

Press release: One Linkage launches campaign for corporates to support SMMEs affected by unrest

23 July 2021

One Linkage, a women-owned technology company, is putting its weight behind efforts to help small South African businesses recover from the spate of unrest that affected parts of the country in recent days.

A week of looting and rioting has seen the destruction of thousands of businesses in the Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal provinces, with many of these being Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) that are likely to struggle to get up and running again.

To assist these businesses, on which tens of thousands of South Africans depend to earn a living, One Linkage has launched the #RiseUpSA Campaign, which aims to enable corporates to connect with and “adopt” SMMEs that need support.

One Linkage CEO and co-founder Hepsy Mkhungo says corporate South Africa is invited to join the cause and help SMMEs affected by the riots to rebuild and restart their businesses.

Some large corporates, such as Sasol, have already committed to the cause. Sasol’s Chief Procurement officer, Lebelo Lukhele explains, “The recent civil unrest coupled with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been catastrophic for many South African businesses. As a corporate rooted in our South African heritage, we must remain agile in our response to the needs of our SMEs to ensure they remain sustainable. We are proud to partner with One Linkage as part of the #RiseUpSA campaign in responding to the immediate needs of small businesses. This partnership allows us to demonstrate the ‘spirit of ubuntu’ along with the power of digital platforms and innovation in the face of adversity.”

“The initiative is designed to make it easy for corporates to lend support to affected SMMEs. As a small tech start-up, we know the devastating impact any disruption can have on small businesses. We are leveraging our cloud-based platform, designed to connect business opportunities, and make it easy for SMMEs and corporates to work together,” says Mkhungo.

Seamless collaboration

The Linkage platform is an integrated, cloud-based digital tool that facilitates seamless collaboration and transparency between stakeholders to achieve supplier diversity and small business development. For the campaign, Mkhungo explains that One Linkage is opening the onboarding component of its platform to the public at no cost to corporates and SMMEs.

“To participate in the campaign, SMMEs can register and upload required compliance documents, proof of being an existing business, and evidence of how they have been affected by the recent unrest. These documents will be used to vet and authenticate the claim,” she says. The platform will be open to both formal and informal business.

“Once a complete profile has been submitted, a high-level vetting processes will be conducted by our sister company, Zevoli, at no cost to any party, to minimise the exposure of corporates to unscrupulous claims.”

The SMMEs will then be categorised by industry, size, location, and number of employees to provide useful data for a corporate match. Registration is open to all small businesses with revenue of less than R50 million a year. Although BBBEE compliance will be requested, it will be for the purposes of recording rather than a pre-requisite for participation.

“Similarly, corporates are requested to register their interest to support SMMEs on the Linkage platform. They will need to provide general corporate information, contact details and indicate the type of support they would prefer to offer,” says Mkhungo.

Direct relationship

When a match is made, a direct relationship is established between the corporate and SMME. Corporates are free to select an SMME according to their preferred criteria. Some might select only businesses in their value chain, while others might prioritise a small business based on the number of employees, its location or how it has been affected.

“The platform provides corporates with suggested ideas for support, based on the individual requirements per SMME. These could include infrastructure support, funding, mentorship or even psychological support. However, any additional support not specified can be offered by

the corporate. Ideally, the participating corporate should take the SMME under their wing and provide end-to-end support to ensure the company can get up and running again.”

Mkhungo notes that one of the benefits for corporates is the support they lend can be aligned to either Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives or Enterprise and Supplier Development (ESD) initiatives. The platform will simply provide another means to source program participants.

“The broader benefit is helping the economy to recover from the setbacks caused by the unrest. The sustainability of any big business depends on its value chain. Unfortunately, the unrest has destabilised most value chains in South Africa, so this initiative is aimed to rebuild the industry.”

Registration will be open from 21 July to 23 September 2021. In support of Nelson Mandela month, it will remain open for 67 days. Both corporates and SMMEs can [register here](#).

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