



Newsletter

BUSINESS INCUBATION June 2020

Agri-Tech Solutions

This RSTP-UNDP initiative was supported by: Eswatini Water and Agricultural Development Enterprise; National Marketing Agricultural Board; Eswatini Cane Growers Association; and National Maize Corporation. There were six winning solutions presented by five start-ups.

- **Simple Books** - an android application that farmers access via a tablet in order to enter their financial transactions. Simple Books prepares the basic books of accounting prevents farmers from having inaccurate financial records by storing all data on the cloud.
- **MaxYield** - an android application that captures farming activities during the crop production lifecycle.
- **eSwazistore**- an android application and website which facilitates farmer listing, inventory tracking and payments.
- **SaveEasi**- a micro-lending system for members of cooperatives.
- **FarmEasi** - a web-based farm management system with inventory tracking and accounting.
- **Esiveni** - a mobile and cloud-based integrated solution that clients will access through an application, website, WhatsApp and USSD for viewing and paying for agricultural services & goods.



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Overview on Start-ups

The objectives of the RSTP's incubation program are to:

- Increase the proportion of locally generated innovations in the economy.
- Nurture local start-ups so that they survive and grow through the vulnerable early stages of development and become bankable and competitive businesses.
- Remove barriers to entrepreneurship, market access and innovation.

By June 2020, there were forty-two (40) incubated companies falling into five categories, namely: ICT; agriculture and food-

solutions; biotechnology; climate and environment solutions; and indigenous knowledge systems. These companies employ 190 people; 37% are women and 55% are youth. Eleven (11) of these companies with 79% and 32% of employees falling under the youth and women categories received seed capital from UNDP amounting to E1,485,000.00. These companies trade in climate and environment solutions and agricultural produce. Sixty percent (60% of the solutions have gone through the market validation stage and some are generating revenue. The remaining 40% of the solutions are still at prototype development stage.



Incubation Services

RSTP offers a differentiated incubation program to start-ups which is characterized by the following:

- Facilitation of product innovation – from prototype to certified product.
- Business development – improvement from pre-revenue stage to a viable business model, investor and financial sector readiness and market access.
- Intellectual property protection and technology transfer services.

RSTP provided the following services virtually due to the partial lockdown measures:-

- Capacity building & access to networks – RSTP provided two online training workshops and one-on-one advisory services.
- Business facilitation – RSTP assisted two companies to enter the municipality zones.
- Intellectual property protection and technology transfer services – RSTP advised start-ups on IP matters.
- Fundraising support – one start-up received support from RSTP and UNDP to access funding from the Industrial Development Company of Eswatini.



Capacity Building

Training workshop on Mental Health and Wellness 14 & 18 May 2020

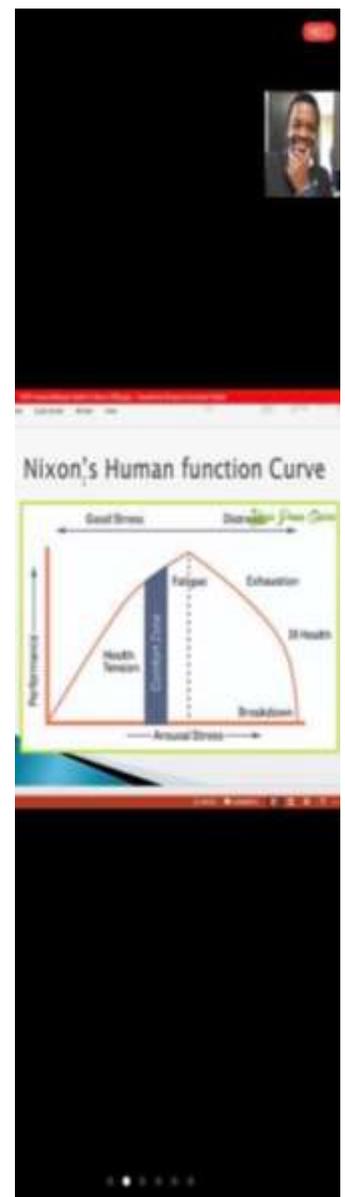
The impact of COVID-19 on small businesses is overwhelming and it is taking a toll on people's mental health. This necessitated this training workshop to: educate, increase knowledge pool and create awareness on mental health; provide professional expertise in demystifying common perceptions and views on mental health; and build capacity for one to be able to identify red flags for seeking professional help either for self or next person. The training covered the following topics:

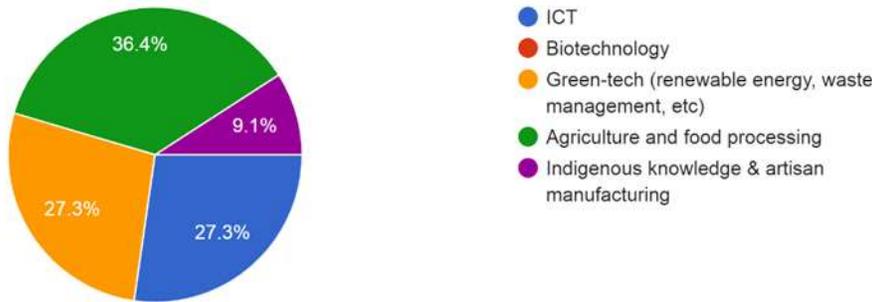
- Importance of mental wellness;
- Risks to mental wellness;
- Mental health and wellness in the workplace;
- Stress, depression; and Self-assessment.

Training workshop on Trademarks- 7 July 2020

Every business needs a competitive advantage in order to survive and grow in the marketplace. To obtain this competitive advantage, businesses can use trademarks. A trademark is a distinctive sign which identifies certain goods or services. Trademarks enable customers to recognize your products. The training was delivered by Gabsile Maseko-Gamedze who is a partner at Robinson Bertram. The training covered the following topics:

- Key terms in intellectual property law;
- Trademark proprietors;
- Rights of the proprietor and protection;
- Infringements and enforcement; and
- Filing of trademark application.





Pie chart showing the sectors of incubated startups

Survey Report

Small businesses and startups in Eswatini are facing a critical challenge. COVID-19 has disrupted the economy and is having a significant impact on startups and SME's in Eswatini. Considering the important role that businesses play in creating jobs, economic growth, development and prosperity, the Royal Science and technology Park (RSTP) conducted a survey in May to identify key challenges faced by startups resulting from COVID-19. A total of twenty two (22) valid survey responses were received from a wide variety of startups representing multiple industries.

Key outcomes of the survey are as follows:

- The most pressing challenge faced by startups is cash flow as 77% of the startups indicated a shortage in cash flows;

- Only 36% of the startups were operating as per their plans. Close to two-thirds of the startups were not operating as per their plans due to COVID-19 related problems such as reduced orders and instructions by authorities;
- 63.6% of the startups are facing a decline in revenues and 50% of the startups are facing a decline in orders-;
- Supply chains have been disrupted as 68% of startups indicated that they were unable to get the required material, goods or services to conduct day-to-day operations;
- Six startups, (27.2%) indicated that they were laying off staff in the short term as a measure to cope with the Covid-19 pandemic;
- A majority of the startups- are seeking advice with business continuity planning and business advice on diversification of products and sales channels, export and logistics restrictions and requirements and online business management training; and
- Half of the startups indicated that they would like the government to support them with personal protection equipment like masks and thermometers, access to cash and short term finance, legal advice on the application of labor laws and regulations during crisis and clarity on official measures to contain the crisis.



Next call for Proposal

The call will target Startups and SME's with solutions that solve problems in ICT, agriculture and food, biotechnology, health, green solutions and indigenous knowledge systems sectors. Applications will also be welcome from startups and SMEs with innovative solutions that tackle the Coronavirus outbreak. These solutions may fall into any of the following areas: -

- Finance.
- Agricultural unmanned technologies, automation, processing, climate responsive techniques or inputs, etc.
- Technologies targeting municipality or local Government services.
- Education technologies and digital workplace Telecommunications technologies.
- Transport, logistics & value chains technologies.
- Technologies for protecting the vulnerable population.
- Healthcare technologies.
- Tourism & entertainment technologies.
- Technologies targeting Government service delivery.
- Economic transformation technologies.

For updates on the call, follow <https://www.facebook.com/businessincubatorRSTP> or visit <https://rstp.org.sz/it-business-incubation/>