

## SUCCESS STORIES FROM NAMIBIA



INSIGHTS FROM ACCESS! BUSINESSWOMEN

The International Trade Centre (ITC) is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations.

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# EMPOWERING WOMEN, CHANGING LIVES



## WHEN WOMEN SUCCEED, WE ALL SHARE THE BENEFITS

Women-owned enterprises that export tend to earn more, pay more, employ more people and be more productive than firms that only operate domestically. Currently, women own up to 40% of small and medium-sized enterprises globally, but lead only one in five exporting firms.

To help address this issue, the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the Government of the Republic of Namibia signed an agreement in March 2014 to implement the [ACCESS!](#) Programme for the delivery of export development services to women entrepreneurs. This marked the first time the Namibian government paid for an ITC programme to be implemented in the country.

[ACCESS!](#) Namibia was jointly implemented with the Namibia Trade Forum (NTF) as the [ACCESS!](#) focal point institution, ensuring national ownership of the programme and sustainable delivery of services to Namibian businesswomen.

## CREATING LASTING CHANGE

A training of trainers was led by two regional lead trainers in Windhoek in fall 2014. Following a pilot training programme in early 2015, eight candidates became certified [ACCESS!](#) national trainers, ready to deliver a full-fledged training package on export processes and business management.

Additionally, ITC and NTF have a licensing agreement that allows both organizations to adapt, localize, promote and use [ACCESS!](#) materials and methodologies throughout the country.

In 2015 and 2016, NTF organized and delivered technical training workshops as well as mentorship and business coaching for more than 50 women entrepreneurs, based on the [ACCESS!](#) export training course and methodology. These offerings have been integrated into the NTF services portfolio.

By strengthening the capacities of trainers in Namibia to offer export development services to women-owned businesses, the programme supports sustainable change. Read on for insights shared by women entrepreneurs in a variety of sectors who have directly benefited from this experience.

# COSMETICS

## *Tuli-Line: make-up for your melanin skin*

### Owners

Tulimeyo and Johanna Kaapanda, Tuli-Line cosmetics

### Finding opportunities in the ordinary

Like many successful business stories, the Kaapanda sisters started their make-up brand called Tuli-Line in their home garage. Tuli-Line produces face powders made from 'otjize', a red stone mined in the Kunene Region in the Opuwo area. Otjize is famously known to be used by the Ovahimba women of Namibia who have been applying the red powder on their skin for sun protection for centuries.

The Kaapanda sisters saw an opportunity in the market when they could not find suitable make-up products for African skin. They decided to turn Namibia's indigenous products into value-added products for the domestic and international markets. Other product lines in the pipeline include face masks, soap and edible baobab powder.



### Marketing

Tuli-Line initially had a distribution deal with Pick'n Pay, one of Namibia's largest grocery store chains. However, because many people do not purchase make-up from grocery stores, the Kaapanda sisters decided to withdraw their brand from the shelves. They are now selling from their factory premises and through social media, including Facebook and Instagram.

### Export markets

Tuli-Line exports to Ghana and Zimbabwe, where niche markets have been created. Marketing and branding are the main challenges in integrating the company into regional and international markets.

## Challenges

A short-term challenge is achieving proper packaging for the Tuli-Line make-up line.

There is a limited number of suitable suppliers of cosmetics packaging in Namibia as the sector itself is in an infancy stage. Packaging materials are imported from South Africa, which increases production costs. There is also a need for better equipment to increase production efficiency.

## Lessons learned

After participating in the [ACCESS!](#) training programme, Tuli-Line improved its business strategy by learning to:

- Upgrade packaging and labelling.
- Evaluate export readiness and export packaging.
- Take into account all the elements involved in exporting, such as proper quotations and adequate Incoterms.
- Better understand the level of risks between the importer and exporter.
- Define a more precise costing of production processes.



# ORGANIC FERTILIZER

## *Black Gold Compost: The magic of organic fertilizer*

### **Owner**

Waldie Sieberhagen, Black Gold Compost

### **Turning hobbies into business**

Waldie Sieberhagen started growing mushrooms as a hobby. She began experimenting with different seedlings and compost mixtures. Today, Sieberhagen is in the business of recycling rotten, wilted produce such as carrots, onions, tomatoes, as well as their by-products, to manufacture organic compost or fertilizer. She manufactures and distributes 12 varieties of organic fertilizer under her own label, Black Gold Compost.

### **Marketing**

Waldie Sieberhagen says products such as multipurpose compost and premium lawn sell best between August and October. Other products, such as lawn spot repair for the full sun and lawn spot repair for the shady area, sell throughout



the year. Flower bulbs sales do well in both the summer and winter.

The Black Gold Compost production plant is based in Tsumeb, where most input factors are also sourced. Tsumeb and surrounding areas, including Otavi, are where most fresh produce production takes place in Namibia, making it a strategic location. The warehouse is based in Windhoek, where all distribution takes place.

On meeting standards, all products have been lab tested and results are available. A notable achievement is that the products have been certified as organic. In addition, all compost and soil are tested locally on a variety of fruits and vegetables.

The products are distributed in 18 branches of Pupkewitz around the country; 18 branches of Agra; one of Namibia's largest nurseries, Ferreira's Nursery; and other nurseries around the country.

## Export markets

Waldie Sieberhagen aims to export her products to South Africa and Botswana.

## Challenges

Challenges include getting a packaging machine up and running to meet market demand. There is also a need to find a plot near Windhoek to cut travelling time from Tsumeb to Windhoek, which would allow more time to manage production and sales in Windhoek. The other challenge is to acquire a bigger compost turner to triple production.

## Lessons learned

After participating in the [ACCESS!](#) training programme, Waldie Sieberhagen is now able to:

- Assess her export readiness.
- Understand that her packaging needs to include the 'Made in Namibia' label and the address of the company.
- Review her marketing strategy to create a website to market her products.
- 'I think initiatives such as [ACCESS!](#) are very important to us manufacturers because we are the ones to create employment and contribute to the growth of our national economy,' she said.



# CHILDREN'S WELFARE

## *Moringa Oleifera project: supporting children's welfare*

### Founder

Elizabeth Hilger, Theresia's Orphans and Vulnerable Children Foundation

### Growing trees to educate children

The Theresia Foundation is a non-profit organization registered with the Ministry of Health and Social Services as a welfare organization. It looks after 111 children in the Mavanze village in the Kavango Region.

The foundation launched the Moringa Oleifera project, which raises income to support the education of children.

The project has planted 5,800 Moringa Oleifera trees and harvests the leaves to process them into powders to sell in the market.

The Moringa Oleifera project has established itself in the market, but there is work to be done related to packaging and marketing the product for its medicinal properties.



### Challenges

Some of the immediate challenges are related to a lack of standards and certification in the country, as well as packaging and labelling issues. Additionally, there is a need for customized machines to process the leaves into fine powder.

### Lessons learned

The *ACCESS!* programme helped those working on the Moringa Oleifera project to:

- Better understand the concept of manufacturing and market access.
- Improve packaging.
- Find opportunities to participate in trade expos to market their products and grow the network.
- 'We are thankful and look forward to benefitting more, especially in the mentoring process,' she said.



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# CHEMICALS

## *Magnetized Investment Chemicals: The power of cleaning detergents*

### **Owner**

Naomi Keefas, Magnetized Investment Chemicals

### **Creating eco-friendly cleaning products**

Magnetized Investment Chemicals manufactures cleaning detergents and supplies hardware for fishing vessels, factory operations, government, retail and private organizations in Namibia.

'Our cleaning materials are biodegradable and eco-friendly. About 75% of our detergents are made from lemon and our Namibian aloe vera plant,' said Naomi Kefas, owner of Magnetized Investment Chemicals.

Products cleaners, disinfectant, air freshener, soap, shampoo, stainless steel cleaner and polish, as well as washing powder.



### **Marketing**

Naomi is giving great importance to new marketing services for securing supply contracts. Her company has developed a website and increased its presence on social media. Multiplying her participation in Expos and Trade Fairs is one of her objectives and a way to dynamically market her business.

### **Challenges**

Naomi currently experiences difficulties reaching out to the markets. Even though she has received strong interest from large department stores, she lacks sufficient machinery and packaging items to meet the growing needs of her company. In order to be even more impactful, Naomi requires her production to be approved by foreign Standards Bureaux; and to secure reliable suppliers of raw material.

## Lessons learned

After participating in the [ACCESS!](#) programme, Naomi was able to:

- Rebrand her products to make them more attractive.
  - Attract interest from leading retailers in the country to supply her products.
  - Work on obtaining machines to increase volume to meet domestic demand.
- Explore plans to exports to Angola and Zambia.
  - 'I enjoyed the [ACCESS!](#) programme because it opened up my mind to differentiate my products in the market, and it also encouraged me to start looking at export markets to grow my business,' she said.



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# NEWSPAPER-BASED VASES

*Mariazinha Investment: Unique vases from recycled newspapers*

## Owner

Maria Kambonde, Mariazinha Investment

## Producing handmade vases

Maria Kambonde runs a small business manufacturing vases made from recycled paper, which she sells from her home in Ongwediva.

## Marketing

Even if Maria's presence on new social media is limited for now, her strategy is to run a website and to improve her communication.

Thanks to the [ACCESS!](#) project and the support of NTF, Maria managed to participate in Trade Fairs in Windhoek to market her business and to sell more products, allowing her to save a lot on travel and transport costs.



## Challenges

Maria Kambonde needs easy access to old newspapers, which are her main inputs. To overcome this, she needs a sourcing model in which she either collects or lets people drop off old newspapers at her workshop.

The [ACCESS!](#) programme is assisting her with this through the mentoring and coaching programme.

## Lessons learned

The [ACCESS!](#) programme helped Maria Kambonde to:

- Better understand the power of branding.
  - Become more attuned to her customers' needs.
  - Attract more customers by producing plain and natural-looking vases, rather than over-decorated ones.
- Incorporate traditional materials to give the vases more of a Namibian and African touch.
  - Register her company with the Ministry of Industrialization, Trade and SME Development.
  - Participate in trade fairs and expos.



# CLOTHING AND TEXTILES

## *White Feather Creations and Deco: Clothing and textiles made in Namibia*

### Owner

Mathilde Ishtile, White Feathers Creations and Deco

### Manufacturing clothing

White Feathers is a company that specializes in manufacturing clothing. It employs 15 employees, including 12 women. As part of the [ACCESS!](#) programme, staff benefitted from a week of mentoring and business coaching, which analysed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the business. The report generated aims to assist the company in implementing some of the business management recommendations.

### Challenges

Human resource development remains a challenge. There is a strong need to incorporate staff training in the production



system because clients' needs change on a daily basis and the sector is becoming more and more competitive. Staff training is of particular importance if the company is aiming to stand out in the clothing and textiles sector.

### Lessons learned

Business improved after White Feathers participated in the [ACCESS!](#) programme. The following changes were implemented:

- Updated layout of the shop floor to a more professional set up, with consideration of work flow and power lines in an effort to adhere to international industry standards.
- Availability of additional office facilities and equipment to the staff.

- Newly trained personnel who are willing to take up extra tasks and responsibilities.
- Usage of pattern blocks and industry cutters to achieve greater uniformity in production.
- Shift in the business model to focus more on corporate customers: 'In the corporate world, volume, quality and timely deliveries are more important,' Mathilde Ishtile said.





This booklet was produced within the context of the project [ACCESS!](#) for African Businesswomen in International Trade.

## [ABOUT THE PROJECT](#)

The project aims at improving business support services for women to increase their capacity to export and succeed on international and regional markets with the ultimate goal of promoting their economic empowerment, contributing to poverty reduction and improving standards of living.

The [ACCESS!](#) Export Training course consists in 25 modules for women entrepreneurs, 2 modules for [ACCESS!](#) Trainers as well as 2 modules for [ACCESS!](#) Focal Point institutions, plus 5 sectorial addenda to help make the modules sector specific (horticulture, handicrafts & textiles, coffee, hides skins & leather, services).

The training modules and the course are designed to make women entrepreneurs knowledgeable about all aspects of their enterprise and export processes, to significantly raise their understanding, to improve their ability to prepare their business for export transactions (on their own or with the help of an international or local expert), and to boost their confidence, so that they can make informed decisions of their own, albeit perhaps with outside expert help.



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA  
Ministry of Industrialization, Trade and SME Development



## PROJECT PARTNERS

A project funded by the Government of Namibia, led by the Ministry of Industrialization, Trade and SME Development, managed by the Namibia Trade Forum (NTF) and the International Trade Centre (ITC).

### International Trade Centre (ITC)

The International Trade Centre is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations. ITC's aim is for businesses in developing countries to become more competitive in global markets, speeding economic development and contributing to the achievement of the United Nations Global Goals for sustainable development.

[www.intracen.org](http://www.intracen.org)

### Namibia Trade Forum (NTF)

The Namibia Trade Forum is a Government agency mandated to institutionalise public-private dialogue and cooperation with emphasis on international and domestic trade and investment policies. The role of the NTF is to act as the main consultative body representing the private sector views to the government. It thus serves as the highest public private partnership on international and domestic trade and investment matters.

[www.ntf.org.na](http://www.ntf.org.na)

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