

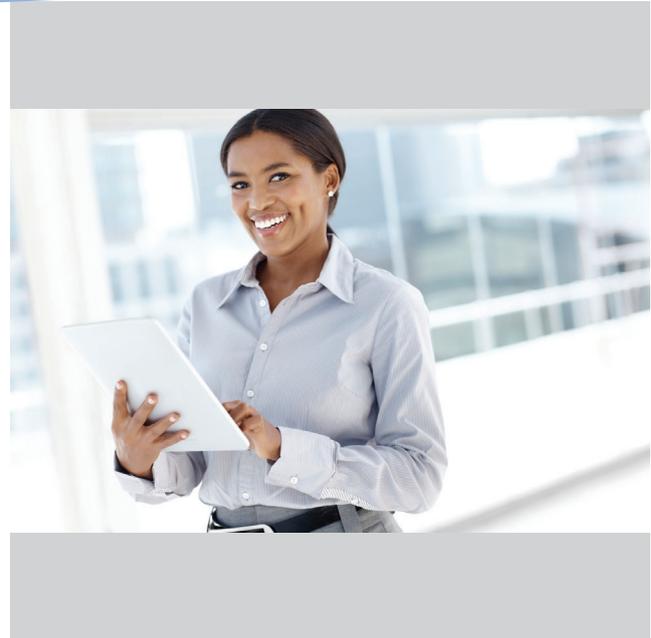
Entrepreneurial development for women in Namibia

Are you a self-employed Namibian woman? If you sometimes – or often – wish you had some support then this article should be an answer to your prayers. If you have never heard of the Women's Desk & Special Projects arm of the Namibian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, then today is your lucky day.

According to the Namibia 2011 Population and Housing Census Preliminary Results, 51% of the Namibian population are women. And yet the National Development Plan 4 notes, *"The Government is keenly aware that most of the unemployed are young people and women"*. The facts are thus that while the majority of Namibians are women, they remain poor and their participation in the social, cultural, economic and political life of the country remains limited. Equally sidelined are women entrepreneurs whose businesses struggle due to lack of capital and domination by men-owned and/or managed businesses.

The challenges faced by Namibian women entrepreneurs include a failure to match business opportunities with the necessary level of competency and technical skill, a lack of consumer market insight, as well as little knowledge of consumer trends. This means, while you are able to produce products of great value, you may lack business management skills, knowledge of registering your business, filing tax forms in order to benefit from these for your business, the ability to access available financial resources and many more valuable business skills that can take your financial position from surviving to growing a profit. They say most small and medium enterprises (SME) fail within the first three years. And many of those that don't fail merely struggle along.

Since 2012 the Women's Desk of the Chamber of Commerce has been working on growing rural women into better business owners by empowering them and increasing their opportunities to take part in mainstream business activities. With the help of the Finnish Tampere Women's Association 165 women entrepreneurs in the //Karas region have been trained in financial literacy, costing, pricing, budgeting, record keeping, planning, marketing, business coaching and mentorship. The results have been the development of better products, identification of new consumer markets, increase



in individual business incomes and enjoying better living conditions.

The Chamber would like to do this for more of our Namibian women. They have been working on creating sustainable infrastructure within which women enterprises are able to grow. The supports they are availing include scouting and business evaluation, business training, advisory services, coaching, mentorship, addressing industry specific gaps in training, re-evaluation and monitoring. The Women's Desk has not only thought of empowering the entrepreneur but has gone into dialogue with stakeholders to support and increase collaboration between government and the private sector in order for the economic system to better support women's businesses to grow sustainably. In the final instance they encourage and support women in establishing cooperatives. Cooperatives allow women who might have been isolated and who worked individually to now have the opportunity to band together and create "economies of scale" as well as increase their own bargaining power in the market.

Source: PowerPoint presentation by Joyce Mwangi Nauyoma at the First Annual Leadership Development For Women in Namibia Conference, held on 12-13 February 2014

For questions and guidance, please contact Joyce Mwangi Nauyoma at the Women's Desk & Special Projects of the Namibia Chamber of Commerce and Industry at: jmnauyoma@ncci.org.na