



Black Umbrellas CEO Mark Frankel.



Kgosigadi Communications founder Rene Mokoena.



G Nkomo Incorporated founder Gcobisa Nkomo.



Youneeq founder and entrepreneur Thembelihle Sishi.

Black Umbrellas opens business avenues

Asanda Mathhare
 asandam@caxton.co.za

The country's staggering 33.5% unemployment rate was highlighted at a Women's Month event at Clico Hotel in Rosebank on August 20.

The event was hosted by Black Umbrellas in partnership with the Cyril Ramaphosa Foundation, as women entrepreneurs were celebrated.

For black African women, unemployment is higher than the national average. According to Statistics South Africa statistician-general Risenga Maluleke, the unemployment rate among black African women was 39.2% in the first quarter of 2024.

"Black African unemployment rates have been consistently higher than other population groups over the past 10-year period," she said.

Black Umbrellas was established as a non-profit company in 2005 with the object of providing resources, training and support to emerging black-owned small, medium, and micro enterprises. The primary purpose of the non-profit has always been to address the high levels of economic inequality in South Africa, and the resultant high levels of poverty and unemployment.

The aim is to provide qualifying black entrepreneurs with the confidence and skills to build businesses with the necessary foundations for sustainable growth.

According to Mark Frankel, the CEO of Black Umbrellas, "With the support of our corporate sponsors, more women are enabled to participate in Black Umbrellas' development programmes, furthering a shared commitment to gender equality and empowerment."

To be part of Black Umbrellas, budding entrepreneurs are encouraged to visit the NPC website to create a profile and be assessed through various forms provided on the portal.

The Sanlam Foundation has also partnered with Black Umbrellas to give small and medium-sized enterprises access to the resources and expertise they need for their businesses to thrive. This is through three programmes customised to match any stage of a business person's entrepreneurial

journey.

Gumede said, "At Sanlam, it is important to look at entrepreneurs at every phase of their business, hence, the three programmes enable an entrepreneur to move from one level to the next."

Sanlam Foundation programme manager Andiswa Gumede talked about the programmes:

- **Masakhe (let us build)** – A six-month programme that allows entrepreneurs to validate their ideas and see if it is still in the 'idea phase' or to cement themselves in the type of industry they are stepping into. This is also where they build their value proposition.
- **Siyakhula (we are growing)** – An eight-month programme that looks at cementing the business, opening doors in terms of finance, and other avenues that help build a business through coaching or boot camps.
- **Asindize (let us fly)** – A programme that takes a business to the next level where one can scale, create employment, and build a sustainable business that can outlive you as an entrepreneur.

The founder of digital marketing consultancy Youneeq, Thembelihle Sishi said she was deeply grateful for the role Black Umbrellas played in her business journey.

"We were met with the disheartening news of our high unemployment rate with women being the most affected. Alarming, women with qualifications faced a higher unemployment rate of 10.7% compared to 8.3% for men, however, the organisations that are part of Black Umbrellas are actively engaged in changing these harsh realities," she added. "Black Umbrellas is deeply familiar with our struggles and ensures to meet us where we are and accommodate our inadequacies and concerns through master classes, business model workshops, and activities." Another entrepreneur, Kgosigadi Communication founder Rene Mokoena shared her business journey.

"Black African unemployment rates have been consistently higher than other population groups over the past 10-year period."



Black Umbrellas project manager Raymond Matala.

"As an entrepreneur, I sought guidance and mentorship, stumbled upon Black Umbrellas, and filled in their entry form. I was placed in the Siyakhula programme which aimed at propelling an entrepreneur through tests and exercises that build you as a person. I found the programme to be wholesome and thoroughly prepared me for the business."

Mokoena started her business in 2012 and specialises in traditional marketing, including branding, solutions, and events. With the ever-evolving marketing digital space, she has added digital marketing services and created online footprints for her clients.

The CEO of Cyril Ramaphosa Foundation Mmabatho Maboya concluded that they wanted to reaffirm their dedication to empowering women entrepreneurs, fostering an environment where they could overcome challenges and achieve success.



BAAB Media Group managing director Zintle Ramano.