

## **Khama: Accessories brand built on collaboration between creatives in London, and Malawi**

London, United Kingdom Kasungu, Malawi

Elaine Burke

<http://vimeo.com/132736807>

<http://vimeo.com/132735084>





Year Founded:  
2012

**Organization type:**  
for profit

Project Stage:  
Growth

**Budget:**  
\$10,000 - \$50,000

Website:  
<http://www.khama.co.uk/>

**Twitter:**  
<https://twitter.com/khamadesign>

**Facebook:**  
<https://www.facebook.com/Khamadesign/>



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## Project Summary

### Elevator Pitch

#### **Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.**

Khama is an accessories brand built on a collaboration between designers in London and Malawi. Khama is a hub workshop and supports artisans with design, training, access to markets and facilities for our producers to have their own business. It creates a supplementary income for our producers.

#### **WHAT IF - Inspiration: Write one sentence that describes a way that your project dares to ask, "WHAT IF?"**

What if the woman of Sub-Saharan Africa no longer had to be dependent on others to create a sustainable life, what if they could create their own independent income streams and become the leading breadwinners of their families?

### About Project

#### **Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?**

When Khama's founder visited Kasungu she recognized the levels of poverty were strongly correlated to the lack of vocational training. She identified the dependency on farming, an unstable seasonal income. Attempts had been made to supplement income through sewing previously so as to improve livelihoods but this was poorly planned as there was no location to sell thus no passing trade and items made were identical. This is when Khama was formed.

#### **Solution: What is the proposed solution? Please be specific!**

Before Khama, the women were a part of a training scheme that taught sewing skills. This was beneficial but it wasn't providing income as the products they were producing were identical and the market saturated. Introducing design, the women make different items to that on the market and items for tourists that are new, thus opening up a whole new market which Khama are attempting to tap into. The problem of sourcing materials has been largely solved by Khama with the use of recycled or local material like fishing line or recycled rubber the women are now no longer reliant on imported materials. Eg Khama backpacks, instead of importing backing material we have used local materials by using recycled tobacco bags from a local tobacco farm.

#### **Awards**

No awards to date due to the high cost of entrance which we have chosen to spend alternatively, this being said we have had increased interest from well-known organizations such as Care international which we believe will increase people's awareness.

## Impact: How does it Work

#### **Example: Walk us through a specific example(s) of how this solution makes a difference; include its primary activities.**

Maggie was part of the original group from the knitting and sewing school. She responded well to training, and moved into a managerial role to coordinate production. Maggie is now our production manager. She supervises quality control, training new producers, leads product development and can read spec sheets, sample items and manage each stage so that we can make new products and pitch for more business. Maggie's income has increased x3 since joining Khama and she now provides for her family acting as the main breadwinner, before Khama she could not pay the rent for her home. She has her own clients at the workshop that provide an additional income. She has reported increased societal status in the local community since working at Khama.

#### **Impact: What is the impact of the work to date? Also describe the projected future impact for the coming years.**

Khama's impact can be seen in a number of different ways, take for example in the local community of Kasungu, school children can be seen with Khama backpacks on their way to school due to increased orders from local community. Khama have also an additional tourist trade as they are the only workshop of their kind in the area, therefore tourists and local NGO staff come and buy their gifts from those working at the Khama workshop. Khama now employ 4 full time staff members in Kasungu with approximately 15 other women working to supplement their other employment daily. Khama provides cooking facilities, running water, electricity in the workshop. So the women have the facility to cook 1 x hot meal during the day for themselves and regularly their children, whilst also allowing a place to socialize with others with the workshop becoming a kind of community centre for many in the locality.

#### **Spread Strategies: Moving forward, what are the main strategies for scaling impact?**

Our collaborations and interest from Care International and Value Added in Africa, Khama is due to continue moving forward. We want to create a full co-operative, teach IT skills to encourage trade and skill sharing. We partner with MicroEnterprise Africa and hope to expand this so they can be our core partner on the ground with experience in the finance and business sector in Malawi whilst mentoring our staff. Our strategy is to develop our product range by establishing specialist groups, for example we want to expand our group of hand knitters and woodcarvers to ensure year round business.

## Sustainability

#### **Financial Sustainability Plan: What is this solution's plan to ensure financial sustainability?**

Khama plans to form partnerships with organizations with large scale customer bases. We have partnerships in UK, USA, Ireland and Malawi. With more sales from these and our 13 stockists, we want to invest in improving skills of our producers which will lead to their self-sustainability. We have proven to be a trusted source for brands; have produced quality products for high-end boutiques, including a Selfridges and The People's Supermarket.

#### **Marketplace: Who else is addressing the problem outlined here? How does the proposed project differ from these**

## approaches?

There are a number of ethical brands out there now but at Khama we not only design our products, we have a production facility to do this. We have our own design-led brand and are able to support existing brands to make products in a fair way. We are different in that we allow for women to come and go from our organization as we appreciate that they have existing livelihoods but they also value the opportunity to supplement their income at Khama. This avoids creating a culture of dependency. We are unique in that we are not dependent on other sources and can produce all our products locally.

## Team

### Founding Story

Elaine studied womenswear at NCAD, Dublin before moving to London in 2001. Working as a designer and consultant for a number of independent brands, and then with high street clients. She became involved with Fairtrade projects in India, and artisans in Kibera, one of Africa's largest slums, in Nairobi. She then began seeking out a project that had more links with micro finance and a focus on producers working towards independence. Travelling to Malawi with Khama partner MicroEnterprise Africa, Elaine met a sewing group in Kasungu. Seeing that the sewing group had real potential, but noticing that graduates were producing identical low quality products she brought them together to form Khama.

### Team

Elaine Burke, Designer & Founder, UK, Ian Marshall, Co.Founder & Director Khama, Founder Micro Enterprise Africa. Ian is from an accounting and financial background. Lila Marie Hamilton, Art Direction and Branding, UK, Charity Chapita - Financial controller and administration, Malawi, Amos Danger (yes, that is his real name!) Lead pattern cutter, Malawi. Maggie Banda, Production and Workshop Manager. Amos and Maggie were part of the original team of from the old knitting and sewing project. Our core team of 12 producers are in the Khama workshop, and approx. 10 crochet producers in a nearby village.

### Value Chain: Where does your work fit into the apparel value chain? [check all that apply]

Raw Materials, Manufacturing.

### Your Role: What is your relationship to the apparel industry? [check all that apply]

Brand Representative, Designer, Factory Owner, Sourcing Manager / Supply Chain Manager.

### Target Population: What stakeholder groups do you engage or empower in your work? [check all that apply]

Brands, Consumers, Designers, Farmer or Farmer Associations, Factory Workers, Retailers - Department Store, Sourcing Manager / Supply Chain Manager, Women.

### ● Intervention Focus: What are you trying to achieve / influence? [check all that apply]

Access to Essential Services (i.e. Healthcare and Education), Conscious Consumerism, Environmentally Sustainable Practices, Labor Rights (i.e. Collective Bargaining, etc.), Gender Equality, Anti-forced Labor or Anti-Human Trafficking.

### Lever for Change: Select up to 3 ways your work is helping to transform the industry.

Capacity Building, Media, Training.

### Is your project targeted at solving any of the following key barriers?

A Job is Not Enough: Low-Income Workers Cannot Secure Long-Term Well-Being, Sustainability is Not Yet in the DNA: Fast Fashion's Current Model Disincentivizes Value-Driven Economies.

### Does your project utilize any of the innovative design principles below?

Activate Local Know-how for Driving Solutions: Build Opportunities for Workers to Become Leaders, Transform the Chain into a Web: Link Unlikely Sectors that Open New Pathways to Sustainability.

### Innovation Inspiration: When you first conceived of your project, did you think of it as applicable to the apparel industry?

yes

### If you answered "no" to the previous question, which industry was your project originally aimed at transforming?

### ● Replicating in the Apparel Industry: If your project didn't initially target the apparel industry, how are you specifically tailoring it to do so now?

### Are you nurturing or inspiring others to be changemakers? If so, how?

Khama works with London College of Fashion and Makerversity at Somerset House.

### ● Tell us about the partnerships that enhance your approach. How have you collaborated with others in the industry to increase your impact?

Ethnic Threads and Value Added in Africa Dublin, Care International/Lendwithcare, London College of Fashion,

Source URL: <https://www.changemakers.com/fabricofchange/entries/khama>