

# Promoting Entrepreneurship amid Youth in Windhoek's Informal Settlements: A Namibian Case

Heike Winschiers-Theophilus<sup>1</sup>, Daniel G. Cabrero<sup>2</sup>, Shilumbe Chivuno-Kuria<sup>1</sup>, Hedvig Mendonca<sup>3</sup>, Shambe Angula<sup>1</sup>, Lisa Onwordi<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Namibia University of Science and Technology, Faculty of Computing and Informatics, 5 Storch Street, Windhoek, Namibia. <sup>2</sup>University of West London, School of Computing and Engineering, St Mary's Road, Ealing, London, W5 5RF, United Kingdom. <sup>3</sup>University of Namibia, Northern Campus.

## Abstract

Considering the high unemployment rate among Namibian youth and a lack of job opportunities, the promotion of entrepreneurship has gained wider attention in the country. A number of initiatives have been started such as entrepreneurship trainings and workshops, business idea competitions, etc. All these aim to inspire young people to think of alternative income sources. As part of a two-year funded community outreach research and development (R&D) project, we have investigated participatory approaches to engage marginalized youth into conceptualizing their own context, imparting skills, and deriving new career paths. This paper reports and reflects on one of the interventions we have recently concluded with a group of youth in Havana, an informal settlement in the outskirts of Windhoek. We conducted what we entitled "The Havana Entrepreneur", a series of interactions inspired upon the model of the American reality game show "The Apprentice". Over a number of weeks two youth groups were given challenges to tackle by means of competing against one another. After completion of each challenge, groups were rated by a number of judges on skills demonstrated such as marketing, presentation, reflection and creativity among others. We observed an increase in, and improvement of skills revealed along tasks' completion, besides an openly expressed self-realization and discovery of abilities by participants. Moreover, the youth are currently engaged in the continuation of activities beyond the initial entrepreneurial interactions. Thus we suggest replicating "The Havana Entrepreneur", including the recording on camera of it by the youth themselves as a new mode to instigating a wider entrepreneurial spirit in informal settlements.

## Introduction

The promotion of entrepreneurship in Southern African countries' informal settlements is becoming rather affluent, especially in South Africa (van Aswegen, 2012; Steyn et al., 2013), though also in Zimbabwe and Mozambique (Crush et al., 2015). Boudreaux (2008) points out the rapid growth of the African urban contexts due to rural migration, and that more often than not migrants end "accommodated" in informal settlements because of costs in housing driven by governmental decisions. Rogerson (1996) describes scale and nature of urban poverty and its causes in growth and the complexity of the informal economy in the South African context. This includes a consideration on constrains of informal economies and the growth of survivalist enterprises and the links between formal and informal economies. Limited possibilities in informal

economies to resolving issues of poverty and the links promoted between formal and informal economies (Rogerson, 1996) hamper entrepreneurial developments.

Considering the peculiar situation in informal settlements alternative models to support job creation and entrepreneurship need being explored. As such, van Aswegen (2012) scaffold form interviews revealing the situation of township residents in South Africa combined with the definition of social entrepreneurship, and create a socially entrepreneurial business model aimed to alleviate some of the residents' most pressing needs. Likewise, a research project on entrepreneurship in low-income settlements in Kampala, Uganda, explores a local Youth organisation as a proxy that reveals the strength of a participatory approach (Gough, Langeyang & Naatovu, 2013). Back in South Africa, Steyn et al. (2013) applied a Participatory Entrepreneurship Development framework in an informal settlement in Johannesburg pursuing a relatively radical participatory approach to ICT services development within a marginalized community. The latter approach seeks to overcome challenges of traditional and existing participatory methods to ICT project implementation towards developing ICT-based solutions to solve community problems in developing contexts. This is done by stimulating entrepreneurship amid community members. However, Steyn et al. conclude that to "truly innovate" ICT and services, participants should be equipped with much deeper knowledge of ICTs (ibid).

In our research in Namibia we explore an unconventional mode to promote entrepreneurship among youth in an informal settlement at the outskirts of Windhoek in Namibia. Thus we present the Namibian landscape of youth unemployment and the need to strengthen youth entrepreneurship. Within this context we elaborate on our challenge-based approach to inspire the youth to venture into entrepreneurial activities. While we have successfully completed our pilot study, we are now engaged in the institutionalization of the project in collaboration with diverse partakers such as the community, government, industry and university.

## **The Namibian context**

Namibia, a relatively young nation and independent since 1990, holds political stability via its democratically elected government. As per 2011's census Namibia has a population of about 2.2 million people (NSA, 2014). According to the African Economic Outlook organisation Namibia has experienced a Gross Domestic Product growth of 5.3% in 2014 from a previous 5.1% in 2013 (Phiri and Odhiambo, 2015). To this situation the active mining and agricultural sectors contribute as the biggest employers (ibid). In turn, such firmness provides a peaceful environment essential for the Nation's social and economic development. 51.6 percent of Namibian households declared salaries as their main source of income, while 15.8 percent live on subsistence farming and only 6.9 percent from businesses (NSA,2014). With a total labour force of 990,998 in 2014, 712,752 were employed with 41.1 percent of those employed in the informal sector and 30.1 percent in vulnerable employment (Namibian Labour Force 2014 Survey Report). Employment conditions vary widely and thus vulnerable status is assigned to those without formal agreements and access to benefits considered being more at risk. Namibia holds one of the most unequal wealth and income distributions in the world (Mwinga, 2012 and Pasqual, 2014 in Konicki et al. 2014). With a Gini index of 57.2 in 2015, 18 percent of the

population are estimated to be under the upper bound poverty line (NHIES, 2015/2016). In recognition of the socio-economic challenges the current 'Namibian National Development Plan 4' has formulated as its primary goals a "high and sustained economic growth", "increased income equality" and "employment creation".

### **Youth Unemployment**

From the total Namibian population youth comprise 519,000. This sector of the population is considered as those amongst the 15-35 year-old range by the National Youth Charter and the Namibian Statistical Agency (NSA, 2014). The rate of youth unemployment, though, has been alarmingly high in Namibia, directly affecting the country's economic system and subsequently socio-economic factors in the country. According to the NSA the quota has reached 39,2% in 2014 (Labour Force Report, 2014) as per youth between the ages of 18 and 35. Thus about 314,000 of the above counted youth were employed in 2014, while about 205,000 were unemployed in the same year. Therefore the creation of youth employment is not just a moral imperative, but an economic necessity as emphasized by the Government in the fourth National Development Plan (NDP4). This is while the youth have so-far accumulated an overall loss on employment prospects (NSA, 2013), with many having been forced to precarious sources of entrepreneurship (Nghiulikwa, 2008) –as some of our participants stated– for *just surviving*. Ongoing issues to do with the postcolonial legacy (Sarkin-Hughes, 2009) and limitations in the use of land (Melber, 2014) may be aspects contributing to local challenges for better futures for the youth, while the continuous rural-urban migration provides a skewed ratio of job opportunities versus job seekers. Like in other capital cities in developing countries worldwide, Windhoek is not an exception to the above as it also records high youth unemployment rates. This is particularly so in Katutura, a township in the outskirts of Windhoek holding a historical vulnerability towards unemployment since colonial and apartheid times (Friedman, 2000).

### **Youth entrepreneurship**

Considering rates of unemployment and the lack of career prospects among Namibian youth, the promotion of youth entrepreneurship has inevitably gained wider attention in the country. This is a key turn to opening doors to young generations that, for one reason or another, still lack opportunities to forging an honest, integral and legit livelihood of their own. To empower Namibian youth with suitable skills, information and entrepreneurial platforms are hence issues at stake for them to become the drivers and innovators of their own future and Nation. Thus the National Youth Council has declared the following objectives: "To develop the inherent abilities and capabilities of the individual youth" and "to initiate youth development projects and to encourage the establishment of projects" (Youth Promotion Policy, 2008). The aim is to encourage the youth to think of sources of income alternative to [un]employment, and to eventually gain self-sustainability through self-innovation.

Recognizing that youth entrepreneurship can play a pivotal role in this regard, there are yet far too few services offered in the country to providing the necessary support for the youth. In the latest Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) report titled "Africa's Young Entrepreneurs: Unlocking The Potential For A Brighter Future", Namibia is rated the third-worst country in Sub-Saharan Africa when it comes to youth entrepreneurship, with just 33% of young people in the

country starting or running their own business, and 44% of the youth entrepreneurs not employing anyone except the owner. Thus Phiri and Odhiambo (2015) emphasize the need for Namibia to “boost quality of education and training to improve skills and enhance competitiveness”. Education and training must hence be provided to the youth, among others, for the latter to be capable of contributing to the socio-economic development of their Nation.

### **Entrepreneurial education and training**

A number of entrepreneurial programmes have been developed and are currently offered at different institutions. The purpose of Entrepreneurial education has been to encourage self-employment and impart the necessary skills to promote the creation of SMEs thereby contributing to the national socio-economic development (Johansen & Lundhaug, 2016). An introduction to entrepreneurship is provided at secondary school and an upgrade of skills can be obtained at vocational training centres facilitating own business ventures (April, 2015). A higher level formal entrepreneurship education is offered by the Namibian public and private Universities in form of distinct courses within degree programmes or as public short courses. Entrepreneurial training courses are also presented at private and accredited smaller training institutions in Namibia (April, 2015). In a survey conducted by Johansen and Lundhaug (2016), 78% of their respondents had attended Entrepreneurship as a school subject out of which 93% considered it to be significant in establishing their own business. This shows that an early introduction of entrepreneurial thinking is essential. However most further trainings are costly and theoretical. Other stakeholders such as the Namibia Business Innovation Centre are thus supporting entrepreneurial initiatives in the form of training and workshops on entrepreneurship and business-idea competitions among others (<http://nbii.nust.na/?q=our-services>). Those initiatives are often linked to third party sponsorships. Sporadic entrepreneurial trainings and support services are also offered or supported by non-government organisations, individuals and organisations under their corporate social responsibility programmes. Generally problematic has been the dissemination of information about such opportunities to the vulnerable and marginalized youth.

### **Government Support of Youth Entrepreneurship**

The government has introduced a number of youth initiatives such as the National Youth Service to recruit young school leavers and create a platform for unity, cultural exchange, patriotism and discipline to mention but a few (ILO, 2005). Multipurpose Youth Centres have also been established in different regions across the country to provide training and skill development (ibid). The National Youth Council has initiated an annual youth expo, youth enterprise promotion services, information exchanges, and training and skills developments in line with the Youth Enterprise Promotion Policy of 2004. A Target Intervention Program for Employment and Economic Growth (TIPEEG) was implemented in 2010 to create short to medium term jobs and also to tackle high unemployment rates. The government also promotes entrepreneurship via both, the program Vision 2030 (2004) and the Namibia's Industrial policy (2011) to advocate for Small and Medium Enterprises (SME). Besides, a SME bank was founded to give financial access for training and development of entrepreneurship, while the above policy links innovation and R&D as important components in establishing successful SMEs. Kardosa (2012) ultimately claims innovation and entrepreneurship are essential in fostering a sustainable socioeconomic

development. Complementing the National Development Plan in accelerating the development in identified priority areas, the Harambee Prosperity Plan (HPP) was launched in 2016. One of the key outcomes listed is to establish: “A spirit of entrepreneurship resulting in increased youth enterprise development” (HPP, p. 5). Drafting and adopting a National Youth Entrepreneurship Policy and an Impact Evaluation Framework has been strategised. On a practical level, the government is committed to develop more conducive funding and development options of Sme’s and start up’s as stated: “We will create a single ring-fenced Enterprise Development Fund, exclusively for the youth” (HPP, p32)

## **RLabs**

One of the promising initiatives has been The Reconstructed Living Labs (RLabs). The concept was originated in South Africa in 2008 (Parker et al., 2012) and is now a global movement operating in 22 countries worldwide. RLabs focuses on the youth and creates an environment for community driven innovation by offering various trainings, community development, social and disruptive innovation, mobile and internet solutions and social enterprise incubation. RLabs Namibia started in 2012 as a pilot project under the Namibia Business Innovation Institute (NBII), one of the centers of excellence of the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) (formerly Polytechnic of Namibia). RLabs seeks to impact, empower, and reconstruct communities via innovation by targeting the most marginalized and outcasts like crime committers. Besides training and incubation services, they have also established a community living lab allowing for co-creation, open design, as well as social innovation in South Africa.

## **Live in informal settlements: Havana in Katutura, Windhoek**

Katutura is compounded of formal and informal settlements where over 100,000 currently live with a lack of basic hygiene, services and amenities. Havana is one of the townships in the outskirts of Windhoek. Havana was established in 1992 (The Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia, 2009) and it is one of the largest informal settlements in Windhoek. According to The Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia in 2009 there were about 4002 households in Havana (ibid).

Due to a fast increasing rural-urban migration, public infrastructures and services lack behind. This includes infrastructures such as schools and roads among many others. In the Walking Havana session below, participating youth revealed such challenges in the form of the general scarceness of electricity connections, cumbersome pre-paid access points to potable water, wastelands surrounding the housing shacks and a scarcity of hygiene resources where public, decaying, open showers serve locals for sanitation (Cabrero et al., 2015). “Small business owners operating in the informal settlements of Havana have vowed to continue connecting power illegally as long as the City of Windhoek continues to turn a blind eye to their cry for electricity” (Windhoek Observer, 20 February 2015). Such newspaper articles and others concerning the eviction from illegal shelters are regulars in Namibia’s local press.

Besides social ills such as high crime, alcohol abuse and prostitution, together with a lack of job opportunities were also stressed Walking Havana; while it was also found that many ‘informal’ inhabitants survive on casual jobs and micro-businesses like small bars, barbershops or selling

second-hand clothes, meals and other items. Others have a main job or study at the same time that they hold additional odd unspecified jobs on the side. It must also be stated settling in Havana has often been an economical decision for many due to the lack of monetary means. Although Havana's environment is not smooth, most youth claimed to enjoy a firm sense of community and have many friends in the area. On the technological side all youth participants in our project had access or owned a cell-phone, ranging from simple Nokia ones to smartphones. Many youth also hold Facebook accounts they use when they have access to the Internet, one of the more expensive commodities in Namibia. Ultimately, such description of Havana resembles in many ways the situation in some Kenyan slums as reported by Wyche (2015).

## **Promoting Entrepreneurship in Havana**

As part of a two-year community outreach R&D project, we have investigated participatory approaches to engage marginalized youth into conceptualizing their own environments –gaining skills and ultimately deriving this into sustainable career pathways. This paper reports and reflects on an intervention recently concluded with a group of youth in Havana. A novel and innovative technique inspired by the American reality-TV show “The Apprentice”, “The Havana Entrepreneur”, has been conceptualized and deployed as recounted below.

### **Project History**

Concerned with the scarcity of local capacity in the field of Information Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D), and promoting principles of participatory design as a promising approach to empower marginalized youth, in October 2014 we conducted an international two-week intensive course under a North-South-South project funded by the Finnish Foreign Ministry in Windhoek. The main purpose of this course was to equip students with skills and responsibilities of a technology designer working with local communities, thereby building local and international capacity for ICT4D. The programme, entitled UFISA (User-centred design for Innovative Services and Applications), facilitated the development of joint education between universities in Southern Africa and Finland (Kujanpää, 2014) via six core partners, three from Africa (i.e. Namibia, South Africa, Botswana) and three from Finland. Activities carried out by this partnership circulated around a multi-disciplinary area of education and development that employs User-Centred Design (UCD) to develop ICT community services. The overall object and aim of the project were to provide intensive education tutorials meant to help participants identifying a problem in a given context, while working towards a sustainable plan of action. Such plan included steps on either how to solve the problem or how to alleviate the effects of the identified problem. This project continues being developed at present, and the imminent steps are highlighted in the concluding section of this manuscript.

The community selected were youth associated with the Kabila Centre, run by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Namibia (ELCIN) under the City programme that aims at empowering Communities. The centre, supporting different community activities related to the church as well as a kindergarten, has over the years received a number of funding from different donors. Among others long term support got provided by the Finnish Embassy in Windhoek under the local

collaboration funds. Thus through the involvement of Finnish colleagues as part of the UFISA course, the relation between the NUST and the Kabila Centre was established.

UFISA students got first introduced to Havana's youth to exploring their socio-economic defies. As a result the issue of unemployment got extrapolated. Students went on proposing a potential number of ways to tackle unemployment for the youth in Havana. The initial idea sparked in the form of planning a community centre that could, in turn, become self-sustainable, and that would disseminate specific information to youth that, otherwise, they currently have not an access to. The centre would also provide jobs to some of the youth, as it will require a team to manage it, and to acquire and manage projects positively benefiting youth and the Havana community at large. A number of technology driven solutions were proposed too such as a mobile job-matching system. In addition, the project evolved into the need of developing entrepreneurial skills amid the youth via involving them in some challenges as reported herein. In turn the youth have progressively and extensively engaged in activities allowing them to plan, strategize and work together towards a common goal of community betterment and personal growth.

Having successfully completed the course, and with a steep learning curve for all the students, many expectations were created among the community members (Mushiba et al., 2015). Based on moral and ethical grounds, the researchers from the Department of Computer Science of the Faculty of Computing and Informatics at NUST continued with the project beyond the course. A number of workshops to establish the youth's context were thus conducted such as *Walking Havana*, *Contextual Mapping*, *User-Created Personas* and technology demos (Winschiers-Theophilus et al. 2015, Cabrero et al. 2015). Such workshops got carried out with the Havana youth, as well as some of the students at NUST that, at the time, studied toward their undergraduate and Honours degrees. All activities were and are funded under a bilateral grant administered by the National Commission of Research, Science and Technology (NCRST). The latter is particularly concerned with Research and Innovation contributing to the National Development Goals.

## **“The Havana Entrepreneur” a challenge-based approach**

The Havana Entrepreneur is a novel intervention whereby a group of marginalized youth from Havana community competed in challenges that promote their entrepreneurial spirit and encourage social innovation, community work and reflections in hindsight. Participants were grouped in two equally numbered clusters for each challenge. Each group had one person dedicated to record all activities with a camcorder provided by NUST. Basic camera training was provided aiming to producing a reality TV-show agreed upon by all participants from the outset.

### **Structure**

The format was identical for all challenges, namely:

Groups got provided 45-minute slots to discuss the one challenge at hand. This was done so that they strategize and delegate tasks to each other in preparation for a successful execution. This also gave them a chance to ask the facilitators questions regarding the challenge at hand.

A week later the groups got 2 hours to complete each specific challenge. Group then presented their results to a panel of judges. The later consisted of facilitators, one community member and guest students. After such presentations judges prompted the groups for more details and gave advises according to what got presented and achieved. Depending on the challenge, certain criteria were judged on individual score sheets. These were later averaged to determine the winning group. After the announcement of the winner a general open reflection and a discussion were carried out. Then each group got requested to choose a member of the group to be sent to the other group. This held the purpose of refreshing group's constellation but not in its entirety.

The next challenge was then announced and the process started all over again as above.

## **Challenges**

The following four challenges were identified and run distributed over a number of weeks.

- 1) Developing a business plan for the community centre;
- 2) Selling second-hand clothes in the vicinity;
- 3) Manufacturing products out of recycled material;
- 4) Taking tourists on a tour through Havana.

### **Challenge 1: Developing a business plan for their community center**

In teams, participants were proposed to draw up a business plan that would address previously identified needs in the community. Template documents were provided by facilitators to act as guidance for participants in creating their business plans. The groups were given an opportunity to present these to the panel and other participants. Presentations were proposed to aim at strengthening their presentation skills for future occasions, while the score cards used evaluated the following: Innovation, Teamwork, and Presentation, Entrepreneurial and Financial skills.

A rather basic business plan was accepted form both teams, though these were later altered into professional ones after completion of the Havana Entrepreneur Challenges.

This challenge redirected participant's thinking out of their comfort zones and provoked critical thinking toward developing a business plan that is best suited for a community centre. With that, participants were able to be created and plan for a center that is self-sustaining and beneficial to the community at large. In the process participants learned that working together as a team, though with different backgrounds, allows them relating to each other via common challenges. Such relationships aided them thinking of the outcome of the process to be a common solution.

### **Challenge 2: Selling second-hand clothes in the vicinity**

Back again in teams participants were provided with a bag of 20 second-hand and a few new clothing and shoe items. Both bags were pre-sorted by the facilitators to ensure they contained equal items (e.g. a pair of jeans in each bag) and equal quality of items. A fee of N\$10 was requested to be paid back to the previous owner of the clothes. Aside that the participants could allocate any prices they liked to the clothes. The teams were then asked to strategize on how and where best to sell those items, and with the highest profit margin.

On the selling day teams got given 2-3 hours to sell the items. Each team was accompanied by a facilitator. The judging panel used a score card made up of the following categories: Marketing Strategy, Teamwork, Sales & Finances, Innovation, Creativity and Reflections.

Despite their ideas were not actually visible in the planning of the selling of the clothes, these became noticeable as they started selling the items. Eventually a group managed to make a good profit, while the other group struggled to the point of making a loss. Participants learned a good lesson in having a good and innovative strategic and marketing plan beforehand.

### **Challenge 3: Manufacturing products out of recycled material**

Participants got requested to come to this next session with wasted products findable in the community so as to recycle them to creating products that could either be used in their community's kindergarten at the Kabila Centre or that they could sell. Facilitators provided sample images from the Internet of products created from recycled materials. This aimed to offer ideas of what they could produce. Examples were stationary holders made out of old cans, candle holders out of bottles or abacuses out of old bottle tops. On strategizing the production process teams put together a list of materials needed such as glue, crayons, needles, etc.

In production the teams got time to prototype their ideas with materials they had brought along. Teams then presented their products to the judges and were scored according to the following: Innovation & Creativity, Teamwork, Products, Planning and also Motivation.

The images initially presented by the facilitators inspired participants to make creative designs out of recycled resources. They were so inspired by such challenge that they decided to always consider making something useful out of recyclables and not discard them as pure waste.

### **Challenge 4: Taking tourists on a tour through Havana**

Participants were requested to design a touristic tour through Havana, thinking which way to walk and what to show their clients. The tour was planned towards a one hour walk. Participants got assistance from volunteers familiar with Microsoft Publisher to designing a flyer for the tour to then be provided to the tourists for advertisement and promotion.

"Tourists" were recruited among visiting overseas scholars to, and staff members from NUST who had not been to Havana before. A total of 8 tourists were distributed over the two groups and each was charged N\$50. Each team got a set of T-shirts of the same colour to be easily identifiable during the tour. At the end tourists got questionnaires to evaluate the experience.

The tourists highly appreciated the tours, as they were a true representation of the community and their surroundings. On their part, the teams ensured their strategy was innovative enough as opposed to the professional tours organised by the tour companies. They learned they can actually make money with such tours to generate income in the hope to improve their lives.

## **Results**

To establish a team spirit groups were requested to jointly decide on a team name. A group called themselves by an indigenous name “Pondjilwa peendwa”, which in Oshivambo means “finally there is light at the end of the tunnel”; the other group named themselves “We unite”.

### **Challenge 1 – Developing a business plan for their Community Centre**

A group consisted of a number of older and more experienced members, compared to the other group, which consisted younger participants with no business experience. Thus, the former group held an idea of what a business plan entailed, and delivered a detailed plan. Both business plans, though, fell short on the financial aspects such as in stating a start-up capital and how their business will make profit, as well as self-sustainability in the long run. After the judges questioned their business models both groups came up with similar ideas as to provide curriculum vitae typing and printing and photocopying services for the community.

The members of the group that lost the challenge expressed shame (to the point that they wanted the recordings to be deleted) and disappointment, though they turned these feelings into a competitive motivation which was clearly experienced throughout the next challenges.

### **Challenge 2 – Selling second-hand clothes in the vicinity**

Both groups were encouraged to come up with a marketing plan and pricing strategy to sell the clothes and to encourage them to utilise their promotional skills. Both groups showed a lot of enthusiasm for this challenge, to the point they were most interested in buying the clothes themselves than in selling them. The groups ultimately focused more on pricing rather than thinking ways to promote and sell the clothes. Thus in the strategic meeting they went through all the clothes, made a list, and attached a selling price to each of the items.

On the selling day it became evident groups have not prepared to market their products. As such they spontaneously went around the area selling their clothes. The one group recorded a substantial sale, even though they encountered resistance in several occasions because they were accompanied by a “white facilitator”, believed to be a priest and taking advantage of the participants. This team was very persuasive and verbally eloquent, thereby able to sell. The other group, though, as analysed from the videos recorded on the day, they deviated from the challenge, which may be the reason why such group achieved an insignificant sale, a loss.

Younger participants eventually realised how they undermined marketing as being paramount, while others expressed they learned how to communicate with potential clients, and how easy it is to make some money this way. They though admitted they were ill-prepared and that next time they would advertise better and stay at one spot while focus in selling throughout.

### **Challenge 3 - Manufacturing products out of recycled material**

In the preparation stages participants grasped the idea of developing recycled useful products. The recycling task allowed them to collaborate as a group by planning what materials they would create out of the ones initially thought-of and collected. Furthermore, on the production day they

came well prepared with materials such as newspapers, light bulbs, plastic bags and bottles, aluminium cans, cardboard and juice boxes, and old pen barrels.

Each group used the materials collected to make various objects. Thus they showed creativity and personal skill designing objects that could be used in every day life. As an instance, one group assembled a light bulb holder out of a juice box, a jewelry box out of newspapers, necklaces from intertwined plastic, string and newspapers, and a blind made out of pen barrels.

Participants though stated they had no awareness of the creativity they possessed before completing this task. They hence claimed recycling materials had boosted their confidence in their ability to be creative and enterprenurial. They saw the usefulness of the recycled material and vowed to continue in this regards because of the evidence in the products manufactured.

#### **Challenge 4 - Taking tourists on a tour through Havana**

Participants were excited about planning the tour and brainstormed what they would showcase. A group emphasized on the infrastructural side in attempting to show the hardship in Havana; the other looked at a more entertaining tour through bars and including traditional food tasting.

Participants prepared the tour the week before by designing marketing brochures representing sites they intended to take their visitors to. Tour preparations allowed them to develop and improve their ability to plan the task as a group. By designing their own brochures, their creative and interpersonal skills as a group emerged. They moreover planned where they intended to take their tourists, especially considered the security aspects of the route. This showed initiative and creative thinking as paramount skills associated with successful entrepreneurship.

On the day participants first prepared the tourists by instructing them on specific rules they were to follow such as not carrying laptops or any other valuables. The tour guides felt confident before, during, and after their tours. They used camcorders and still cameras to capture the tour with confidence, displaying their practical learnt skills in operating technologies.

The youth noted how this challenge had opened-up their minds to the various entrepreneur ventures they could embark upon to improve their livelihood, while the money earned was ultimately distributed equally among the group members. They also stated having enjoyed mingling with overseas people and were much at ease in their communication. The tourists mostly enjoyed the authenticity of the tours not being overly professional and organized, but including lively surprises from the street of Havana as they walked about.

#### **The Aftermath of the Havana Entrepreneur**

Once the four challenges got completed, participants expressed eagerness to attending more training sessions, especially on communication, technology, leadership, and on writing business plans. As such participants got invited to a special ideation workshop on business plan creations at RLabs, and as a result they developed a new version of the plan for the community centre.

Meanwhile, some participants together with professional filmmakers prepared a trailer from the recordings shot during each session. This got screened at the Youth Day celebrations, while it is

also intended to be pitched to the National TV station (i.e. NBC) as a full TV-series produced by the Havana youth community. The Youth Day attracted interested stakeholders, among others a local company selling small scale solar panels who begun a collaboration with the youth in Havana selling such solar products.

End of 2015, NUST received 1.6 Mio N\$ from the Embassy of Finland to expand its RLabs project into Havana. While the focus in the past was mainly on providing trainings to the youth, RLabs Namibia will now both, expand its scope and develop income generating activities for the youth: a youth café will hence be constructed in Havana; IT-services will be developed to give the youth a platform to market themselves and their skills and community projects; and a 'job factory' will be established to allow youth to work on specific projects and receive remuneration according to their involvement. RLabs Namibia will furthermore move from a mere project to an independent Section 21 (NGO), which is intended to become self-sustainable in the long run.

The formal collaboration between university, government, industry partners and the community is the foundation for a long-term joint venture combining the different expectations of partakers: The University with a primary aim of capacity building and knowledge creation, the government looking to reduce youth unemployment, industry partners exploring new markets, and the community continuously striving to better their living conditions and sustain livelihoods. The numerous entrepreneurial training institutes are to be integrated closely into this multi-stakeholder initiative and to adapt their programmes and business models accordingly.

### **A Brief Reflection**

We believe the Havana Entrepreneur approach has proven successful in this setting and that a continuation is required both, to keep asserting our observations on results and to be able to confirm this mode and current approach as a formalised method for other settings to deploy.

As the groups progressed in the challenges, they gradually gained confidence and talents. This got especially demonstrated during the reflections after the challenges' presentations, where participants were extremely eloquent throughout, and where they also stated to have learned to sell their products or services at their best. In terms of preparedness, the days of the recycling production and for the tour were the only days that participants were well prepared in advance.

All participants expressed deep gratitude and enjoyment in that they had the opportunity to be part of this 'amazing' experience. They hoped other community members could get equal chances to go through such a programme. They all also stated they have got some business ideas they would like to explore in further detail in the imminent future. It is thus important that existing training institutes support further skill developments.

Contributing key factors to make us believe in these successes, though, come from the real life set-ups were participants got immediate rewards either monetary or as credited in dormant skills. Since Havana communities are Ubuntu-based, and although the Havana Entrepreneur approach was set-up in a competitive manner, participants valued team and common learning efforts far more than the winning or losing game per-se. Most youth groups we have and do work with in Windhoek and surroundings, are generally and continuously apprehensive to their fellow youth

as much as to themselves, and how to, for instance, inform others on the opportunities they got in working with us. Thus, further information sessions with the community are being planned at this point in time.

Working through the challenges with the youth we observed a number of possible improvements, especially on the usage of technologies to support marketing, promotion and customer services. On the other hand, this intervention has not created new dependencies as we have experienced in some of our technology development projects. Thus a well-balanced intervention needs to be planned to ensuring maximising available resources that produce opportunities for further improvements over time.

## Conclusion

The Havana Entrepreneur approach revealed promising results as for youth empowerment, awakening entrepreneurial spirit, and in sparking innovation and opportunity. This entices us to keep working in the ensuing phases of the project providing to expectations of all partakers, and to finally find if this approach can become a customary method in ICT4D that not only becomes popular in informal settlements nationwide, but also exemplar in further countries and milieus. The confidence, realisation and skills gained by the youth, encourages us to launch into the next phase, namely the Havana “digital” Entrepreneur. We must however be wary in regards to innovative ideas, concepts and products or services regarding their ultimate self-sustainability by and in the community. Towards this it must be said we are concocting an ensuing plan that not only keeps integrating the youth from Havana in further participatory activity, but that also provides them with means by which they can make a living, thus engage even further in the venturing and upcoming steps. In this regard training institutes and other youth entrepreneurship services play a fundamental role in supporting the continuation and implementation of novice entrepreneurs’ endeavours. Thus a multi-stakeholder programme will be devised and coordinated by RLabs.

Eventually we see this project as having produced a spark of hope in the Havana youth communities in that they have been provided with an opportunity to shine by themselves, while organising their future actions and the tackling of further stakeholders such as local politicians.

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