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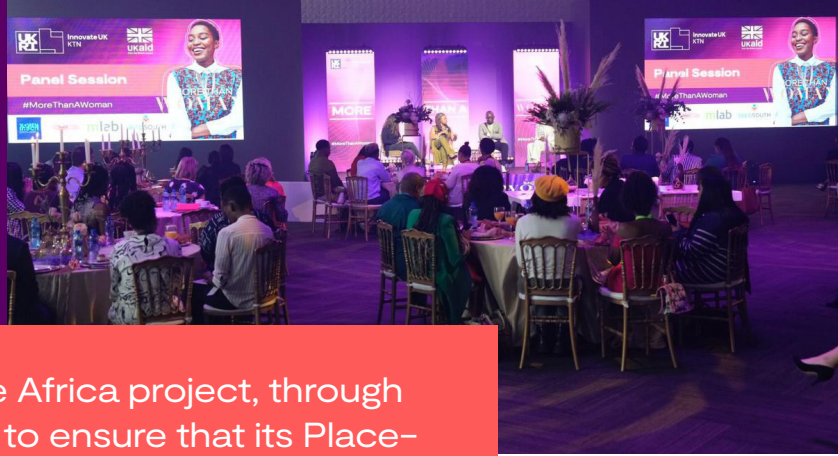
Connecting for  
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## Case Study

# PBI in Action: Creating Change Through Telling Untold Stories

# Introduction



A key objective of the Global Alliance Africa project, through the **#MoreThanAWoman** initiative, is to ensure that its Place-Based Innovation (PBI) activities are tailored to the needs of under-represented communities, and more specifically, women.

The initiative came about after a locally led Advisory Group identified improved opportunities for women innovators as a key pillar to achieve its collective goal to create **“an inclusive innovation ecosystem driving economic growth and prosperity in Gauteng”** through the PBI model and activities.



## The Problem

Women in townships and lower-income communities play an integral role in creating sustainable solutions to local challenges. The [Mastercard Index of Women Entrepreneurs \(MIWE\)](#) points towards steady growth in the number of women-led businesses in South Africa: **up from 19.2% in 2019 to 21.9% 2021.**

Yet, traditionally, women-owned businesses and ideas are often labelled as ‘informal’ and, as a result, **are undermined and overlooked** despite their vast potential for growth, revenue, and socio-economic impact.



To achieve [Sustainable Development Goal 5](#) (gender equality; empower all women and girls) requires transformative shifts, integrated approaches, and innovative solutions. When putting it in the context of place-based innovation it demands a different approach to support and enable women to participate, contribute and access all levels of the innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem.

**Investing in women is an important part of building the talent and skills pipeline for business innovation.** Inspiring, involving and investing in greater diversity is a core part of Innovate UK KTN investment activities in the UK<sup>1</sup>.

Investing to break down barriers for female entrepreneurs in Africa is also a core part of the UK International Development agenda, as the UK is leading the way in supporting female entrepreneurs across Africa to start and grow businesses<sup>2</sup> and the **#MoreThanAWoman** initiatives is one of many others.

1. [iuk.ktn-uk.org/programme/women-in-innovation](http://iuk.ktn-uk.org/programme/women-in-innovation)  
2. [gov.uk/government/news/uk-aid-to-break-down-barriers-for-female-entrepreneurs-in-africa](http://gov.uk/government/news/uk-aid-to-break-down-barriers-for-female-entrepreneurs-in-africa)



## Through the #MoreThanAWoman initiative we set out to:

- ✓ Redefine the perceptions of innovation by women, especially those who are from or are servicing townships, by breaking the glass ceiling.
- ✓ Use a storytelling approach to demonstrate that these women are leaders and change-makers whose stories need to be heard and told.
- ✓ Use innovation tools and methodologies to support a cohort of women entrepreneurs from townships or servicing townships to proactively identify obstacles and think through actionable next steps.
- ✓ Convene ecosystem actors to facilitate connections and collaborations to support the inspiring women entrepreneurs / innovators.
- ✓ Convene the ecosystem to reflect and actively address obstacles and barriers for women innovators / entrepreneurs within the current ecosystem.

## The Solution

The #MoreThanAWoman initiative aimed to redefine perceptions of women innovators by exploring the obstacles women entrepreneurs face; outlining actionable next steps for remedying these issues; and spotlighting success stories.



## Four key strategies/approaches were used to support the women:

### i. Bespoke support services

Based on a thorough analysis of each individual's needs and gaps (rather than a one-size-fits-all approach).

### ii. Speaker training

Taking an approach to support the women to tell their powerful stories and, in doing so, giving due justice to their innovative products and/or services when presenting to an external audience.

### iii. Spotlighting opportunities

In the form of an event and media opportunities to give the women a voice and an audience to pitch their ideas and innovations to.

### iv. Facilitating access to investment

Through seed funding/award opportunities and access to investors that they may not ordinarily be able to reach.



## i. Bespoke Support Services

Following a call for stories, we selected a cohort of eight women entrepreneurs to go through the journey with us. We took the cohort through speaker training and used the Innovate UK KTN [Innovation Canvas](#) tool to identify areas where they required specific support to develop their business and inform their pitches.

The Innovation Canvas tool is designed to help innovators create value from innovation and identify the changes needed to make an idea succeed. It provides a framework for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of a specific project, identifying the most urgent challenges to overcome, and prioritising what action to take.



## ii. Speaker Training

From the initial cohort of eight, we shortlisted four women innovators who were then supported with additional speaker training to ensure they were confident to showcase their work and tell their story, alongside a professionally created video that authentically tells their story to attract potential investors and partners.

"The most amazing part was that a professional production company assisted us to tell our story in a video format and bring in everything about what makes us a woman, not just the business side of things, but who I am as a mother; who I am as a sister; who I am as a person within the community."  
**Lungile Maile**





### iii. Spotighting Opportunities

The work culminated in a **local network event**, organised by Global Alliance Africa and collaborating ecosystem partners, for the four finalists to tell their story and showcase their successes. In keeping with our belief in collaboration and partnerships, we brought together innovators, entrepreneurs, investors, incubators, and media to the event to share and deep dive into the untapped opportunity of township economies.



While their innovations offer solutions to very pertinent local challenges, these stories also demonstrate the ability to **create broader socio-economic impact in the longer term.**

### iv. Facilitating Access to Investment



To demonstrate Global Alliance Africa’s continued support, and to encourage the stakeholders in the audience to support the women on their journeys, two awards were presented to the ‘Best Pitch’ on the day, Lungile Maile, ([view case study](#)) and the ‘Best Township Innovation’ Thuso Motau ([view case study](#)).



Best Pitch winner Lungile Maile

Best Township Innovation winner Thuso Motau

The event served as a platform to encourage investment, coaching and mentoring for women entrepreneurs. By showcasing the tremendous potential of what women can achieve within townships, the initiative sought to contribute towards the two finalists’ next milestones and ambitions to grow and scale their businesses.



# Results & Benefits

The showcase videos spotlight the four inspiring women that pitched their innovations at the **#MoreThanAWoman** event.

The four finalists now have an additional asset in the form of the [video](#) to be able to pitch to other partners and investors.

The wider cohort of women are also taking away valuable learning around how to speak, present and pitch to different audiences; better understanding of their own journeys in being able to identify and solve challenges; and confidence in their ability to tell their story and access partnerships.

Most importantly, **they felt a sense of community in being part of the cohort** and being able to share their struggles and successes.

“Meeting women who are on a similar entrepreneurial path is so refreshing, as the journey is often isolating and extremely lonely<sup>3</sup>.”

The combination of bespoke **support services, speaker training, spotlight opportunities and facilitating access to investment** thus far has proven an effective combination in **accelerating these women’s journey** towards increased access to investment to grow and scale their businesses. The snapshot below highlights the impact that these activities have had to date on one, of our four, inspiring women innovators.

## Spotlight: Mahlodi Letsie



Mahlodi Letsie is the founder of Bare Minds, a revolutionary start-up that offers personalised self-development programmes for African youth struggling with their mental health. Their mission is to **promote mental wellness through an African lens**, using cutting-edge technology and innovative approaches to help individuals achieve their mental wellness goals.



“It was an incredible opportunity we had, through to the process of us being able to film a docuseries spotlighting our stories as female innovators in Johannesburg right through to the pitching experience. It was an amazing platform to get Bare Minds out there into the public and make those networking opportunities happen.”

Leveraging the connections made through the **#MoreThanAWoman** initiative, Mahlodi has been accepted into the next Future Females cohort for 2023; been on two radio segments; participated in a TEDx Pretoria Salon Event; and is exploring opportunities to work with students from University of Johannesburg to carry out further research and development on her product and services. [Learn more](#)

3. Quote from anonymous feedback received from women entrepreneur



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The Global Alliance Africa project is a six-year project funded by UK International Development through Innovate UK (GCRF) and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

Read more about PBI in the following case study:

### Place-Based Innovation, a Snapshot of 2022-2023



[View Case Study](#)

For more information on PBI and Global Alliance Africa, contact Bhavya Srinivasan

**Bhavya Srinivasan**

Knowledge Transfer Manager - Global Alliance Africa

✉ [bhavya.srinivasan@iuk.ktn-uk.org](mailto:bhavya.srinivasan@iuk.ktn-uk.org)

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