

eThekweni Informal Economy Support Programme (IESP) - Jobs Fund and eThekweni Municipality Co-funded

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Eyekhethelo Furniture Co-operative

Enterprise description:

Eyekhethelo designs and manufactures high quality furniture and provides a furniture repair service. The organizations skilled workers in carpentry, upholstery and spray painting are located in an abandoned building in the Adams Mission School, Amanzimtoti. The business has been operating for 8 years, has a strong local customer base and is owned by the members of a registered cooperative.



Job creation:

There are currently nine workers. An additional four jobs may be created for carpenters, spray painters, upholsterers, administrators/marketers, and apprentices. The jobs created are mainly for skilled workers and also for those assisting with deliveries. The will require expansion in the operations and this can be achieved by obtaining new machinery and skills to improve quality. To date, two new permanent jobs started.

Achievements:

- Completed isiQalo basic business training which enabled the enterprise to strengthen its operations in applying improved business management skills such as calculating costs, profits, holding staff meetings, keeping records. The enterprise has managed to effectively do their bookkeeping for over 10 months.
- Sector skill training: a successful part of the intervention was on-site training by a sector specialist which included:
 - Better use of machinery and tools - clean, check and service tools and proper use
 - Improved health and safety
 - Manufacturing of tools instead of buying them
 - Getting cheaper inputs e.g. using inexpensive materials, for example using cheaper yet strong 'backing-boards' cabinets has reduced costs and increased profits with no impact on quality
 - Boards are being cut more efficiently with minimum wastage (as a result of training in 'cut-make-trim')

- The mentor has also motivated the entrepreneurs, including introducing the them to banking - a new bank account was opened and the enterprise no longer relies on handling cash and are able to manage money better using services such as cell phone banking.

Way forward:

- The enterprise has the tools and expertise to produce high quality products, particularly furniture, and have potential to grow and develop to create more employment opportunities. They need further mentorship including support in marketing and assistance in securing a permanent workshop space.
- The cooperative will present a proposal to request for a long term lease agreement on the current property to obtain security of tenure with the Adams College Governing Body

Learning:

- IsiQalo helps participants with lower levels of education/literacy to start running businesses much better (in this case book keeping and tracking profits were seen to benefit the business and facilitated the process whereby the co-operative to started saving).
- Practical and targeted workplace-based sector skills mentorship (e.g. cut-make-trim) are valuable for entrepreneurs with constrained time and limited literacy.
- Training must be provided early in order for the business to have time to apply skills learned and for impacts such as job creation to be monitored.
- The attitude and receptiveness to training and advice allowed the mentors to build a good rapport with the co-op and develop skills.
- PPT should have started the sector skills training at the same time as the business skills. This would have been more beneficial. The coop could have increased production and created jobs quicker.



Image showing a member of Eyekhethelo Furniture in production

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