

# RISE INTERNATIONAL

Evaluation Report January 2019 to March 2020



Relationships  
Inspiring  
Social  
Enterprise

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

After 7 years of working in Southern & Eastern Africa and witnessing how under-resourced local entrepreneurs are in rural and semi-rural environments, Daniela Gusman co-founded Relationships Inspiring Social Enterprise (**rise**) International with Oliver Needs, BOND Events' President, in partnership with two architects Pedro Clarke and Luca Astorri who have extensive experience working in low income countries together creating the "**in loco**" program.

**rise** International is a US registered non-profit established in 2016 piloting in Lesotho, Southern Africa since January 2018, and has since also registered as a non-profit in Lesotho in July 2019.

**rise** links aspiring entrepreneurs to essential resources they need to thrive particularly for university graduates from the built environment.

The resources provided include business & entrepreneurial training as well as design & build technical coaching, soft skills development, professional networks, access to market and employment opportunities.

**rise** seeks to improve the poor quality and lack of infrastructure in most African cities and seeks to improve the capacity of local construction entrepreneurs to tackle these challenges, by bringing recent graduates from the built environment with local skilled labourers to work on design and build community projects.

The aim is to alleviate poverty through economic development by training aspiring entrepreneurs in the built environment to set up businesses thus generating employment for themselves and others.

Tradespeople and professionals are recruited to mentor and work together with recent graduates on a live community project, through a program called **in loco** that uses locally sourced talent and materials, striving to create an entrepreneurial mindset.

The **in loco** program is a unique design, build and entrepreneurship fellowship program focused on learning by doing.

## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report analyzes and evaluates the key activities that **rise** has implemented through 2019.

This includes the second cohort of the **in loco** fellowship and the impact of the fellowship by assessing the progress of the first cohort of **in loco** alumni post the 2018 fellowship.

Learnings from the 2018 fellowship, proved that an improved recruitment strategy was necessary in order to increase the quality of applicants, which **rise** management put into place for the recruitment of the 2019 cohort of fellows, as well as decreasing the number of fellows recruited from 20 down to 13 fellows.

In addition, rather than recruiting an older experienced site manager, **rise** management took the executive decision to hire one of the 2018 alumni to be the site manager for the 2019 cohort which helped ensure continued professional growth for the alumni as well as giving the new cohort of fellows emotional support since they were being managed by a recent **in loco** graduate.

### Methodology

Data was collected through surveys throughout the year.

For each activity, **rise** conducted baseline and endline surveys post the intervention. Self assessments as well as one-on-one bi-monthly reviews were conducted with all the fellows.

Continued monitoring will be carried out for 5 years post fellowship and beyond if possible, in order to monitor the fellows' ongoing progress and challenges post the fellowship.

### Findings

- It was found that the 2018 alumni who were able to attend the ongoing mentorship provided by **rise**, were in a better position to manage their businesses, as opposed to those who did not take part in the mentorship program.
- Recruiting based on quality, instead of quantity, proved effective in the caliber of fellows recruited and in the management of the program.
- Partnering with community projects with strong management systems in place, is crucial for the successful implementation of the ongoing success and management of the infrastructure and project developed.
- This was a different case, than working with an organisation that needed far more than a building, but also required organisational capacity strengthening which is beyond **rise**'s core competencies and therefore not in a position to provide.



## Key activities completed in 2019

- Design & Build of Lesotho's first **Intellectual Disability and Autism Centre (IDAL)** which was the 2019 *in loco* fellowship project.
- Pilot rural project for economic and infrastructure development in partnership with a non-profit called **Possible Dreams Foundation** which consisted of the Construction of a footbridge as well as the start of a community sewing project in the rural community of Ha' Sekantsi.
- Design a model day care centre for the children of factory workers in Maputsoe, commissioned by **Catholic Relief Services**, as well as designing low cost improvements to existing day care centres.



## Key activities started in 2019 that will continue in 2020

- **African Clean Energy** selected *rise's* alumni to design and construct 19 mobile shops that will enable them to distribute their energy efficient stoves to hard to reach rural communities throughout the country. This project is co-funded by the **EU** and was a challenging tender for the *in loco* alumni to have won under *rise's* guidance.
- A non-profit, **Kick4Life** has hired *rise* to design and manage the build of a football stadium.
- **The Morija Hub** and **Morija Arts Centre** have commissioned *rise* to design an extension for the Hub and a new Community Arts Centre in Morija.
- **Morija Heritage** project has asked *rise* to carry out an architectural survey and compile restoration plans for historic buildings which will be done in partnership with the Masters program from the Politecnico di Milano.
- A non-profit **Action Ireland Trust** is recruiting *rise* as their implementing partner to design and construct ablution blocks as well as water harvesting, food gardens and school kitchens in 5 primary and secondary schools in the District of Maseru identified by the Ministry of Education as top priority schools in need of assistance.
- **Scatec Solar** commissioned *rise* to conduct Financial Literacy training for 36 community members who have sold their individual plots of land to a company who will install solar panels and generate energy into the national grid - a first of its kind in Lesotho.





## Key activities started in 2020

- LNFOD (Lesotho National Federation of Organisations with Disabilities) hired rise to design & build their new HQ offices as well as income generating activities so that they can sustain themselves as an organisation. This project will form the 2020 *in loco* fellowship.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, a young group of *in loco* 2019 alumni, formed a company called xyz collaborative who have designed and built hand wash stations for the Ministry of Health and Maseru City Council sponsored by UNDP, UNICEF as well as for other organisations including Sepheo, Action Ireland Trust, Botho University and so on.

"I have learned a lot especially with the business sessions. I am now more confident in my business especially when it comes to negotiating. I would like to thank rise for the opportunity to learn, so many people that I interact with would now like to join the *in loco* program just from hearing about my experience."

- Tshepang Thabane  
2018 alumni

## Recommendations

The *in loco* fellowship has successfully been running for 2 years now.

Having understood the skills gap that exists with university graduates facing the job market, *rise* is now in a strong position to develop a curriculum that will help to make the program easily replicable and scalable to eventually be rolled out to other countries.

It has become apparent that an Enterprise Incubation Hub is needed to provide *in loco* alumni as well as other start ups with operational and business support, such as accounting, legal and marketing services as well as coworking spaces, ongoing business coaching, mentoring and access to market.

The pilot to test the *in loco* program in a rural setting has shown that adaptations to the program would need to be made for different geographical areas where rural communities' education level is more limited since the majority of them have not completed secondary school and have other skills and development needs than those of university graduates.