

Chieta and JBS (UJ) celebrate graduation of SA's finest entrepreneurs

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Chieta, the chemical industries SETA, together with partners, University of Johannesburg's (UJ) Business School, and Chemin, the not-for-profit SA chemical technology incubator, hosted their first graduation ceremony for small businesses that successfully completed Chieta's inaugural Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP) this year.



L-R Professor Randall Carolissen, dean of UJ's Johannesburg Business School, a graduate and Chieta CEO, Yershen Pillay

This impactful initiative represents a R2m investment in the programme and is part and parcel of Chieta's long-term vision to fund 2,000 young entrepreneurs by 2025.

Chieta's EDP graduation ceremony for the first cohort of successful entrepreneurs took place on 10 November, hosted by UJ's Johannesburg Business School Centre for Entrepreneurship.

At the graduation ceremony, Professor Randall Carolissen, Dean of UJ's Johannesburg Business School Centre for Entrepreneurs, congratulated the graduates on the hard work and commitment they devoted to the programme and encouraged them to apply their learnings to their small businesses, and to reach out to mentors if they encounter obstacles to their success in the forthcoming months. He wished them all well as they embark on a fresh new journey of small business growth, empowered by the EDP.

The EDP ran from 14 February 2022 to 16 September 2022. It was conducted by Chemin, which operates under the auspices of the Small Enterprise Development Agency's programme, as well as Tloumogale Business Development Consulting, and held at the UJ Johannesburg Business School Centre, which also presented selected training and skills development modules to the candidates.

The EDP is designed to address the challenges experienced by small businesses in the chemical sector, improving their business acumen, building visibility of their brands, and promoting awareness of their businesses and products. The EDP's two key objectives are to:

1. Enable small business owners to learn precise skills and enhance their knowledge in order to improve their business

performance.

2. Create sustainable and stable enterprises that are competitive and innovative, and equipped to stay abreast of national and international regulations.

The programme's significant impact includes empowering the delegates to:

- Match new venture opportunities to market needs within a chosen industry sector.
- Determine and manage the financial requirements of a new venture.
- Match new venture opportunities to market needs.
- Compile and utilise a business plan to manage a new venture.
- Seek funding for a new venture.

In the longer term, the EDP aims to ensure a sustainable increase in chemical manufacturing and transformation within the South African chemicals value chain that will benefit women (70%), men (30%), and youth (53%) in line with Chieta's objectives to empower more women and accelerate youth development to contribute towards a sustainable economy.

Yershen Pillay, CEO of Chieta, notes that what makes the Chieta EDP stand out from other SMME development programmes is that it provides small businesses with solutions to the specific challenges they experience within the broader scope of their development. At the start of the EDP, Chemin conducted surveys with the beneficiaries to identify the skills needed, which are then developed and enhanced.

Chieta's funding support of the programme gives the delegates an advanced qualification in entrepreneurship, business administration skills by Tloumogale Business Consulting, digital marketing by Digital ARK Marketing Research Agency, a funding readiness programme presented by the University of Johannesburg Business School, a business support voucher, and corporate identity design and printing of a gazebo, banner, and table cloth.

The EDP also provides ongoing mentorship services and additional support for some of the beneficiaries. The graduates will continue to be assisted with market access and funding opportunities going forward.

The requirements for the successful entrepreneurs to be selected onto the Chieta Entrepreneurship Development Programme are:

- To have existing, registered and active businesses.
- To provide all the required application documents and meet the programme's requirements.

Beneficiaries of the first EDP are enthusiastic and encouraged by the value provided by the programme. Mbali Ntsele from Lindamkhonto says: "I appreciated the group work where we discussed our issues and heard everyone's opinions."

Kefilwe Gabankile from Fiffy G Cosmetics, particularly enjoyed the group activities: "They gave us each roles and responsibilities, and we were able to share diverse perspectives. The pool of knowledge and skills was valuable."

Isabella Tsakane from Mtiposo says: "Learning financial management, and about the growth and development of the chemical industry is fascinating. And owning a small business is fulfilling with enormous rewards." Paul Masilo from Freshmo Brands says: "The facilitator was impeccable and so was the entire course which brought value to each of us."

Pillay says Chieta has a long-standing and successful partnership with Chemin, and this year's targeted EDP is taking the partners' skills development initiatives to a new level: "Our aim is to create sustainable and stable enterprises that are competitive and innovative and are equipped to stay abreast of national and international regulations."

Chieta has long been the principal agent in assisting SMMEs in the chemical sector and has in past years supported and sponsored Chemin with over R2m for skills development programmes, and a further R1m for the Small Business Enrichment Programme facilitated by Chemin, in partnership with UJ's Johannesburg Business School Centre for Entrepreneurship.

Chemin's long-term objectives align with Chieta's skills development strategies, and include:

- Providing an enabling business environment for startups and SMMEs.
- Providing business mentorship and business development services.
- Facilitating technology and entrepreneurial training.
- Providing access to infrastructure and services for appropriate technology and business incubation.
- Increasing BEE within the chemical industry.
- Establishing networks linking global and local companies.

Pillay adds: "The partnership we have with UJ's Johannesburg Business School Centre for Entrepreneurship, Chemin, and other stakeholders is synergistic, and is ensuring that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Through the EDP, we are merging our respective niche expertise with the development and support of SMMEs through mentorship, business development training, and technical quality assurance services, which in turn has the potential to ensure the sustainability, scalability, and profitability of the candidate SMMEs."

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