

# MAKING ACCESS REAL

**A journey to access financial  
freedom**

Kubatana Kwedu





**Title:** A journey to access financial freedom

**Organisation:** Kubatana Kwedu

**Country:** South Africa

**Date:** December 2017

### **Who are we?**

Kubatana Kwedu (KK) was established in January 2016 to address the issue of unemployment, and exclusion from employment opportunities, of young lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and other gender-diverse (LGBT+) South Africans. Its aim is to uplift the socio-economic status of its target group through entrepreneurship. It is a non-profit membership-based organisation working currently in the Johannesburg area. We have 50 members and 10 staff, most of whom are volunteers. They use social media platforms and word of mouth to get information about our organisation to the public.

### **What was the issue?**

As a direct result of sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination, young LGBT+ persons find it very difficult to access financial and economic resources and opportunities. Some have been denied, or lost, jobs; or have received discriminatory treatment within their work environment, because of their sexual orientation. Those who are artists or small manufacturers are excluded from mainstream

markets that offer small businesses an opportunity to display and sell their wares.

### **What was the change we wanted to see?**

We wanted to eradicate internalised stigma among our target group, and to shift the focus from sexuality towards financial and economic advancement. We wanted to create links between young LGBT+ people interested in business and entrepreneurship and other young people and business enthusiasts who do not identify as LGBT+. This would help to dispel the feeling of isolation often felt by young LGBT+ persons and to expose them to opportunities outside of their own circles. We also wanted to provide mental and emotional health support, as well as help people find ways to sustain themselves. Most of all, what we wanted to see was a focus on our common humanity – on what makes people similar, rather than the ways in which we are different.

### **What did we do?**

We thought about how best to create opportunities for the entrepreneurially minded, and decided to organise a “market day” that takes place monthly at Constitution Hill in Johannesburg. The stalls are provided and set up at no cost to the participants. This is an opportunity to showcase and sell their work and wares to the public, and get to know other business minded people in their community. We use our social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to get the information about the market out to the community, and we distribute

posters through other organisations that we work with, like the Coalition of African Lesbians (CAL) and the Ekurhuleni Pride Organising Committee (EPOC), to reach a wider audience. The participants are young LGBT+ people living in the Johannesburg area. Thus far they have been mostly craftspeople, and visual media artists.

### **What did we achieve?**

We were able to build a working partnership with Constitution Hill, involving free use of the venue for the market days. One unintended but positive consequence from this initiative has been a sense of community among those that attend. Furthermore, the Sowetan newspaper has featured the event on its front page, leading to increased visibility for the organisation and its work.

### **What were the key lessons learned?**

**Sustainability:** Operating without funding or consistent financial backing has made the work harder and slower, as people within the

organisation are not able to fully commit without compensation. An organisation cannot survive on the efforts of volunteers alone.

**Trust:** Buy in from our own constituents was critical to the success of the market day. They feared judgement and rejection, and so it took time to build relationships and inspire their confidence through our consistency. A programme cannot succeed without buy in from its intended beneficiaries.

**Communication:** Word of mouth is a very effective way of disseminating information.

**Collaboration:** Finding ways to work with those outside of the LGBT+ community is important, as it allows us to tap in to a wider support base.

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