



GOOD PRACTICES

The Bokamoso Entrepreneurial Centre in Windhoek

A HUB FOR ENTREPRENEURS, LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

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Overview

The Bokamoso Entrepreneurial Centre (BEC) supports entrepreneurs in Windhoek offering working space and targeted capacity-building programmes that strengthen business capabilities and promote sustainable business growth.

Background

Windhoek, capital and economic centre of Namibia as well as home to around 500,000 inhabitants, draws young people from all corners of the country seeking higher education and training, employment in government and corporate sector jobs, and entrepreneurial opportunities. Around 40 percent of the population of the capital region Khomas is aged between 15 and 34.

The regional and local authorities thus have made start-ups and entrepreneurship a strategic priority, significantly improving the political and regulatory framework for business creation. The Governors office offers an annual Equipment Support Programme for entrepreneurs to apply. For the city of Windhoek, supporting entrepreneurs has become a strategic objective within its five-year plan. The Economic Development Division plays a key role in coordinating the various stakeholders within the entrepreneurial ecosystem. In 2003, it established the Bokamoso Entrepreneurial Centre as a hub for information and entrepreneurial development.

Objectives

The mission of Bokamoso Entrepreneurial Centre is to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), especially start-ups led by young people. Guided by its strategic vision, “Empowering Tomorrow’s Market Leaders,” it aims to equip them with the resources and skills they need to compete effectively in regional, national, and international markets and seize new business opportunities after graduating from the Centre.

The Centre also aims to provide a platform for entrepreneurs pioneering innovative solutions to environmental and economic challenges and thus contribute to a more sustainable urban economy. It actively supports businesses that promote resource efficiency, waste reduction, recycling, reuse and sustainable production practices.

‘When a young Namibian starts a business, she does not only create an income for herself. She creates jobs for others, dignity for her household, and confidence in her community. A region cannot develop while its young talent waits on the sidelines.’

Hon. Sam Shafiishuna Nujoma, Governor of Khomas Region, Namibia

The Bokamoso Entrepreneurial Centre site. | Photo: City of Windhoek



Activities

Bokamoso Entrepreneurial Centre supports a diverse entrepreneurial community in manufacturing, crafts, the creative industries, as well as in textile, cosmetics, the food sector and in information and communication technology (ICT). Currently, it comprises around 40 entrepreneurs in a near-balanced gender representation.

It provides its tenants with

- affordable workspaces and business premises (30 to 122 m²), enabling them to start their businesses without facing high initial costs.
- services that support them in formalising and professionalising their operations including a 3-day-programme to generate a business idea as well as a 5-day-programme on how to start a business and to develop a bankable business plan. After 1 to 2 years the enterprises undergo a follow-up-programme on how to improve and scale up their business.
- individual advisory support focussing especially on business growth.
- better access to financial resources by connecting with financial institutions and enhancing credibility with investors. It provides business support services to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements, such as business registration, social security contributions, and tax obligations and helps accessing mentoring support and business management training.
- support in marketing products both nationally and internationally. The Centre assists in identifying and navigating relevant regulations and requirements. Also, it organises several major events throughout the year, providing opportunities to showcase products and services. These include an arts and culture festival, a spring market and a Christmas market.

The Bokamoso Entrepreneurial Centre maintains strategic alliances with a variety of stakeholders from government, the private sector and the wider SME community. These include the [Development Bank of Namibia](#), the [Namibia Investment Promotion and Development Board \(NIPDB\)](#), the Namibia Business Innovation Institute (NBII), the [Social Security Commission \(SSC\)](#), the [Business and Intellectual Property Authority \(BIPA\)](#), the Ministry of Labour, and the German development organisation [Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit \(GIZ\)](#).

Thanks to its strong network, the Centre is able to bring in additional training opportunities and programmes such as a female entrepreneurship programme. Occasionally, it is visited by schools to foster an entrepreneurial mindset among students at an early stage, a programme the Centre aims to expand in the future.



PureMarula skincare | Photo: City of Windhoek

Success Stories

PureMarula is a skincare product developed by a family-owned business that started out at the Bokamoso Entrepreneurial Centre. The product is made from the Marula fruit, which the company sources from women's cooperatives in Northern Namibia under fair trade conditions. The raw material is processed into a variety of products, the waste material sustainably sold to chicken farmers. The Bokamoso Entrepreneurial Centre facilitates support and access to networks for the company in expanding its products to the international market.

The company E-Bikes for Africa assembles electric cargo bikes sourcing its components from international suppliers. The bikes are used by other businesses based at the Centre, like delivery services or SMEs collecting waste materials that are then transformed into recycled products, such as fashion items made from recycled denim.



Demand for e-cargo bikes in Windhoek is high. | Photo: City of Windhoek



Impacts

The impact of the Centre is far-reaching:

- Over the past 16 years, the Centre has reached and supported an estimated 1,200 young people aged 18 to 35 in their entrepreneurial activities.
- It has produced several notable success stories that have grown into recognised businesses within Namibia. Among these are Karibu Flowers, School Tex Sports Wear, Talamo Foods, African Naturals and Tuli Line. Some of them have developed distinctive Namibian products that draw on traditional practices and use local resources.
- The businesses create employment opportunities within the community, helping to address youth unemployment, strengthen household incomes and promote women's economic empowerment in a community facing several socio-economic challenges. Most of the businesses are led by previously disadvantaged entrepreneurs and families. Currently, the 40 entrepreneurs hosted at the Bokamoso Entrepreneurial Centre create employment for 120 individuals which also get trained in customer care, safety and security. The Centre itself employs several staff members for maintenance as well as a SME that provides cleaning services.
- As the only city-owned entrepreneurial centre in Namibia, it has become a point of reference for other local authorities across the country seeking solutions to promote start-ups as drivers of local economic development.
- Furthermore, the Centre has emerged as an important contributor to circular economy and sustainable business development in Windhoek. Many of the entrepreneurs integrate circular economy principles into their operations.

Conclusion

Bokamoso Entrepreneurial Centre has evolved alongside its clients. Initially, it operated primarily as a business incubator, providing basic infrastructure for SMEs. When, over time, it became clear that physical space alone was insufficient to enable businesses to operate beyond their day-to-day activities, the Centre introduced training, business development support and other capacity-building activities to foster sustainable business growth.

Currently, the Centre is exploring its future strategic focus, undergoing an organisational development process supported through its sister city Bremen. As part of this process, the Centre is considering options for achieving financial sustainability and reviewing its status as a mixed incubator. Also, there are plans to expand its facilities to meet growing demand.

Success factors were:

- being a municipal institution provides credibility and trust
- building partnerships with local, regional, national and international stakeholders and serving as a bridge between them and the businesses
- remaining responsive to needs of the clients



Top: Home for artists at the Centre
Bottom right: Fashion companies also produce at the Bokamoso Entrepreneurial Centre, including school uniforms for local schools. | Photos: City of Windhoek

IMPRINT

Published by

Connective Cities
International Community of Practice for
Sustainable Municipal Development
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Connective Cities is a joint venture between

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The German Association of Towns and Municipalities
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The Association of Municipal Enterprises
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Service Agency Communities in One World
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Cover photo: City of Windhoek

Basic design and layout

blickpunkt x – Büro für Kommunikation und Design

August 2026

Commissioned by

German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
(BMZ)

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Since 2013, Connective Cities has been promoting the worldwide exchange of municipal expertise. Within the framework of structured learning processes, the platform disseminates proven-practice solutions for sustainable municipal development and supports peer learning between German and international municipal experts, as well as the joint development of project ideas.

Connective Cities is commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). It is a cooperation between the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, Engagement Global with its Service Agency Communities in One World (SKEW) and the Association of German Cities (DST), the German Association of Towns and Municipalities (DStGB), the German County Association (DLT) and the Association of Municipal Enterprises (VKU).

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