

VENDORS WITH DISABILITY, ACTION FOR DEVELOPMENT REFORM



20 – 21 MAY 2019

With the support of:



ABBREVIATIONS

CoW	City of Windhoek
TM	Tuuthikeni Market
VISET	Vendors Initiative for Social and Economic Transformation

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1. Executive Summary

Global experience has shown that a number of countries are continuously seeking to eliminate any form of injustice or discrimination in their communities. There is increased emphasis on the need to promote and respect human rights. This includes protecting the rights of the vulnerable members of our community, through a number of interventions. Subsequently, Governments and civil society have joined hands in the endeavour to protect the vulnerable persons.

In Namibia, Tuuthikeni Market (TM) provides opportunity to informal traders to display and trade in various goods and services at prime locations in a cost-effective way.

Recently, TM has sought to expand its reach through the empowerment of the disabled vendors. This was in recognition of the various challenges facing disabled vendors operating in the TM flea market, as well as around the city of Windhoek. This report outlines the objectives and outcomes of a recently (20th - 21st May 2019) held workshop in Windhoek on **'Vendors with Disability Action for Development Reform'**. The challenges identified are primarily based on the discussions held with vendors with disabilities. TM subsequently recommended short-term feasible solutions for policy makers to consider. The envisaged goal of this endeavour is to contribute in developing Windhoek into a more inclusive city.

2. About the Partners

2.1 Tuuthikeni Market

Tuuthikeni Market was founded in 2010 in Windhoek with the aim of promoting and showcasing innovative small business start-ups in Namibia, to enhance residents' participation to help build economic and social capital. The founder, Ms. Luise Mwanyangapo, is a recipient of the 2018 prestigious Mandela Washington Fellowship, where she represented Namibia under the Business and Entrepreneurship Track at Clark Atlanta University, USA. The Vendors with Disability Action for Development Reform workshop is a product of the sponsorship proceeds she has to continue with her community engagement initiatives.

2.2 Vendors Initiative for social Economic Transformation (VISET)

Vendors Initiative for Social and Economic Transformation (**VISET**) is a union of vendors with structures throughout Zimbabwe. The organization was formed in 2015 to spearhead the social and economic transformation of street vendors by championing their quest to earn livelihoods in the current harsh economic circumstances. Furthermore, the organization was formed pursuant to the need for a solidarity centre for street vendors who continue to be victims of human rights violations. The organization has a national membership database of over 68 000 vendors located in all major cities, towns and growth points in Zimbabwe. Mr. Edward Kapodogo, the Senior Programs Officer represented it. VISET shared its experiences from Zimbabwe, as well as participating in the formulation of the way forward in Namibia. Edward is also a recipient of the prestigious Mandela Washington Fellowship (2018) where he represented Zimbabwe under the Civic Leadership at Drexel University, USA.

3. Workshop Objectives

In cognisance of the various challenges facing the various stakeholders, the Workshop objectives were framed as follows;

- I. To identify challenges faced by vendors with disabilities operating in the informal sector.
- II. To review the legal and policy frameworks governing the informal sector in Windhoek.
- III. To determine the type and level of support made available to informal traders by the City of Windhoek.
- IV. To deliberate on the role of various stakeholders in the advancement of the interests of vendors with disabilities.

The aforementioned objectives provided the foundation of the discussions during the course of the workshop. The discussions culminated in the realisation of the broader objective, which is the;

- *Development of a report highlighting the plight of vendors with disabilities & recommendations for CoW to incorporate into their strategic planning for street traders.*

4. Informal Business Sector in Namibia: An Overview

The Namibia Statistics Agency 2018¹ labour force survey (LFS) states that 57.7% of employed people in Namibia are in the informal sector. This was down from the 67% figure found by the same survey in 2016. Nevertheless, it is inarguable that the informal sector still plays a critical role in job creation and poverty alleviation in Namibia. It is worth noting that, of the respondents who were economically inactive, 10.5% of them attributed their inactivity due to disabilities.

5. Current Status of Disabilities in Namibia

According to the Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA) report (based on the 2011 census), there were about 98 413 recorded as having disabilities in Namibia. These findings are backed by the 2016 Namibia Inter-Censal Demographic Survey Report, which indicates that People with Disabilities make up 4.7% (translating to over 100 000 people) of the population. According to the NSA report, the highest proportion of females that was disabled were the visually impaired, while for males' physical impairment of lower limbs was the most prevalent form of disability. Overall, in terms of the prevalence of types of disability, physical impairment, that is, of lower limbs, was the most common type of disability. 22.6% of people with disabilities had a physical impairment disability.

¹ https://d3rp5jat0m3eyn.cloudfront.net/cms/assets/documents/Labour_Force_Survey_final_-_2018.pdf

The number of persons with disabilities in the Khomas region has increased by up to 45%², this figure has the potential to increase as not every individual is born with a disability. Undoubtedly, the region's status as the economic hub of Namibia is drawing more people seeking better opportunities. The NSA report indicated that Khomas region has the highest net migration rate (of the disabled) with a 45% percent inflow of persons with disabilities. Consequently, this necessitates a change in policies and structures of the national/regional capital, that is, Windhoek, to be more inclusive of this marginalised and disadvantaged population demographic.

6. Government Policy

The empowerment and capacitation of the disabled is a human right, and the Namibian government has acknowledged this fact. The establishment of the Office of Disability Affairs has further highlighted the intention of the Namibian government to empower disabled citizenry.

On the 4th of December, 2007, Namibia also ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) which is the only UN human rights instrument with an explicit sustainable development dimension.

Furthermore, the Namibian government established the National Disability Council of Namibia (NDCN) in 2008 by an act of Parliament (Act No. 26 of 2008). The mandate of the NDCN includes the monitoring of the National Policy on Disability.

7. Challenges Faced by Vendors with Disabilities

Small Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) have been identified as the primary job creators in most countries. However, in Namibia, as in many countries, the failure rates of SMMEs is unacceptably high. Among the problems faced by SMMEs in Namibia are;

- High crime rates
- Lack of access to land
- High taxes and levies
- Poor vocational skills
- High costs of utilities
- Lack of access to essential information
- Inability to meet international standards to penetrate the retail market locally and internationally
- Limited access to financial support to enable business growth
- The existing infrastructure are not user friendly to vendors with disabilities
- Current by-laws being outdated and restrictive
- Communication challenges (for the visually and hearing impaired).

During the workshop, it became apparent that the abovementioned challenges are still prevalent among vendors. The structural hindrances in society further compound the

² http://cms.my.na/assets/documents/Namibia_2011_Disability_Report.pdf

challenges faced by disabled SMME owners. As mentioned above, lack of skills is one of the main challenges facing SMME business operators. A significant population of the disabled in Namibia do not have access to education, let alone quality education, thus compounding their career challenges.

8. Support Programmes in Place

Since independence, the City of Windhoek (CoW) has invested over N\$16 million in the development of the informal markets. However, there is a vacuity of policies that specifically target the disabled citizens of the city involved in the informal sector. Nevertheless, among the Strategic Objectives outlined in the city's Transformational Strategic Plan (2017-2022), the disabled are mentioned as a priority for the city. The Strategic Objective reads as follows;

“EMPOWERMENT OF YOUTH, ORPHANS and VULNERABLE PERSONS”

“This objective focuses on the socio-economic empowerment of youth, orphans and vulnerable persons including people living with disabilities”

Whilst the abovementioned objective is commendable, the challenges discussed in the next section suggest that there is a gap between the aforementioned objective and the everyday reality facing vendors with disabilities.

9. Remedial Strategies: Based on Workshop Deliberations

The challenges facing the disabled vendors as identified by delegates are outlined below;

- **Marketing and visibility**

Some delegates indicated that CoW did not do enough in promoting their open markets on their platforms (other than naming them they are not visible to appeal to tourism or encouraging the local community to purchase / consume local goods).

TM Recommendation: CoW should make use of its website to promote open markets better and engage with tour operators. They could also facilitate this by advertising the open markets through their tourism information centre and consider innovative design concepts for future open market/incubation structures in Windhoek.

- **Monitoring of incubators**

During the deliberations held, the issue of poor sanitary conditions at the incubators was repeatedly highlighted.

TM Recommendation: CoW should send out health inspectors at least once a month to ensure their establishments are clean, well maintained and ensure that traders/vendors are selling goods that will not risk the health of customers who

purchase from them (this will facilitate the ease of promoting open markets and alleviate fears of customers buying from people with a disability).

There is a general understanding that there is a shortage of health inspectors at CoW, however this importance can not be stressed enough.

The ablution facilities are usually never clean or working properly, this makes it difficult for vendors and even disabled patrons to make use of, taking into consideration that some ablution facilities at incubators are not disability friendly.

- **Consideration of the visually impaired group**

The CoW website was identified as not being user friendly for the visually impaired.

TM Recommendation: The promotion of audio material on the CoW website was highlighted as a necessity. Delegates also suggested that water bills, newsletters and other information that is accessible from CoW be made available/accessible in braille. Earlier in the report, it was mentioned that visual impairment was the most common form of impairment among females. In cognisance of this fact, the need for braille and audio content cannot be overstated.

- **Consideration for the hearing impaired**

In public hospitals, critical patients sometimes lose their lives because hospital staff are not able to communicate with the disabled, particularly the speech impaired who can only communicate through sign language.

TM Recommendation: CoW should also provide better access to information e.g. having sign language interpreters within the CoW departments to assist with queries or information.

- **Wheelchair users**

Delegates discussed how the group (disabled) struggles with putting wheelchairs on taxis/buses or accessing stores. A suggestion was put forward that special transport (the new 'Move Windhoek' buses) or taxis be assigned/marked to cater for disabled persons on the road. This can also be a joint initiative with the Ministry of Transport.

Wheelchair users expressed difficulties when using public transport or patronising shopping centres.

TM Recommendation: the city should explore the possibility of availing special taxis or sufficient public transport that is user-friendly for the disabled. This objective is also highlighted in the Strategic Plan 2017-2022. Hence it is critical that implementation of this initiative is prioritised. Regarding vending centres, we recommend that by-laws are enacted and effected that compel all public buildings to be accommodative of people with special needs.

In 2016, it was reported that about only 40%³ of city owned infrastructure was inclusive of people living with disabilities.

- **Accessibility of infrastructure (general)**

TM Recommendation: Increase disabled friendly facilities such as sidewalks. Benchmark with cities such as Amsterdam, Seattle, Washington DC, which are regarded as among the most “disability-friendly” cities in the world. TM further recommends closely studying Tucson’s (in the United States of America) Sun Van Paratransit System, a dedicated transportation service for individuals with disabilities.

- **Employment**

Disabled people in the city tend to be disadvantaged when it comes to employment opportunities.

TM Recommendations: CoW should strive to become an employer of people with disabilities e.g. CoW could compel all open market traders to contribute N\$1 a month which could be used to pay the salary of someone to keep the designated vending stations clean. Calculations will be dependent on how many market traders there are and what the acceptable earning would be for the potential employee. Furthermore, the city may use rebates to encourage corporations domiciled in Windhoek to employ the disabled. Finally, entrepreneurs with disabilities should be made aware of training programmes such as the Entrepreneurship Training programme that is offered by the Centre for Enterprise Development (CED) at the Namibia University of Science and Technology. An agreement was signed between CED and the National Disability Council of Namibia in 2014 to train people with disabilities. This can be communicated through the various disability associations to save on advertising costs through the media.

- **Harassment and Discrimination Against Street Vendors with Disabilities**

Discrimination is still a huge factor, as some do not accept people with disabilities.

TM Recommendations: CoW should engage in sustained awareness campaigns to change negative attitudes and stereotypes towards persons with disabilities.

- **Rentals**

High rental prices are a challenge to rent a business place.

TM Recommendation: CoW should consider rebates (or any incentives) for the disabled vendors to encourage entrepreneurship. The economic empowerment of

³ <https://www.thevillager.com.na/articles/10796/city-buildings-not-accessible-for-physically-disabled/>

the disabled could potentially reduce the medical burden that could be faced by government.

However, accessibility of land/space is a problem⁴ that has persisted, and it is critical that the city creates zones or incentives that could empower vendors with disabilities to access land. The city has previously pledged to ensure that land is allocated to this population demographic, although there is no evident progress in this regard. Legislation must also be enacted to avoid fronting⁵.

- **Applications Forms Need Revision**

CoW application forms do not take people with a disability into consideration, as they neglect to ask respondents to state any disability when applying for stall space or incubation space.

TM Recommendation: Revise forms to make them more inclusive. This would undoubtedly increase access to information, and allow CoW to have a more informed view of the vendor demographics.

- **High crime rates**

The high crime rate was an issue of concern to the delegates. As indicated earlier in this report, the high crime rate is one of the major concerns facing SMMEs in general. The disabled, particularly the visually impaired, easily fall victim to petty criminals. As previously stated, high crime rates continue to impede the growth of a vibrant SMME sector.

TM Recommendations: CCTV is recommended so as to dissuade would be criminals from taking advantage of the disabled. Furthermore, increasing the visibility of city police in the vending areas would reduce incidents of crime.

- **Review of City Bylaws**

CoW does not have a representative from any disability group when reviewing the city bylaws, this ultimately excludes them from important decision making processes that affect their day-to-day operations as SMMEs.

TM Recommendation: CoW should engage vendors/traders during these reviews to ensure all voices are heard and a general consensus is met around decisions that affect traders/vendors.

At the conclusion of the Vendors with Disability Action for Development Reform workshop, TM set up a committee that is put forward to be part of the review committee of the city bylaws. The committee is composed of the following members:

⁴ <https://www.namibian.com.na/156341/archive-read/Disabled-group-begs-City-of-Windhoek-for-land>

⁵ <https://www.nbc.na/news/windhoek-residents-use-people-disabilities-get-land.18611>

1. Isaak Murakwanii
2. Nixon Mumanava
3. Pelgrina Ndumba
4. Liina Angomba
5. Lukas Amakali
6. Eben Hardripunda
7. Linea Petrus
8. Eliphaz Edward

A joint committee that is inclusive of all stakeholders is thus a necessity. As stated in the CoW strategic plan, there is a need for citizen participation and inclusion in such endeavours of national interest.

- **Engagement with street trader associations**

Namibia currently does not have strong associations that represent the interests of street traders/vendors, let alone those with disability. It is therefore pertinent that CoW keep the doors of engagement open as they have by participating in this workshop titled “**Vendors with Disability Action for Development Reform**”.

10. The Way Forward

To map the way forward, the workshop participants made various commitments and pledges, as outlined below;

- I. A steering committee was established. It is proposed that the committee be expanded to be inclusive of other stakeholders.
- II. The CoW pledged to work with vendors with disabilities when reviewing by-laws, of which some have been identified as being too restrictive.
- III. The Deputy Minister for Disability Affairs pledged to support initiatives for vendors with disabilities as well as leading the goal of developing enabling policies governing the informal sector
- IV. Participants agreed to hold periodic meetings to discuss any issues affecting the sector.
- V. Participants pledged to engage responsible authorities on issues affecting vendors as they engage in entrepreneurial activities
- VI. It was agreed that there is a need to engage in exchange programmes with other informal sector players in the SADC region so as to help promote transformation and growth of vendors into viable small to medium enterprise at the same time contributing to national development.

As with any programme, the key to success is follow-up. The implementation of the above plans would contribute towards the realisation of vision 2030 and the Harambee Prosperity Plan. Vendors with disabilities are an important resource that could be harnessed to ensure that the above goals don't just remain a mirage. Whilst in many African countries there are favourable policy frameworks geared towards the empowerment of persons with disabilities, meaningful change is lacking. It is important therefore, to ensure that Namibia does not become a statistic, a country which is

signatory to many policies aimed at advancing the needs of persons with disabilities, without any tangible implementation results.

10.1 Revision of Regulations

It is apparent that the majority of challenges identified by participants are centred around the scope and implementation of CoW regulations. Consequently, there is a necessity to address the shortcomings of the existing by-laws, and revisions be made where necessary.

Furthermore, it is clear that there is a gap between policy and implementation. Hence CoW is encouraged to consider its obligations as articulated in the policy documents, and ensure that all commitments made by CoW are honoured. Specific reference was made to the following;

- I. Vendors with disabilities call upon CoW to identify them as a unique demographic, rather than the generic “vulnerable persons” category. This is to ensure that their unique needs are properly addressed.
- II. Regulations regarding open markets/incubations are not comprehensive enough. CoW needs to consult vendors with disabilities so as to enact more inclusive legislation.
- III. Ensure the development of legislation that compels all commercial property owners (both private and public) to ensure that their facilities are user friendly for all demographics.

10.2 The Inclusive Cities Design Model

The inclusive cities framework should guide planning the operations of the city if Windhoek is to be truly responsive to the needs of all its citizens. The inclusive cities initiative is a participatory design model that brings together key stakeholders in the informal economy ecosystem to produce innovative and sustainable alternative modern inclusive city designs, which address informal sector challenges (including street vending) while conforming to urban standards and not depriving others of the right to the city’s infrastructure. As such, the initiative is part of a continuous process to continued diagnosis of causal and effect of the informal economy while promoting collaborative actions between citizens and CoW office bearers to ensure inclusive planning that supports local economic development of Windhoek.

The inclusive cities model seeks to work closely with local authorities to ensure the inclusion of the informal economy in city planning and design so that the needs and requirements of the various informal sector actors are taken into consideration. The model also addresses; knowledge gaps on inclusive city planning and designing and exclusion of the Informal sector actors especially persons with disabilities, women and youth who constitute the majority of informal sector traders.

11. Conclusion

Literature is awash with studies that demonstrate the value of SMMEs to the socio-economic development of countries. Countries such as India, China, South Korea and Malaysia grew their economies through a vibrant SMME sector. However, SMMEs also have a high job destruction rate, particularly in Namibia.

From the deliberations informing this report, it is evident that entrepreneurs face a number of challenges in the Namibian environment. These challenges are compounded for those who are living with disabilities. It is important for policy makers to commission further research on the challenges facing entrepreneurs living with disabilities, and, in partnership with academia, civic society, develop strategies to assist the aforementioned entrepreneurs. For instance, vendors need to be consulted and engaged in planning, designing and implementing projects.

The Deputy Minister, Honourable Alexia Manombe-Ncube also reiterated in her opening speech at the workshop that the inclusion and promotion of SMEs for all could serve as an instrument for financial development, economic advancement and also serve as an apparatus to tackle joblessness, destitution and crime prevention, provided that the necessary support systems are appropriately implemented.

The purpose of this report is to provide short term feasible suggestions and to stimulate debate and bring awareness to the double whammy facing entrepreneurs with disabilities. Tuuthikeni Market and VISET Zimbabwe are currently in the process of establishing a VISET Namibia chapter and develop a bigger regional network. It is hoped that this report will stimulate further engagement and relationship building with CoW. Once the chapter is fully established it will advance the interests of vendor's/street traders in Namibia.

12. Appendices



Fig 1. Restrooms at the Tutugeni Open Market in Okuryangava



Fig 2. Restrooms at the Tutugeni Open Market in Okuryangava



Fig 3. Leakages and running water from restrooms at the Tutungeni Open Market in Okuryangave



Fig 4. Open Market concept designs – Lyeeta Market, Okuryangava



Fig 5. Accessibility ramps at the Lyeeta Market, Okuryangava



Fig 6. Overcrowding at Tutugeni open market