

MDDA

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FUND REPORT

Media Transformation Initiative

2025

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Introduction

The Economic Development Fund (EDF) is a transformative initiative aimed at creating a more inclusive and diverse media sector in South Africa. Established from funds allocated by the Competition Commission after findings of anti-competitive practices among media companies, the EDF supports young black entrepreneurs, media, and small agencies previously marginalised by high barriers to entry.

In partnership with the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA), which administers fund distribution, the EDF enables democratic engagement, educational advancement, and community empowerment. A key component of the EDF includes funding bursaries for media and advertising students, viewed as a long-term investment in industry leadership and innovation. By providing essential resources and educational opportunities, the EDF fosters a media landscape that better represents and serves South African communities.

The Economic Development Fund (EDF) was established in July 2017 to distribute funds obtained by the Competition Commission from several media companies that were found to have engaged in anti-competitive behaviour.

The Commission's investigation into price-fixing, which began in 2011, resulted in 15 media companies signing consent agreements. These agreements imposed financial contributions to the EDF and penalties.

The Fund's purpose was to promote access, inclusivity, and participation in the media and advertising industry, by supporting small and emerging agencies and media organisations that had been excluded due to high barriers to entry.

This involved promoting market access for companies with the potential for sustainability, and supporting the growth of those already operating in the sector.

The Competition Commission's mandate is to regulate all sectors of the economy and not concentrate on one sector only. Its mandate is to analyse and penalise contraventions and not to administer funds. With that in mind, the Competition Commission entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA), to manage the fund's distribution and ensure a strong governance framework.

The MDDA was tasked to ensure that funds reached qualifying beneficiaries, particularly smaller and emerging agencies and media organisations, to address systemic challenges in the media sector, empower underrepresented groups, as well as to contribute to a more diverse and competitive landscape.

This report highlights the MDDA's and EDF's key achievements, including the positive impact it has had on over 37 SMME's, 60% of which are youth-owned, and its contribution to gender empowerment. It details the strategic investments in education through bursaries, which the MDDA views as a long-term investment and solution with the biggest potential impact for fostering leadership, change, and innovation in the industry.

Additionally, the report highlights initiatives such as the post-qualification experience, startup funding, sustainability funding, mentorship, training initiatives, and the provision of free advertising airtime - all aimed at supporting the growth and development of underrepresented groups in the industry.

Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA)



Appointed by the Competition Commission, the MDDA oversees the disbursement of EDF funds. Established in 2003 under the MDDA Act No. 14 of 2002, the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) was created as a statutory body to foster an inclusive media environment that reflects the needs of all South Africans. It is a partnership between the South African Government and major print and broadcasting companies to assist in, amongst others, developing community and small commercial media in South Africa.

Over the past 20 years it has played a critical role in the transformation of the media landscape in South Africa impacting over 500 organisations.

The MDDA Mandate:

The MDDA was tasked with creating an enabling environment for media development and diversity reflecting the needs and aspirations of all South Africans. This included addressing the exclusion and marginalisation of disadvantaged communities and individuals from accessing media and media projects. The MDDA also encouraged ownership, control, and access to media by historically disadvantaged communities, as well as by underrepresented indigenous language and cultural groups.

Furthermore, the organisation supports the development of human resources, training, and capacity building within the media industry, particularly for historically disadvantaged groups. It aims to channel resources to community media and small commercial sectors while raising public awareness about media development and diversity issues.

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CEO Statement

Transforming South Africa's Media Landscape

The Economic Development Fund is designed to support small commercial media in South Africa through capacity building, sustainable funding and bursaries for students currently studying towards media and related studies at some of the country's leading academic institutions. The fund aims to empower and uplift the media sector by expanding funding opportunities for small companies in media, advertising, marketing, and digital realms.

The MDDA, as a media development and diversity agency, has been a strong advocate for community and small commercial media, running various programmes, including grant funding, research and innovation, capacity building, and advocacy, all aimed at ensuring the sector's long-term sustainability. Through the EDF, the agency is now reaching a broader and more diverse range of beneficiaries, with a strong emphasis on sustainability and economic growth. The addition of the bursary programme distinguishes the MDDA/EDF, positioning it as a key driver in fostering the development of the next generation of media leaders and innovators.

Driving Transformation and Economic Growth

The MDDA/EDF serves as a catalyst for transformation, far beyond being a mere funding initiative. By providing startup capital and mentorship, it ignites job creation and stimulating economic growth in the media sector. Our commitment to nurturing black-owned media and advertising agencies has already delivered remarkable results, showcasing the ability of these entrepreneurs to shape the future.

Celebrating Success Stories

One of the EDF projects that stands out is Touch SA Marketing Solutions, one of our standout EDF beneficiaries, this black-owned agency has achieved a significant milestone by launching one of the first digital billboards in the township of Soshanguve, in the Tshwane municipality. This marks a groundbreaking achievement for the MDDA and the EDF, underscoring our commitment to supporting innovative ventures.

Our print beneficiaries, including Pondoland Times and Empuma News, have shown remarkable resilience. Despite facing challenges such as rising printing costs and distribution hurdles, these community publications embody the spirit of perseverance and innovation in the print sector.

Embracing the Digital Future

With the growing influence of technology on the media landscape, digital beneficiaries such as The Digital Plug and Inkosi Media received support, to assist them to continue with driving innovation in this dynamic space.

The Digital Plug is an online media and social media management agency, specialising in content creation and audio visual production to connect audiences with the digital world.

Inkosi Media, known as Inkosi TV, is a 100% black-owned, female-led agency focused on investigative reporting and streaming, enriching the Johannesburg media scene with quality content.

The MDDA is committed to researching and fostering sustainability with the community, and small commercial media, while adapting to the fast-paced digital landscape. By working together, we can unlock possibilities and drive the development and growth of South Africa's media.

Shoeshoe Qhu

Chief Executive Officer



04 Competition Commission

Since the advent of democracy, South Africa's media sector has been dominated by large media companies resulting in slow transformation of the sector, often including anti-competitive practices. The Competition Commission, established under the Competition Act No.89 of 1998, is tasked with regulating competition across South African markets, and has been actively investigating and addressing this.

The Commission's mandate includes addressing key issues such as market concentration, access barriers, consumer exploitation, excessive pricing, competitor exclusion, and collusion.

The Commission's core functions, set out in section 21 of the Act, are to:

- investigate and prosecute restrictive horizontal and vertical practices;
- investigate and prosecute abuse of dominant positions;
- decide on mergers and acquisitions applications;
- conduct formal inquiries in respect of the general state of competition in a particular market;
- grant or refuse applications for exemption from the application of the Act;
- conduct legislative reviews; and
- develop and communicate advocacy positions on specific competition issues.

Recognising the need for more than penalties to correct the harm caused by anticompetitive behaviour, the Commission entered into consent agreements with 15 Respondents in the media and advertising sector including the likes of SABC; Multichoice and Primedia, who were found to have engaged in anticompetitive conduct. They sought to provide redress to those that had been negatively affected by the conduct and to foster market entry for emerging players in the media and advertising sector.

Accordingly, over and above paying administrative penalties, the Respondents were required to provide 25% in bonus advertising space and/or airtime for every Rand of advertising space and/or airtime bought by qualifying small agencies for a period of three (3) years. The Respondents were further required to contribute an amount equivalent to 0.36% of their advertising turnover to the EDF over a period of three (3) years to enable the development of the qualifying beneficiaries (i.e. small black-owned businesses in the media and advertising sector).

Unlocking Media Potential: A Vision for Transformation

Mulalo Ratshisusu, the Deputy Commissioner, believes that in today's dynamic media landscape, competition regulators are championing an open, competitive market where entry and participation are seamless.

The MDDA and the Competition Commission partnership is a groundbreaking model with the potential to reshape the industry and be replicated in other sectors.

Key Insights:

Effective Partnerships:

Our collaboration with the MDDA has proven that strategic partnerships are crucial for impactful implementation. The success of the EDF demonstrates how partnering with experts drives meaningful change.

The partnership with the MDDA has been extremely successful, with the fund aimed at promoting market access and sustainability having supported over 37 companies. Of these, 60% are youth owned and over 50% have women as direct beneficiaries.

One of the lasting legacies of the EDF is the bursary programme, a critical investment into students to have a long-term impact on the sector. To date over 80 students at Nelson Mandela University, North West University, and Red and Yellow, have benefitted. The Commission believes these are the future leaders who will contribute to both the media sector and broader economy.

Scalable Solutions:

The EDF, has developed a replicable formula that can be used to address similar challenges across various sectors. Challenges are opportunities in disguise. In the evolving landscape of South Africa, creative and forward-thinking solutions are essential. Our initiatives are designed to spark transformative change, for small commercial, community media sector. The EDF is a blueprint for innovation.

Mulalo Ratshisusu
Deputy Commissioner



Economic Development Fund (EDF) Overview

Established in July 2017, the EDF emerged from the Competition Commission's investigation into price-fixing within the media and advertising sector. Rather than simply imposing fines, the Competition Commission sought to turn the penalties into meaningful contributions for the transformation in the media and advertising sector.

The EDF's approach included several key initiatives: administrative penalties based on a percentage of annual turnover from major media companies; a 25% bonus advertising-space allocation to eligible small agencies over a three-year period; EDF contributors, redirecting 0.36% of advertising turnover to support sector growth; and content agreements formed between 2017 and 2022 to address market barriers and promote inclusivity.

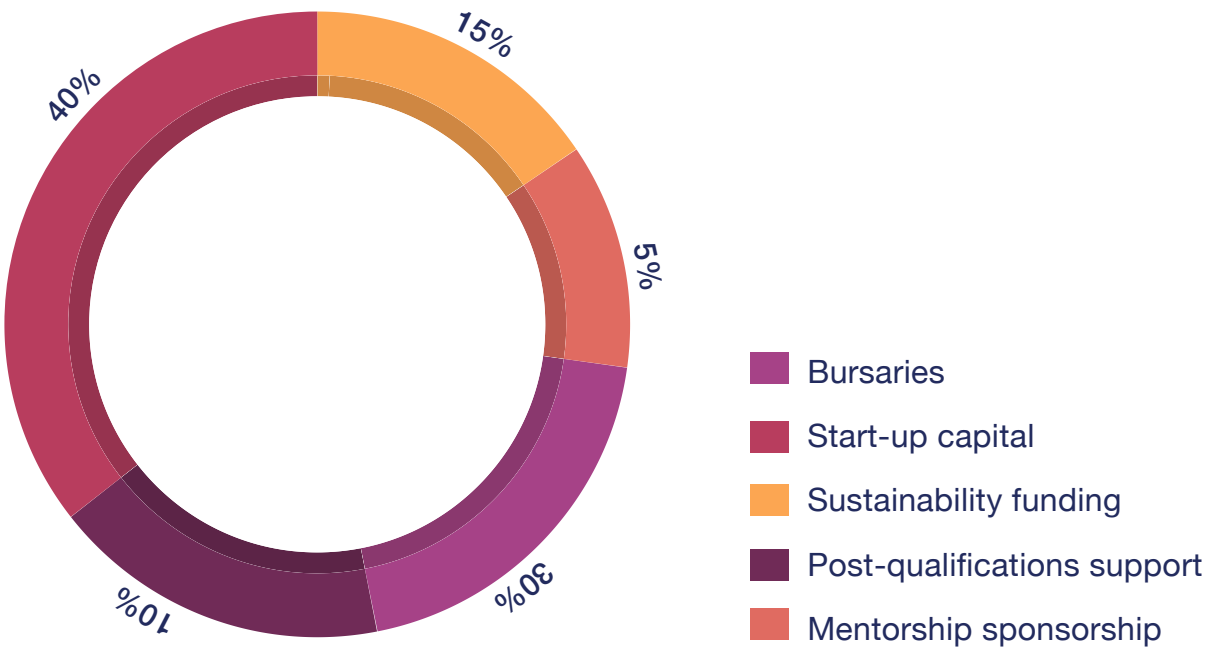
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The EDF Allocation

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The EDF, managed by the MDDA, received R 39,146,087.00 (thirty-nine million, one hundred and forty-six thousand and eighty-seven Rand) in total contributions from media organisations and agencies.

The funding allocation includes 30% for bursaries, 40% for startup capital, 15% for sustainability funding, 10% for post-qualifications support, and 5% for mentorship sponsorship.



Qualifying Criteria for Funding from the EDF

In order to achieve the objectives of the EDF, and the desired impact and transformation, it was imperative for the MDDA to ensure appropriate qualifying criteria for each funding category. The following criteria was implemented for each funding category:

Startup Beneficiaries

The beneficiaries must include Black-owned businesses that need support with sponsorship for mentoring or training in media and advertising business fundamentals, such as working capital management, capitalisation, and human resources processes. Additionally, Black-owned small media or advertising agencies seeking assistance with startup capital and sustainability funding are also eligible for support.

Sustainability Beneficiaries

To qualify as sustainability beneficiaries, an entity must be a majority Black-owned small media or advertising agency in need of startup capital or assistance to maintain operations. The entity should have been in operation for a minimum of two years and must be based in South Africa. Additionally, it should have a staff complement of at least two persons and an annual turnover between five hundred thousand and five million rand.

Bursaries and Post Qualification Experience

Bursaries are available for individuals pursuing media or advertising qualifications at tertiary institutions. Additionally, support is provided for Black individuals who need assistance in gaining the necessary post-qualification experience to participate in the advertising industry.

Selection of Beneficiaries for Startup and Sustainability Funding

In early 2022, the MDDA promoted the fund nationwide through digital platforms, radio stations, and print publications. The response was overwhelmingly positive with 231 applications received; 114 for Startup funding and 117 for Sustainability funding.

From this pool of applicants, beneficiaries who passed the qualifying criteria were selected, there being no discrimination in terms of region or the type of media company. The selection was based purely on the criteria and how well applicants fared during the evaluation phase of their application.

The objective of this funding was to stimulate economic expansion and transformation within the sector, and so it was vitally important to support and promote black-owned small media and advertising entities. These entities are a necessary vehicle to implement a long-lasting economic impact in the communities and regions in which they are based.

The EDF programme is not just funding media businesses, it is shaping the future of the industry and empowering the next generation of leaders. With a commitment to driving transformation and fostering job creation, the EDF’s “Startup” and “Sustainability” programmes have made a significant impact.

The selection of beneficiaries and strategic partners was a crucial part of the success of the project. To achieve the objective and ensure success, the MDDA set in place strict guidelines for funding, appointed key training partners, and secured strategic partnerships with institutions of higher learning.



Funding Guidelines

To ensure the impactful and effective use of resources, the MDDA/EDF set clear and focused funding parameters for each area of support. The financial support was strategically allocated to critical areas that drive growth and success.

Areas of Support

These areas include salaries, which enable investment in talent and the retention of skills; office space, which secures a professional environment for operations; capital expenditure, which allows for the acquisition of essential tools and technology necessary for business growth, including equipment, furniture, and machinery; and operational expenditure, which ensures that core operational costs, such as printing and office supplies, are adequately covered.

The purpose of these targeted funding conditions was to ensure that every investment contributed directly to the development and sustainability of the media organisations or agency ventures that were funded.

Startup Beneficiaries

Of the 114 applicants, 19 dynamic media enterprises received vital funding and mentorship, revolutionising their operations across newspapers, pamphlets, radio, TV, billboards, advertising, and PR.

Thanks to the support from the EDF, these beneficiaries have upgraded their infrastructure and equipment, allowing them to stay competitive and keep up with industry trends. This enhancement has helped them increase their customer base and boost their bottom-line revenue by presenting a more polished and professional image. Additionally, they have expanded their reach, network, and overall impact within their respective business areas.

The EDF funding came at a critical time, immediately after the COVID-19 pandemic, in which many businesses experienced financial difficulties. The funding offered a lifeline to businesses facing cutbacks and closures

The most profound impact has been the creation of job opportunities for young black media owners, both male and female, who have thrived under the guidance and mentorship provided by the MDDA and the EDF programme.

Sustainability Beneficiaries

After a thorough evaluation of 117 applications, the MDDA/EDF proudly selected 18 standout media enterprises to receive their highly sought-after sustainability funding.

This strategic support is not just about fostering growth, but also about strengthening the media and community media sectors, alleviating unemployment, and providing crucial stability.

With the backing of the EDF, these businesses have made remarkable strides. They have expanded their teams by bringing on additional talent, both male and female, which enhances innovation and drives success. By infusing their teams with young, creative minds, they have invigorated their approach and vision. Additionally, they have upgraded their facilities to accommodate their growing workforce and operational needs, while effectively managing expenses by covering significant printing costs, a vital aspect of their daily operations.

Much like the “Startups,” these beneficiaries have successfully navigated the challenges posed by COVID-19, gaining the stability needed to rebound and flourish in a post-pandemic world.



This funding has been transformative, empowering these media enterprises to capitalise on their achievements and accelerate their growth in a competitive industry.

Bursaries and Postgraduate Support

Investing in Future Leaders

“Empowering our youth to enter the business world is one of the most impactful solutions to combat unemployment in our country.”

The MDDA and the Competition Commission firmly believe in the transformative potential of the bursary programme, envisioning both immediate and long-term benefits. To nurture the next generation of leaders in South Africa’s economy, 30% of the budget was allocated to bursaries and 10% to post-qualifications experience and support.

The programme partnered with three prestigious institutions to bring this vision to life: the Association for Communication and Advertising (South Africa) (ACASA) for Red and Yellow, North West University, and Nelson Mandela University.

These universities are tasked with identifying and mentoring promising students and providing bi-annual progress reports to ensure a successful journey. The EDF’s role is to support these institutions with funding and capacity building.

The bursary covers tuition, books, a laptop, and stipends for meals and transport, ensuring a comprehensive support system for the students.

The post qualification experience is an initiative that aims to ensure that graduates in the relevant discipline gain critical experience and skills post qualification and transition from schooling to employment. This will provide graduates with critical insight and experience of the industry.

By investing in education and practical exposure, the EDF is cultivating future leaders who will drive innovation and growth in South Africa’s media sector.

Mentorship

Tachfin Holdings (Pty) Ltd

Tachfin Holdings is a Management and Training Consultancy

Empowering Media Innovators

In November 2023, **Tachfin Holdings (Pty) Ltd** was appointed by the MDDA to provide expert Financial and Human Resources Management mentorship to young black-owned startups in the media and advertising sectors. This strategic partnership supports emerging businesses awarded startup funding, equipping them with the essential skills to thrive.

Takura Chamuka, Executive Director and esteemed economist, shares his enthusiasm: *“I’m thrilled to be part of this groundbreaking initiative by the MDDA and EDF. Programmes like this, fuelled by education and motivation, are pivotal for driving the change we need.”*

Transforming Challenges into Opportunities

Our mentorship programme is designed to tackle the financial, economic, administrative, and behavioural barriers that often hinder the success of small enterprises. We focus on financial literacy, providing our beneficiaries with essential skills in budgeting,

cash-flow management, capital-cycle management, and financial-statement preparation to ensure they are financially savvy. Additionally, our HR mentors offer expertise in effective recruitment, talent assessment, employee development, and legal compliance. We also help address key challenges such as talent acquisition, retention, and understanding labour regulations.

Addressing Critical Needs

We recognise the critical need for strong communication skills in small businesses. Effective communication strategies are central to thriving in the competitive media landscape, helping businesses market themselves, engage clients, and build their brand.

Driving Gender Transformation

The EDF’s commitment to gender transformation is evident, with over 50% of the startups in the programme being female owned. This underscores the significant progress being made in empowering women in South Africa’s media industry.

Supporting Economic and Social Growth

The EDF and MDDA's efforts align perfectly with South Africa's economic restructuring and recovery plans, emphasising the empowerment of small businesses and broad-based black economic empowerment (BBBEE).

Tachfin Holdings is proud to contribute to this vision, creating opportunities for young entrepreneurs and fostering a vibrant media sector.

A Unique Opportunity

Having worked across 15 African countries, Takura Chamuka notes that South Africa offers unique opportunities for media startups, and Tachfin Holdings is excited to play a key role:

"We are not just providing technical, financial, and HR skills; we are inspiring and nurturing the next generation of media leaders. Our goal is to support local radio stations, newspapers, and investigative reporting, to strengthen our local economies and hold political power accountable."

"By empowering these startups, we are fostering a media landscape that is dynamic, diverse, and equipped with the skills to drive impactful change".



Ciber Digital

Ciber Digital is a global engineering, management and development consultancy whose stated purpose is to improve society by considering social outcomes in everything they do, relentlessly focusing on excellence and digital innovation, transforming clients businesses, communities, and employee opportunities.

Catalysing Growth for Media Startups

Empowering the Future of Media

Ciber Digital, a key partner in the MDDA programme, is championing the growth of media startups through a meticulously designed twelve-month mentoring programme. Since launching in September 2023, Ciber Digital has been working closely with 16 promising beneficiaries, with an impressive 90% showing unwavering commitment and enthusiasm.

Liz Makoma Ditshego, Director of the Mentoring Programme at Ciber Digital, shares her excitement about the initiative: "We are collaborating with individuals who are incredibly dedicated and eager to see their businesses thrive. The energy and determination are palpable and we are confident that these entrepreneurs will emerge from the programme 'shining'."

The Mentoring Programme features dynamic engagement, with beneficiaries actively participating by asking insightful questions and demonstrating a genuine desire to succeed. Continuous learning is also a key highlight, as many participants enhance their skills through short courses to stay current with industry trends. Additionally, we provide crucial financial guidance, focusing on optimising revenue streams and profitability.

Driving Transformation

The programme is making significant strides in gender and racial transformation within the media sector. It empowers women, with the majority of participants being female, many of whom are poised to lead major agencies in advertising and marketing. Additionally, it fosters diversity by supporting an increasing number of people of colour as they transition from large corporates to launch their own agencies, bringing fresh perspectives and innovation to the industry.

Revitalising the Industry

Liz reflects on the exciting shift in the industry: "When I was a brand custodian, the industry was predominantly made up of individuals in their thirties or forties. Now, vibrant young graduates from top media and advertising institutions, are infusing the sector with new energy and ideas."

"Transformation is not just a goal - it's happening right now, and it's truly inspiring".

08 Beneficiaries

The Economic Development Fund (EDF) has made a significant impact by supporting a diverse range of beneficiaries. Of the 37 companies that have received funding, 60% are youth-owned, reflecting the Fund's commitment to fostering the next generation of leaders in the media and advertising industries.

Additionally, the EDF has empowered more than 50 women, helping to promote gender equity within the sector. Furthermore, the Fund has provided bursaries to over 80 students, offering them educational opportunities that will enable them to contribute meaningfully to the industry in the future. The following sections highlight some of these beneficiaries and the ways in which the EDF has supported their growth and success.

All beneficiary startups received mentorship throughout the EDF programme, aimed at fostering continuous learning and ensuring the sustainability of their businesses.

Ciber Digital and Tachfin Holdings served as strategic mentorship partners, designing and executing programmes focused on financial literacy, human resources, and best practices.

Their guidance helped the startups implement effective systems and processes while making informed, future-oriented business decisions.



Startup Funding

The EDF funded a total of 19 organisations with startup funding. The following organisations were funded:

ABSOLUT **BOPHELO** **CARDINAL BLAKQ INK**
SUPPMAND **COMMUNICATIONS** **NTU NEWS**

THE DIGITAL PLUG **INKOSI MEDIA** **RYDER LINK**



CHARLES LOGISTICS **RAMP MEDIA (PTY) LTD**
SOLUTION **DISCOVER LIMPOPO MAGAZINE**

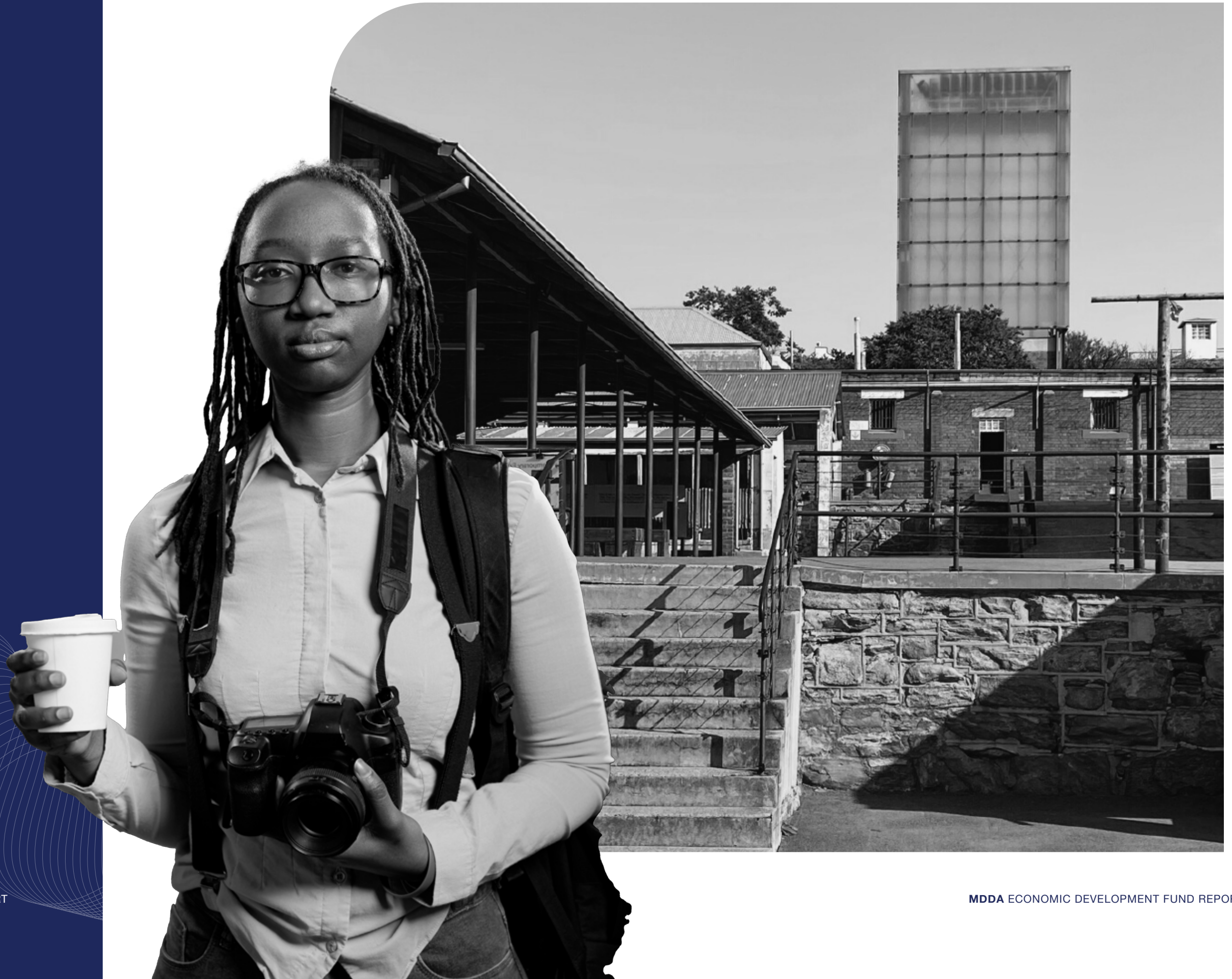
DAVIRTUE FONGOLUCION **EZABANTU MEDIA**
GROUP T/A THE AFRICAN TRUTH (PTY) LTD

INTELEK HOLDINGS (PTY) LTD T/A AS
PONDOLAND TIMES **WINK AFFECTS**

LP MEDIA HOUSE T/A **KGOSIKGADI**
WOMEN'S CLUB MAGAZINE **COMMUNICATIONS**

TOUCH SA **NOLUSINI RURAL DEVELOPMENT T/A**
MARKETING (PTY) LTD **EMPUMA NEWS** **WALL OF ARTS**
TRADING (PTY) LTD T/A DIAMOND MAGAZINE,

Featured Projects



Kgosikgadi Communications

Shaping the Future of Digital Marketing



Kgosikgadi Communications specialises in Web Development, SEO (Search Engine Optimisation), Paid Advertising and Content Development Services, for small and medium businesses around South Africa. Their vision is to be a renowned brand that fosters growth and provides valuable on-the-job training for young professionals and creating a lasting legacy of innovation and support.

Rene Mokoena, Managing Director of Kgosikgadi Communications, always dreamt of leading a successful business. With a background in Communication Science, Rene launched Kgosikgadi Communications in 2012, initially focusing on event management before pivoting to dynamic, ‘below-the-line’, marketing.



Recognising the potential of digital marketing, Kgosikgadi Communications aimed to empower small businesses to compete with industry giants. They envisioned creating a production company with a strong digital presence and sought funding from the MDDA to bring this vision to life.

Their successful application provided the capital needed to establish a professional office, invest in state-of-the-art equipment, and benefit from the EDF mentorship programme.

Mentorship Excellence:

The EDF mentorship was transformative, turning aspirations into actionable business strategies and enhancing operational efficiency. In addition, the programme provided invaluable training and upskilling opportunities for the team, resulting in greater staff retention and optimised resources.

Achievements:

Kgosikgadi Communications stands out in driving brand awareness, boosting sales through targeted promotions, and delivering impactful event management, branding, and advertising services.

Future Focus:

While the business is financially stable, continued support is needed for maintaining premises, retaining staff, and accessing ongoing skills training and mentorship.

“I’m deeply thankful to the MDDA for the opportunity and the EDF for the funding and belief in our potential. Your support has made our dreams possible.”, says Rene.

“It’s the great in you that differentiates you from everybody else.”

Touch SA Marketing

Realising a Dream



Touch SA Marketing is a Johannesburg-based, privately-held company that offers cutting-edge outdoor marketing solutions such as dynamic billboards and digital displays. They plan to expand with multiple billboards and a growing workforce, evolving into a leading township-based outdoor advertising company with a significant impact.

Suprise Sekgota, Co-Founder and CEO of Touch SA Marketing always envisioned owning his own outdoor advertising company. Inspired by the grandeur of billboards seen from transport windows during his cricket travels, Surprise’s childhood dream evolved into a passion for digital out-of-home advertising (DOOH).



From Vision to Reality

Founding Touch SA Marketing:

Established in 2016, the company specialises in DOOH advertising and their goal was to enhance client visibility and brand positioning with cutting-edge digital platforms.

A Major Milestone:

After managing around 150 sites and working with clients like the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS), Touch SA Marketing aimed to own a digital billboard—a significant achievement in a R58 billion industry with minimal black ownership.

Securing Funding:

Suprise’s breakthrough came when he discovered the MDDA’s funding opportunities. A successful application led to a grant covering billboard construction, site rights, and city approvals. The EDF’s support expedited approvals and enabled the project’s realisation within budget.

Mentorship and Support:

The MDDA/EDF mentorship programme provided more than just financial support. It offered invaluable guidance on positioning, target areas, and strategic outreach. Despite challenges with tranche timing and operational synchronisation, the mentorship was instrumental in their success.

Suprise says “I am deeply thankful to the MDDA and EDF for their support and belief in our potential. Your guidance and funding were crucial in achieving our dream. We are excited about the future and the opportunity to continue growing and contributing to our community.”

“If you don’t push yourself, success won’t come to you.”

Cardinal Blakq Ink

Turning Vision into Reality



Based in Gauteng, Cardinal Blakq Ink is a Digital Media Content provider. With short-term goals met and exposure gained, Cardinal Blakq Ink aims to achieve financial stability within two years and profitability within five. They are now focused on acquiring expertise to monetise their social media presence.

Hlengiwe Masika, Director and Founder of Cardinal Blakq Ink, established her digital media content company in 2020 amidst the COVID pandemic. With a BCom from the University of Pretoria, and an LLB from UNISA, Hlengiwe’s dream was to share traditional stories passed down from her grandmother, connecting modern youth with their cultural roots.



Securing Funding:

Initially, Cardinal Blakq Ink faced challenges in securing funding. The banks were unresponsive, but their perseverance led them to the MDDA. Through their support and the EDF’s funding, they were able to realise their vision and gain invaluable mentorship.

Mentorship Excellence:

The hands-on mentorship from Ciber Digital was instrumental. It helped them set practical goals and develop a clear roadmap for their business.

Achievements:

Cardinal Blakq Ink, a 100% black female-owned enterprise, has achieved significant milestones including setting up a professional website and acquiring essential equipment. The funding also covered key expenses such as salaries and high-end software, marking their strong entry into the industry.

Regrets and Insights:

Their only regret was allocating funds to office rental. They wished they had discovered flexible office space options earlier, which could have redirected resources for client-facing amenities.

“We extend our heartfelt thanks to the Competition Commission, the EDF, and the MDDA for their invaluable support. Your assistance has been crucial in our journey.”

“My advice to other entrepreneurs is to stay persistent. If you can visualise it, work towards it and make it happen.”

LP Media House

Turning Dreams into Reality

LP Media House is a full-service PR and Marketing Company specialising in Content Creation, Digital Marketing, and Strategic Partnerships, to engage audiences and drive growth. With plans to expand into printing and enhance transportation for film shoots, LP Media House is poised for further growth including launching a talk show and producing a documentary. Their ultimate goal is to be a solution provider for clients and create opportunities for young graduates entering the industry.



Lebogang Sibiya has turned her dream into a stunning reality with LP Media House, a premier 100% female black-owned Public Relations and Media agency in Gauteng. Thanks to the support from the EDF, they achieved their vision of owning a PR agency within just five years.

From Vision to Triumph

A Chance Opportunity:

In 2022, LP Media House’s fortunes changed when a friend shared a link to an MDDA Facebook post about funding for young black entrepreneurs. With nothing to lose they applied and were thrilled to receive an email from the EDF confirming their successful application. It was the beginning of an incredible journey.

The EDF Impact:

Struggling with unemployment and limited income from their magazine, LP Media House needed capital to scale their business. The EDF’s funding in May 2022 was a game-changer, enabling them to rent office space, acquire essential equipment, and hire three young black interns. This support was instrumental in professionalising the agency and driving its success.

A Path Defined by Resilience:

Despite having a Diploma in PR Management and numerous unsuccessful job applications in 2016, Lebogang’s perseverance led her to a marketing role in KZN. Realising that the corporate world was not her calling, she returned to Gauteng in 2019, launched an online magazine in 2021, and finally established LP Media House, bringing her long-held vision to life.

Recognising Excellence:

LP Media House’s remarkable growth was recognised with the African Excellence Award for 2023, awarded by MEA (Middle East and Africa Markets) as the Best Black-owned PR and Media Agency in Gauteng. This accolade underscores the agency’s commitment to excellence and its impact on the industry.

“I am deeply grateful to the EDF for their invaluable support. Their programmes empower entrepreneurs like me, turning dreams into reality and inspiring us to strive for more. Please continue this vital work for the next generation. God bless you.”

“If it doesn’t challenge you, it won’t change you.”

Sustainability Funding

Eighteen organisations were funded by the EDF for sustainability funding. The following organisations were funded:

ART SAKES **BIG IDEA** LANGA MEDIA T/A
PRODUCTION **GROUP** BUSHBUCKRIDGE NEWS

KWANZA COMMUNICATIONS **INKOSI**
(PTY) LTD MIN CREATIVE **MEDIA**

BLACK BILLBOARD **PAGE 1 BUSINESS T/A**
OWNERS ALLIANCE **GROWTH MEDIA** **METRO NEWS**

LEMA PRINTING T/A **FORTUNE WELL**
PUISANO NEWS ESONA COMMUNICATIONS

KENA MEDIA **INSIDE** **DIZINDABA**
KZN NAMUHLA **EDUCATION** **MEDIA**

MOLUSI BUSINESS **SEKAPETLELE TRADING CC**
SOLUTIONS INDABA BILLBOARDS AND MEDIA

Featured Beneficiaries



Kena Outdoor

Turning Vision into Impact

Kena Outdoor, a 100% black-owned company, is a billboard media owner and brand communications specialist offering brand managers and advertisers a demographically balanced billboard footprint across major urban centres in South Africa.

Looking ahead, they have ambitious expansion plans, including the construction of additional billboards and a broader range of offerings. They also champion increased funding for smaller, dynamic companies to enhance asset ownership and generate new employment opportunities, driving a more diverse media landscape.

Tshepo Matsepe the visionary Group CEO of Kena Outdoor, has transformed his career from telecoms technician to the driving force behind a national billboard advertising powerhouse. His journey, characterised by resilience and innovation, has highlighted the remarkable potential of billboards as a powerful and accessible medium for reaching mass audiences.



Turning Vision into Reality

Early Beginnings:

Tshepo's fascination with billboards took root during his days as a telecoms technician, sparking a bold decision to venture into the billboard industry. Despite early challenges, Kena Outdoor's first successful billboard marked their inception, setting the stage for a transformative journey.

Professional Growth:

Kena Outdoor set out to disrupt the global billboard advertising monopoly. The company's mission was to evolve from a local player to a regional leader, contributing to the industry's growth with a strong, local presence.

MDDA Partnership:

Kena Outdoor's impressive growth caught the eye of the MDDA, leading to a crucial partnership. This collaboration provided vital funding, enabling the professionalisation of the business, investing in young talent, and expanding operational capabilities.

Sustainable Success:

With a diverse team of 38 employees (40% female and 60% male), Kena Outdoor has built a formidable presence across all nine South African provinces. By leveraging institutional expertise and EDF funds, the company ensures financial stability while expanding its inventory and securing premium locations.

"We sincerely thank the Competition Commission for upholding excellent corporate practices and the EDF/MDDA for their invaluable support. Your contributions have been crucial to our success."

"Own your narratives. Own the platform that communicates those narratives in your communities. Own the content. Own your story."

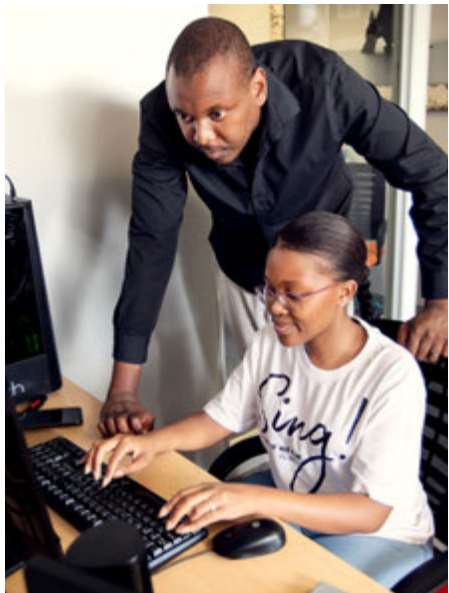
Arts Sake Productions

Transforming the Creative Sector

Arts Sake Productions is a Film and Television Production Company specialising in the creation of independent African films telling unique African stories.

Their aim is to produce groundbreaking movies that resonate on an international scale, showcasing Africa’s rich storytelling heritage. The goal is to impact global audiences and elevate the perception of African cinema.

Vuyani Bila, the visionary Founder of Arts Sake Productions, is redefining the filmmaking landscape with his unique approach to ‘made for cinema’ movies. Since starting his filmmaking journey in 2012, Vuyani’s commitment to originality and creativity has set his company apart.



A Journey of Innovation

The Genesis:

The seed for Arts Sake Productions was planted in 2014 while Vuyani was still at Film School, initially naming his productions ‘Arts for Art’s Sake’. Fresh out of school, he chose an unconventional path, opting to forge his own way rather than join traditional film and TV companies.

The EDF Impact:

During a challenging period, Arts Sake Productions discovered the MDDA through social media and applied for funding. The EDF support proved transformative, allowing Arts Sake Productions to purchase essential equipment, pay salaries, and sustain operations. This financial boost helped retain staff and supported the development of new projects, including their latest feature film.

Founding Arts Sake Productions:

In 2015, Vuyani established Arts Sake Productions as an independent film house, initially self-funded and reliant on private-sector support. Despite the challenges of funding and skilled labour, Vuyani’s determination drove him to teach his actor-friends about film production and create something truly original.

Growth and Vision:

With EDF funding, Arts Sake Productions expanded its team from four to six full-time employees, with additional temporary staff for production projects. This support not only stabilised the business, but also provided the creative freedom to pursue ambitious projects, such as creating an African version of ‘Game of Thrones’.

“Thank you to the MDDA/EDF team for your crucial support. Your assistance has been invaluable in helping us navigate the ups and downs of the creative sector. We hope you continue to support small businesses, as the creative industry needs this vital backing to thrive and innovate. Keep pushing forward—Godspeed.”

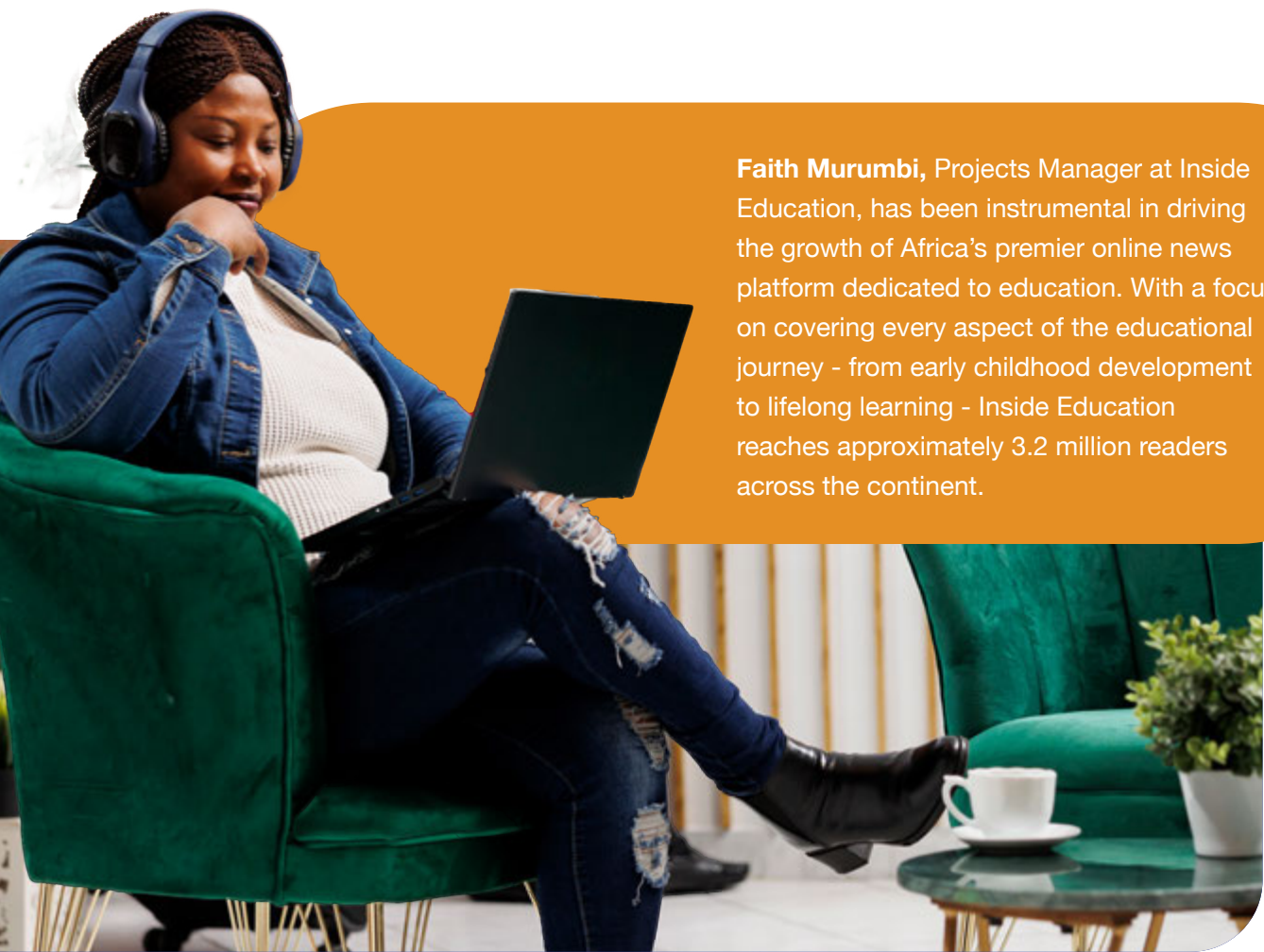
“De aspera ad astra – From Hardship to the Stars. We are going to reach the stars.”

Inside Education

Empowering Africa through Knowledge

Inside Education covers educational matters across the continent through its print publications and digital platform. It is dedicated to investing in the youth, recognising their crucial role in shaping the future, and driving economic growth across South Africa and the continent.

Faith Murumbi, Projects Manager at Inside Education, has been instrumental in driving the growth of Africa’s premier online news platform dedicated to education. With a focus on covering every aspect of the educational journey - from early childhood development to lifelong learning - Inside Education reaches approximately 3.2 million readers across the continent.



Transformative Impact of the EDF Support

A Commitment to Education:

Since 2016, the EDF funding has played a key role in developing Inside Education to an extent where they are now a leading voice in educational matters.

The EDF Advantage:

The support from the EDF was a game-changer for Inside Education. It enabled the organisation to enhance its printing and distribution capabilities, upgrade office facilities, and expand its team from 12 to 15 permanent staff members. The funding also facilitated the hiring of 15 interns with a transformation profile of 90% black and 40% female, and allowed for a more professional office setup, including new furniture and a reception area.

Navigating Challenges:

Before the EDF’s assistance, Inside Education faced significant challenges, including high costs of printing and distribution and a shortage of staff. Despite receiving support from other sources, including the MDDA and collaborations with the Department of Education and the Media, Information, and Communications Technology (MICT) SETA, the organisation needed additional resources to expand its reach.

Broader Reach and Impact:

Inside Education’s quarterly print publication now reaches 400,000 teachers and 24,000 schools, as well as universities, TVET colleges, and provincial departments of education. The goal is to further increase distribution especially to areas with limited internet access, reinforcing their mission to be the foremost educational publication in Africa.

“We deeply appreciate the MDDA/EDF’s support and its ongoing work with other organisations. This funding not only helps in reducing unemployment, but also supports and empowers our youth. Education is fundamental to any economy and we look forward to continued assistance to advance our mission.”

“Investment in our youth is paramount, as they are the leaders of tomorrow and vital to the economic growth of South Africa and the continent.”

Page 1 Business T/A Metro News

Empowering Communities through News

Metro News is a community publication, distributed free of charge in the Manguang Metropolitan area. To ensure long-term success they are focused on developing a robust online platform and expanding into digital media, including a streaming presence on YouTube and social media. This shift aims to attract advertisers and investors, securing the future of Metro News in a rapidly evolving media landscape.



Pitso Mosetlhe (Director): Championing Local Voices
Since its inception in 2012, Metro News, published by Page 1 Business Solutions (Pty) Ltd., has become a vital source of information for the Mangaung Metropolitan area, including Botshabelo, Bloemfontein, and Thaba Nchu. Distributed free of charge, this community newspaper reaches up to 60,000 readers each month, primarily in Sesotho and isiXhosa.

From Vision to Reality

A Community-Driven Initiative:

Pitso Mosetlhe, a graphic designer with a BA in Communications, recognised a gap in local news coverage while running his own communication and design company. Driven by a passion to serve their community, Page 1 Business expanded its business to include a community newspaper, Metro News.

Overcoming Challenges:

The high cost of printing posed a significant barrier to entry. Thanks to a recommendation from a friend, Pitso learned about the MDDA and EDF, leading to successful funding applications. This support covered essential expenses such as printing, distribution, and rent, providing a crucial boost for Metro News.

Sustainability and Future Goals:

Despite the initial success, the company faced challenges in sustaining the newspaper due to the limited duration of the grant and the broader struggles of traditional print media. Recognising the need for a more sustainable model, they are now pivoting towards establishing an online presence.

“We extend our heartfelt thanks to the MDDA and EDF for your unwavering support. Your investment has been crucial in advancing our mission and fuels our drive to innovate and excel. Your commitment inspires us to reach new heights, much like scaling the majestic peaks of Mount Everest. We look forward to continuing this journey with your invaluable support.”

“Always make a total effort, even when the odds are against you.”
– Arnold Palmer

Growth Media

Trailblazer in Outdoor Advertising

Growth Media is an outdoor advertising company, owning billboards across five provinces Looking ahead, their five-year plan focuses on converting static billboards to digital, with an emphasis on Gauteng and the Eastern Cape. They also see immense potential for advertising in underserved rural areas, where access to digital media is limited.



Savita Mbuli, the visionary Owner and Managing Director of Growth Media, is redefining the outdoor advertising landscape in South Africa. With a rich background in media since 1994, Savita has honed her skills as a newsreader, writer, and editor at leading radio stations. In 1998, she co-founded Zazise Communications to empower businesses and government entities to effectively engage with their audiences.

In 2002, Savita took the bold step of leaving her role as Executive Producer at SABC TV News to focus on her entrepreneurial journey. By 2008, she identified a lucrative opportunity in outdoor advertising, prompting a rebranding to Growth Media in 2010.



A Growing Legacy

By 2021, Growth Media proudly owned 40 large-format gantry billboards across five provinces. However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented challenges, forcing the industry into lockdown.

Savita seized this moment to innovate. They applied for a R300,000 sustainability grant from the MDDA helping to stabilise their business during those turbulent times. This grant enabled them to maintain payroll and operational costs, allowing them six months to pivot and adapt.

Empowering the Future

Growth Media is proudly 100% black-female owned, with Savita being the only black woman in South Africa to independently own 40 billboards. Growth Media’s team of seven comprises talented professionals, all black and under 35, underscoring its dedication to empowerment.

Advocating for Change

Growth Media is passionate about equitable support in the advertising industry. They believe the MDDA should better align funding with the unique needs of established businesses and startups alike. Their advocacy stems from a commitment to inclusivity and recognition of the challenges faced by black-owned businesses.

“I didn’t start this business for grants; we sought support because the industry was stacked against us. This funding was crucial for our growth and competitiveness,” she asserts.

A Call for Transformation

Savita Mbuli is not just a leader; she’s a catalyst for change in the outdoor advertising industry. With her innovative spirit and commitment to empowerment, Growth Media is set to elevate the advertising experience across South Africa.

Savita emphasises the need for government involvement in media regulation, stating:

“It starts with the Government. Unlike the mining and tourism industry, where there is a charter so that they could transform, the media sector is the only one that is allowed to self-regulate, hence the lack of transformation.”

Black Billboard Owners Alliance (BBOA)

“We are stronger together, so let’s tackle injustices as one.”

The **BBOA** is an alliance representing 28 black billboard owners and have over 800 billboards operating throughout South Africa. The ultimate goal of the BBOA is to become obsolete, signifying a fully transformed industry that is inclusive, equitable, and envisions a landscape where media owners can advocate and thrive independently.

Empowering Black Billboard Owners

Founded in 2019, the BBOA is a dynamic non-profit organisation dedicated to championing the interests of black billboard owners in South Africa. Created by a collective of passionate black media owners, the BBOA addresses the challenges and barriers faced by its members in the predominantly white-owned outdoor advertising industry.

Advocacy Through Unity

Siphosihle Mbuli is the administrator and plays a pivotal role within the BBOA, ensuring the organisation runs smoothly for its 28 members. Comprising some of the largest and youngest black media owners in South Africa, the BBOA is a powerful voice advocating for change. “We tackle the fights that our members shouldn’t have to face alone because there’s undeniable power in numbers,” Siphosihle asserts.

As a lawyer, she expertly navigates complex legal challenges, ensuring the interests of BBOA members are fiercely protected.



Overcoming Industry Barriers

In a landscape where the cost to build a single billboard can reach R300,000, the BBOA is committed to levelling the playing field. In 2021, after recognising the potential of funding from the MDDA, the Alliance applied for R5 million to establish five digital screens. Their vision is to create a self-sustaining organisation that diversifies the media landscape and supports member initiatives, including scholarship programmes.

While the application process was challenging, the collaborative effort paid off and they recieved R300,000. Although this funding fell short of expectations, it provided crucial support for the Alliance’s activities, including organising a conference that fostered dialogue within the industry.

Transforming Challenges into Opportunities

The BBOA and its peers continue to fight against the systemic inequalities that plague the industry, including outdated lease agreements that hinder black media owners. “Some industries are too entrenched to transform, with barriers that feel insurmountable,” she explains.

Despite these challenges, the BBOA remains committed to its mission, striving for a future where transformation is a reality rather than a goal. While grateful for the support from the EDF and MDDA, the BBOA calls for a more tailored approach to funding that acknowledges the diverse needs of different media sectors.

The BBOA is committed to fostering a more inclusive future in the outdoor advertising space and invites all stakeholders to join them in this crucial mission. Together, we can build a brighter, more equitable landscape for all media owners.

“In order for diversity to be achieved, it needs to be meaningfully engaged.”



Esona Communications

Overcoming Challenges

Esona Communications is a dynamic media solutions company specialising in Outdoor Advertising and Branding. In order to grow, they recognise the need for additional funding to construct more billboards and develop a digital screen. They believe that more flexible funding criteria would empower businesses like hers to invest in sustainable growth.

“I launched my business, and just 26 days later, we were plunged into a COVID-19 level 5 lockdown.”



In 2020, **Iviwe Mqhakama** founded Esona Communications, stepping into the world of outdoor advertising during an unprecedented time. As a passionate entrepreneur, They faced immense challenges with the onset of the pandemic, which hit the outdoor advertising sector hard.

“If there are no people on the roads, why advertise?” she recalls, reflecting on the initial struggles.



A Determined Vision

With over 11 years of experience in outdoor advertising and a postgraduate degree in communications, Iviwe felt ready to embark on her own journey. By 2019, she had reached her professional ceiling and decided it was time to “go it alone.” Despite securing a few static billboards, they recognised the urgent need to adapt to the future of advertising with digital solutions.

Hearing about the MDDA through word of mouth, they approached them for funding to help realise their vision. After navigating the application process, they were granted R300,000 - half of their initial request. Although the funding came with strict guidelines on its use, it was a lifeline for their fledgling business.

A Grateful Heart

“I am incredibly thankful to the MDDA for their support. What they did for me was invaluable. I hope to collaborate again in the future to achieve even bigger things,” she says with optimism.

Iviwe’s journey is a testament to resilience and determination. She believes in the power of hard work and consistency.

Navigating the Challenges

“Every cent counts, and the MDDA funding made a significant difference,”

The grant allowed them to cover office rent, purchase a laptop, and ensure they could operate their business during those challenging times. With a small team—a full-time female assistant and outsourced services for bookkeeping, printing, and billboard management - they kept their business afloat.

Their story is not just about survival; it’s about growth and opportunity. With the right support, they envision a future where Esona Communications can flourish and contribute even more to the outdoor advertising landscape.

“No matter how difficult a situation or times may be, if you work hard and if you are determined and consistent in your dreams and your goals, you will be like the plant that grows through the concrete and makes it against all odds.”

Bursaries and Post Qualification Funding

The EDF/MDDA bursary programme has proven highly impactful in supporting the next generation of industry professionals and leaders. Through the programme, eligible students were funded for their studies with tuition fees, textbooks, laptops, and stipends being covered therefore enabling the students to fully concentrate on their studies.

The funding enabled the students to focus on achieving academic excellence without the stress of financial concerns. The MDDA believes that the bursary programme is set to have the longest lasting impact by helping educate and skill the future industry professionals. The impact of education is lifelong and the benefits are far reaching. In this section we feature students from the different higher learning institutions with whom we partnered.

In order to reduce accommodation and transport costs, the MDDA selected suitable institutions spread throughout South Africa namely North West, Western Cape and Eastern Cape.



Association for Communications and Advertising (South Africa) with Red & Yellow Creative School of Business

The Association for Communication & Advertising South Africa (ACASA) is the official representative body of South Africa's advertising and communications profession. Ranked amongst the world's leaders in creativity and media innovation, their member agencies are consistently flying the creative flag locally and internationally.

ACA is a voluntary organisation formed both by, and for the profession. Their members are committed to fostering trust between marketers and agencies and transforming the advertising and communications industry at large. The aim is clear: to positively influence and impact the professional and operational standards of all South African agencies.

“Through engagement, debate and collective agreement, we are united in our quest to continually build the standards of a profession we are deeply passionate about.”

The Red & Yellow Creative School of Business

is based in Cape Town and is Africa’s leading creative business school where ambitious and talented people go to develop the skills they need to thrive in tomorrow’s world.

“We’re the place to be if you’re looking for future-proofing your career with the commercial logic and creative magic.”

In partnership with the ACA, Red and Yellow offers bursaries to selected students for media-related qualifications.



Featured Students





Ameer Janodien

The MDDA fulfilled my marketing dream

Ameer Janodien always had a passion for marketing, a field with diverse opportunities across various industries. After completing his matric at Wynberg Boys High School in Cape Town, Ameer applied to universities to pursue his dream in Marketing.

Through a family connection, Ameer discovered the bursaries offered by Red & Yellow, an educational institution focused on media studies. He applied and eagerly awaited a response.

“When I received the bursary, I was overjoyed,”

Ameer aspires to further his education with an honours degree and possibly a master’s degree, funding permitting. He dreams of working with prestigious agencies like Ogilvy or Saatchi & Saatchi, and eventually starting his own business.

Ameer believes that bursaries like those from the EDF play a crucial role in addressing wealth inequality in South Africa and extends his gratitude to the MDDA, the EDF, and all bursary contributors for their support.

“They truly change the lives of young South Africans, enabling companies to tap into emerging talent.”



Ashleigh Brinkhuis

Empowered by the MDDA/EDF Bursary Fund

Ashleigh Brinkhuis, who began her academic journey studying accounting at the University of Cape Town, faced a tough decision when personal and financial challenges forced her to pause her studies. Determined to continue her education, she discovered an opportunity to apply for a BCom in Marketing bursary at Red & Yellow, funded by the EDF through the MDDA.

Taking a chance, she applied and was awarded the bursary, allowing her to pursue a new path in which she thrived. In 2023, her hard work and dedication led to her selection by the Erasmus Student Network to participate in a prestigious six-month exchange programme in Belgium. There, she gained invaluable international marketing experience.

After completing her degree, Ashleigh was offered an internship with Heineken, a testament to Red & Yellow’s

strong industry connections.

She dreams of securing a permanent role at Heineken, advancing to a management position, and pursuing further studies either in South Africa or abroad.

Reflecting on her journey, Ashleigh expressed her deep gratitude to the EDF, the MDDA and the Competition Commission.

“I am really grateful that I was one of the people chosen. Having the degree will help me in my career aspirations, so I say thank you.”



Danielle Sadan

The EDF Bursary transformed Danielle Sadan’s future

Danielle Sadan, once one of the breadwinners in her household, never thought higher education was within her reach. After working in customer service roles, she discovered a passion for marketing and set her sights on a BCom in Marketing at Red & Yellow.

Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, she applied for a bursary funded by the EDF. Initially rejected, she was later thrilled to receive confirmation of her bursary.

The bursary allowed Danielle to focus entirely on her studies, and she thrived in her coursework, particularly in Consumer Behaviour. Inspired, she now aims to pursue a postgraduate degree in Industrial Psychology. Danielle also aspires to make a meaningful impact in the industry, especially by supporting young women of colour who face limited opportunities.

Grateful for the support, Danielle reflects, “Young people of today can actually have an impact. Offering bursaries gives them the opportunity to use their voice.”

She thanks the MDDA and business partners for opening doors she never thought possible.

“I’m very grateful for the opportunities that have come my way because of the EDF bursary.”

Pulane Swanepoel

From Occupational Therapy to Marketing

Pulane Swanepoel’s journey into the media industry was an unexpected one. Originally set on a path toward Occupational Therapy at Stellenbosch University, she soon realised that her true passion lay elsewhere.

While studying, she discovered her love for creativity, particularly in social media, leading her to win a social-media campaign competition. This victory earned her a bursary for a course in Digital Content Creation, sparking her desire to pursue a BCom in Marketing at Red & Yellow.

However, financial constraints threatened to halt her progress. Fortunately, Pulane received a bursary from Red & Yellow, supported by the MDDA/EDF.

The support from the MDDA/EDF enabled her to successfully complete her degree and she now works as a marketing assistant at a tech company, with plans to further her studies.

“I think the media industry is often overlooked. We are like storytellers, and it’s so important to tell stories.”



North West University

is a public research university located on three campuses in Potchefstroom, Mahikeng and Vanderbijlpark in South Africa.

The university came into existence through the merger in 2004 of the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, a large, historical university dating back to 1869, which also had a branch in Vanderbijlpark, and the University of North-West (formerly the University of Bophuthatswana).

With its merged status, North-West University became one of the largest universities in South Africa with the third largest student population (full-time and distance education) in the country and ranks among top universities locally, in Africa, and globally.

NWU offered bursaries to several students to study for a degree in Communications, related to the media industry.



Featured Students





Atlehang Tunia Sehlaré

Strategic funding transforms lives and fuels aspirations

Atlegang Sehlaré, a third-year BA Communication student at North West University, initially thought the EDF’s funding offer was a prank! She had shifted from studying Live Performance to pursuing her passion for Content Creation, and the bursary notification felt like a dream come true once the reality of it set in.

“My love is to create art and connect people,”

The MDDA/EDF bursary was a game-changer and allowed her to focus fully on her studies and creative projects without financial stress.

This support provided a crucial boost to her academic and artistic pursuits. Atlegang sees herself pursuing an honours degree or a PhD in the future, driven by a desire to enhance communication within and beyond the industry.

“I am deeply grateful to the MDDA, the EDF, and business contributors for helping young people like me achieve our dreams. Your support has made a significant difference in my life.”

Duduzile Zwane

Duduzile’s journey from education to communication

Duduzile Zwane, from Katlehong in the East Rand, began her studies in Education at North West University but quickly realised her passion lay in Communications. Transitioning to a BA in Communication, she faced financial challenges as a self-funding student.

An unexpected email from the MDDA/EDF changed everything. “I didn’t apply. I was chosen, probably because I was a top student,” Duduzile shared, the bursary allowing her to focus fully on her studies.

Duduzile is grateful for the opportunity the bursary provided. She now plans to pursue honours in advanced corporate communication and aspires to become a brand strategist, filling a critical gap in the South African market.

“I want to thank the MDDA, the EDF, and business contributors for making a significant impact on my life.”



Lindokuhle Nkosi

Empowered to succeed thanks to EDF Support

Lindokuhle Nkosi, a third-year BA in Communications student at North West University, initially struggled with a Psychology degree before discovering her true passion for writing. Hailing from Newcastle in KZN, she faced financial challenges as the eldest of three siblings in university, placing a heavy burden on her family.

Her fortunes changed when she received an email about EDF funding. Hopeful, she applied, and soon was thrilled to learn her application was successful. She shared the news with her parents, exclaiming, “Our prayers are answered” as the bursary would ease her financial stress, allowing her to settle her outstanding university debt.

Lindokuhle recognises the critical role of bursaries for media students noting that, while the NSFAS is known, opportunities like the EDF funding are crucial yet often overlooked.

With her sights set on making a significant impact, Lindokuhle hopes her journey will inspire others to persevere and seek out available support.

“To the MDDA, the EDF, and business contributors, ‘Ngiyabonga’. Your support has been a beacon of hope, providing a second chance to enhance our education and achieve our dreams. Thank you for your generosity and commitment to empowering students like me.”

Luseko Mbaleni

The EDF Bursary support transforms Luseko’s path to success

Luseko Mbaleni, a third-year BA in Communications student at North West University, was thrilled when she unexpectedly received a bursary offer from the MDDA which came at a crucial time, allowing her to clear her university debt and focus on her studies.

Communications, with its diverse channels like journalism and corporate development, perfectly aligns with Luseko’s varied interests. The EDF funding filled a significant gap for students like her, who don’t qualify for NSFAS but still need financial assistance.

This bursary not only motivated her to excel academically, but also inspired her career aspirations. She envisions becoming a Communication Practitioner, helping small businesses grow and succeed in competitive spaces.

“I would like to say thank you so much to the MDDA, the EDF, and business contributors for this wonderful opportunity. It has made a huge difference in my life.”

Nelson Mandela University

Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) opened on 1 January 2005, the result of the merging of the PE Technikon, the University of Port Elizabeth (UPE), and the Port Elizabeth campus of Vista University (Vista PE). The union of these institutions came about as a result of government’s countrywide restructuring of higher education – intended to deliver a more equitable and efficient system to meet the needs of South Africa, the continent, and the world, in the 21st century.

In 2017, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University was officially renamed **Nelson Mandela University (NMU)**: the only higher education institution in the world to carry the name of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela. The name change provided an opportunity for the institution to rebrand and position itself continentally and globally, while also allowing it to usher in a new era of renewed vigour towards meaningful transformation. Nelson Mandela University is today a sought-after educational destination and the most diverse university in South Africa.

Situated in Gqeberha in the Eastern Cape, NMU was selected to provide bursaries, financed by the EDF, to eligible students to study for various media-related degrees.



Featured Students





Lee Doho

Empowered by EDF Funding, Lee Doho transforms her life through education

At 45, Lee Doho, a mother and freelancer, made the bold decision to pursue her honours in Corporate Communications, building on her undergraduate degree in Public Relations. Navigating the unpredictable world of freelancing, Lee found herself working from gig to gig, without the security or benefits of permanent employment. Balancing her career with family responsibilities, she knew it was time to invest in her future.

Lee discovered the EDF bursary through Nelson Mandela University, where she had graduated in 1996. Although she doubted she would qualify as a working adult, she applied and was thrilled to receive a bursary.

“The funding and my postgraduate studies have changed my life, validating me that much more.

I feel proud of myself, tremendously so.”

Despite being the oldest in her class, Lee overcame challenges, graduating cum laude. The bursary not only alleviated her financial burdens, but also opened up new horizons, empowering her to achieve her vision of becoming a thought leader in the media industry.

With heartfelt gratitude, Lee thanks the MDDA/ EDF, and Nelson Mandela University for making her dream a reality.

“It’s been a long, arduous journey, but your support has made it joyful, meaningful, and fulfilling. Thank you for taking a chance on me.”

Sifiso Nyana

Turning challenges into creative success

Coming from a disadvantaged background in the Transkei, Sifiso Nyana faced the challenge of working extra hours to attend university. While studying graphic design at Nelson Mandela University, he learned about the EDF bursary through an email from his lecturer.

He applied immediately but began to lose hope as the academic year drew to a close, so it came as a great relief when he was finally awarded a bursary, and his financial worries eased. Sifiso could finally focus on his academics and enjoy his studies. The bursary also enabled him to launch ‘Listen Live Africa’, a platform that unites students from various artistic disciplines across the university campus. This initiative has successfully brought together creative talents in music, fashion, and more.

Thanks to the EDF, Sifiso now aims to use his graphic design skills to create new channels of communication, especially for the people of the Transkei, where many struggle to visually express their ideas.

“I’m deeply grateful to the MDDA, the EDF, Nelson Mandela University, and the business contributors for giving me this opportunity. This support has been life changing.”



Thabiso Erasmus

Empowering dreams with EDF Funding

Thabiso Erasmus, from the small town of Matatiele in the Eastern Cape, turned his passion for media into reality with the help of EDF funding.

After completing a degree in Environmental Sciences, Thabiso pursued his true interest by enrolling in Media Communications and Culture at Nelson Mandela University in 2021. To manage costs, he studied online during COVID-19 and worked to save funds for his education.

Despite his efforts, financial constraints threatened his ability to complete the course. The breakthrough came when he discovered, through a university email, the prospect of an EDF bursary which would allow Thabiso to finish his degree and settle outstanding fees.

When he received word that he had been awarded the bursary, he was ‘over the moon’ as he could now finish his course.

From that moment on his future looked brighter, enabling him to follow his dream of becoming a copywriter and work in the advertising industry, where he plans to elevate emerging brands and give them a powerful voice.

Now on track to graduate cum laude, Thabiso is set to continue his studies with an honours degree in Media Communications and Culture.

“A heartfelt thank you to the MDDA, Nelson Mandela University, and the EDF for making my dreams achievable. Your support has opened doors and allowed me to pursue my passion.”

