excess and b-grade produce from farmers to add value.

Awana Food was struggling to operate their business formally. As a result, we could not scale our business. We needed training on various business aspects such as ethics that guide a business, business model and finances.

The NICW programme allowed Awana Foods to - leapfrog into formal operations and unleash a proper understanding of what it means to operate a business. Thanks to NCRST, Awana Foods ended up winning the prize money that has since seen us mechanize our production and even then, the way the disbursement was done was an amazing practical teaching on the rules to follow in managing both my personal and business finances.



## Awana Foods's Achievements after NCRST intervention:

- Set up designated production workspace
- Developed more new products and counting
- Obtained NRF (Namibia Recycle Forum) membership
- Have developed a new business model for the business
- Won the Capricorn Food Waste Challenge
- Hired two permanent staff and two casuals
- Building a database with small-holder farmer community
- Selected to attend the 7th Callistus Juma Executive dialogue on Innovation and Emerging Technologies in Kenya Hosted by the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD)



# Leo Canopus Inc

Founder & CEO: Dankie Nendongo

My team and I at Leo Canopus Inc is providing connected WIFI. We have helped enable communities to close the digital divide, ensure social inclusion and equal opportunity for all by making internet access a utility. We believe that we can provide internet connectivity by revolutionizing the way connectivity is deployed. Our goal is to reduce the 40% of the African continent that is not having access to internet.

Leo Canopus Inc was challenged on how to make the business sustainable for generations as I needed to transform from being a tech guy into someone that runs a sustainable tech company. As a result, they could not grow, manage, sustain, and pitch our business. We needed these skills.

Leo Canopus Inc. was able to effectively manage, sustain, and pitch our business thanks to the BOOST-UP programme. I also pick up financial and leadership skills. I was able to connect with like-minded individuals through NCRST, and they have since provided me with advice on a variety of topics.

## Leo Canopus's Achievements after NCRST intervention:

- Developed ICT solutions for transportation, mining, water, and waste management
- We commercially launched our Free Wi-Fi Solution
- Partnered with ISOC for their community network project
- Raised funds to scale our business nationally
- Hired two casuals, six contract based and one intern

# Laverne Pads Manufacturing CC

Founder & MD: Verna Nghuumono

Laverne pads manufacture reusable sanitary pads. We are helping reduce the high number of school dropouts due to period poverty. At Laverne pads we believe that no child should drop out of school or engage in dangerous transactional activities because they cannot afford pads. Our goal is to manufacture cost effective reusable pads that are environmentally friendly.

Laverne pads were struggling with digital skills required to reach new markets especially after the COVID-19 pandemics. As a result, we could not set up an online shop. We needed the skills to use digital platforms to have an online presence and reach new markets while preparing to scale.

Through the NICW programme, we learned about different digital platforms and how to use them to market our products to reach bigger audience and make sales. I started setting up an online shop which is 85% complete. Being on the programme, was a great platform to network with other women and learn from them.



## Laverne pads `s Achievements after NCRST intervention:

- Online shop 85% done
- Products to be stocked in local shops end February 2023
- Obtained bar codes for my products lines & License Certificate through GS1 Namibia office
- Introduced a new product line (Reusable Maternity Pad)
- Website is set up
- Won seed funding from GIZ through Start Up Namibia
- Participated in Windhoek Agricultural Show 2023 and awarded a Bronze for the Best Exhibitor in the Indoor Category
- Participated in a fully funded Know2Grow NextGen Entrepreneurs showcase fully sponsored by NIPDB
- Interviewed about the business and had the article featured in one local and international newspapers
- I was selected with four other women to attend the first ever SADC Female Founder Summit in Botswana through Start Up Namibia, sponsored by GIZ
- Hired 1 permanent staff, 2 employees on fixed term and 1 casual



## Granny's Green Garden

Founder: Ndinelago Iileka

At Granny's Green Garden, we produce jams, juices, and sauces that we source from local farmers and sell to retailers. We have helped farmers reduce food waste by adding value to their produce that does not meet retailers' standards.

At Granny's Green Garden, we were struggling to produce products that met food quality and standards. As a result, our products were not retailer ready. We needed to formulate the products with high quality and standards.

The NCRST through their Walk-in programme connected me with the food processors at Cape Peninsula University of Technology for product development and quality control.

### Granny's Green Garden's Achievements after NCRST intervention:

- As I was unable to pay for the formulation, I focused on getting more sales
- We managed to increase our sales
- Formulation and nutritional content analysis of our various products is planned for April - June 2023

# Nzimbu Investment CC

Founder: Haita Ester

Nzimbu Investment CC produces pure organic juice, jam, tea and Oil from our local vegetables and fruits namely Nongongo fruits for our oil and Mutete vegetables for our jam, juice and tea. We believe that our products can improve the health of our customers. Our goals are to help people to understand and get used to using their own local products rather than using western produce.

Nzimbu Investment CC were struggling to market the products. As a result, we could not make enough sales. They needed to find other platforms to sell the products to increase revenue.

After the NICW programme training, I have learned a lot mostly on how to market my business, and at least learned how to open my own business website. I met best people from the UNDP who helped me out on how to sell my products and how to pitch and I managed to go abroad and pitch in Kigali Rwanda for the first time in front of investors.



## Nzimbu Investment's Achievements after NCRST intervention:

- Own an online shop
- Developed three new products
- Got invited to showcase my products international
- More confident to sell my products
- Got ideas on how to market my products



# Okawa Trading cc

Founder & MD: Mary Ndeshipewa Shikukutu

Okawa Trading CC is processing and brewing high quality Mahangu products, flour and Oshikundu meal replacement drink from locally sourced mahangu grain. We believe in working smart to increase local food produce with added value. Our goal is to create new, unique, and standardized mahangu products.

Okawa Trading CC were struggling to meet its customer demand because our Oshikundu drink was not formulated. As a result, they could not put the product on the shelves. They needed to develop and standardize the product and to have Okawa Trading CC needed funds to further research the product, but it was costly and that is why we applied to the NICW programme.

NCRST provided me with funds to further research the Oshikundu drink. I have also learned where I can market my products, local stores that stock local brands and I have also met like-minded people in the programme who gave me advice on aspects that they have already experienced.

## Okawa Trading `s Achievements after NCRST intervention:

- Almost complete my product development
- Bought Industrial Plot
- Busy with the Building Plan
- Have developed a new business model for the business
- Three big shops interested in my product
- Have new packaging design

# Wision Media and Drafting

Founder & MD: Vaughan Weiss

Wision Media and Drafting is a visual communication agency. That uses 3D renders and animation to present new ideas and innovations clearly. Solving the frustration of miscommunication. We help customers communicate clearly, increasing brand awareness, idea adoption, investor attraction and customer acquisitions are driven to work smart to increase local food produce with added value.

Many people had told me that my product was exquisite and well crafted, but they were unable to afford it and they advised me to sell my products to the tourists. I had no way of accessing this market and I had no idea where to start and thus we applied to the BOOST-UP programme.

The pitch training provided helped me understand how valuable personal and business branding is. I experienced a mindset shift and gained profound confidence in myself. It made it easier to connect with fellow entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial organizations across SADC. The business immediately gained market awareness locally and internationally.



## Wision Media and Drafting `s Achievements after NCRST intervention:

- Won the most Innovative startup 2022 at the Basecamp awards
- Won third place in AR/VR Africa Hackathon
- Completed One Minute Academy videography course to improve our animation productions
- Developed a VR Namibian Museum experience
- Hired two new interns for our marketing and sales

## 5. HOW TO APPLY

The IIR division announces specific innovation areas that will be supported excluding the Walk-ins. They are accessible through the NCRST Website (<https://ncrst.na/calls/>) and indicate the timing of the upcoming calls for application. When a Call is launched, precise information regarding that specific Call in terms of the thematic areas and requirements will be provided. Each Call also has a dedication application form that is shared with this information.

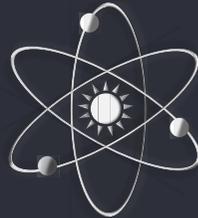
For the Walk-ins, innovators can send an email to [ifp@ncrst.na](mailto:ifp@ncrst.na) to request a form for a meeting.











# NCRST

NATIONAL COMMISSION ON  
RESEARCH, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

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## CYBERSPACE

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