

# DSBD SUPPORTS TOWNSHIP **SECURITY APP DEVELOPER**



Thulile Mthethwa from Tembisa township in City of Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality is a gender activist, software developer, social innovator and founder of Memeza. She is a Gross Domestic Violence (GBV) survivor and the brutality of the violence perpetuated on females as well as defenceless children and senior citizens by man spurred her innovative brain cells and in 2012 designed and developed a mobile gadgetry operated app which is used to report crime instantly.

Her goal was to connect the public with all relevant safety stakeholders such as South African Police Services, Community Policing Forums and Gender Based Violence activists to a one stop mobile app that would beep at the touch of a button and alert authorities of any misnomer occurring in society.

Mthethwa's vision is aligned to the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030's call for a safer South Africa, that is free from any gender violence, crime and rights of citizens are respected as enshrined in the Bill of Rights of the country's Constitution.

"Our aim is to bring innovative, affordable security solutions to all citizens of the country and protection of the vulnerable in society through partnerships with private and public services providers".

"South Africa has shockingly high crime rate numbers, and to bring that down we need to work together and fight the criminals and break down their networks" said Mthethwa.

Starting a business has always been a challenge especially for someone from the townships with limited resources and financial support to fall back on once the project falls to garner enough strength and stand on its two feet. Mthethwa faced those challenges and triumphed, Memeza is the testimony to that resilience and her tenacity when her back is against the wall.

"Starting a small business/social enterprise is a lot of work but easy to navigate if you take time to know the support structures available outside, both private and public".

"Commercialization of a social enterprise is challenging, as investors do not see social impact as a return on investment, instead want to see monetary gains in short terms ahead of human well-being. Therefore, Memeza had to over the years be very creative in ensuring we create multiple income streams that will ensure we stay afloat and grow systematically" said Mthethwa.

She currently has a team of comprising of a few permanent staff assisted by a handful of interns from various institutions around Gauteng province.

“The Department of Small Business Development(DSBD) has been of tremendous help over the years providing Memeza access to opportunities where we could show case our technology and offering to investors and other likeminded entrepreneurs”.

“With the support from DSBD we have been able purchase a motor vehicle, that has made our mobility very easy and increased our physical presence in many communities. We have also bought new machinery, bought branding machinery, conduct business trips to various expos abroad”.

“DSBD support has also helped us get into Gazelles Business Development, Fem-In-Tech training and be included in the Presidential Social Enterprise Awards,” added Mthethwa.

Without a doubt, the value DSBD has brought to Memeza is tremendous hence we have been able to grow and become self -sustainable. DSBD is a support mechanism that have helped us become a company that can stand on its own feet and access the market, thus according to Mthethwa.

Mthethwa’s dream is to see every vulnerable person living in South Africa having access to safety technology and leading a happy crime free life.

“Currently it’s only those staying in affluent areas who have access to alarms, movement sensors, high walls with electric fences that deter criminals, but a complete contrasts in the townships were such amenities did not exist”.

Current prolonged power cuts are putting constraints on the company’s ability to fight crime as people have no means to report criminality occurring in their areas because of lack of telecommunications network failure caused by these power disruptions.

Mthethwa added that the Department of Small Business Development and SEDA have been good to her company since its inception in 2012, and she hopes for their working relations to prosper for many more years.

