Namibian Participatory Design Challenges

For the first time ever, PDC 2014 introduces local Participatory Design Challenges.

Design challenges occur everywhere, locally and internationally, and unfold in many different ways. Our intent is to tap into the expertise of international designers participating in the PDC 2014, to tackle relevant local challenges, leading to the implementation of designs.

Together with designers from all over the world, local stakeholders will design solutions for the Participatory Design Challenges chosen for this year. By holding an open call, the local organization team has identified 7 Namibian Design Challenges. Although the challenges are very specific to Namibia, we expect that the design processes and solutions found will be applicable to other countries.

Get involved now and contact: challenge@pdc2014.org

1. Become a challenge agent. Every Design Challenge should have two agents, one in Namibia and one outside of Namibia, to jointly lead the pre-conference process, organize the sessions to be held at the conference and eventually hand-over the proposals for implementation.
2. Fund or co-fund a Design Challenge (support the challenge financially or in services).
3. Simply declare your interest in participating as a stakeholder or solution developer.

PDC 2014 Design Challenge participants will have the chance to collaborate locally and online. Artful integrations of Design Challenges and interactions will be created in advance, allowing teams to read and research about the challenge, share their knowledge, discuss design processes, share images/sketches and evolve their ideas, leading up to the personal sessions at the PDC.

To achieve this, we will constitute and reflect upon the design and participation space through 2-3 interactions, in order to formulate the questions, motivations, relations in designing 'about, with and for'. Furthermore, we want you to bring any material needed to the sessions at the PDC. The sessions will take place in different formats, such as design workshops, competitions, excursions, artistic displays, panel discussions or any other fitting formats. The Namibia Business Innovation Centre (NBIC) is proudly joining the initiatives by supporting post-conference implementations of solutions.

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#1 Design Challenge: How can Namibia optimize its energy consumption and rely on its own renewable energy sources?

Namibia is one of the few countries worldwide with the most days of sunshine along with substantial amount of wind and woody biomass in the form of the invader bush exceeding 100 million tons. We believe that Namibia has great potential to harvest its own consumption of renewable energy and potentially export power. Though at the moment Namibia imports electricity from South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe and even Mozambique for centralized distribution. Neither consumers nor providers are engaging sufficiently in the worldwide debates and movements towards sustainability. Solar cooking/baking, water heating or electric cars are not widely available nor in use, neither are investments in de-centralized, renewable sources such as bush, wind and solar energy.

The Design Challenge here is to engage the major stakeholders in a design session on a feasible plan of action based on a sound business model, personal objectives and plans to which they will commit.

Stakeholders: NamPower, Electricity Control Board, Renewable Energy & Energy Efficiency Industry Association of Namibia (REIAoN), Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Institute (REEEI) at Polytechnic, Regional Electricity Distributors (REDs), municipalities, big companies like Ohlthaver & List, Mining companies, domain experts, and citizens.
#2 Design Challenge: How to foster a reading culture and ensure access to reading material for all learners and citizens of Namibia?

Many Namibians and especially learners have demonstrated a reading weakness, even though the illiteracy rate is not so high. Could the reading weakness be a question of interest, language, access, or cultural habits? Many schools or households stock books for young Namibians to engage in extra-curricular reading. Could the reading culture be promoted through new devices such as e-readers where books of choice are more accessible?

This Design Challenge aims to find strategies to encourage young and old Namibians to engage in reading through facilitating easier access.


#3 Design Challenge: How can we prevent the rise of gender-based violence in Namibia?

Of late, Gender Based Violence (GBV) has taken on dimensions that can no longer be tolerated or ignored at national level. Even in their own homes, women and children have suffered irrevocable atrocities and a national outcry seems not to have put it to an end. While the problem has many causes, approaching it from different angles with joint collaborators across society and governmental agencies responsible can lead to solutions.

The Design Challenge here is to get different experts and citizens together and develop long-term strategies as well as selected interventions and services through innovative design.

Stakeholders: Ministry of Gender & other ministries such as Ministry of Health, Directorate of Social Welfare Services, national and local police units & responsible citizens

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#4 Design Challenge: How can Namibian citizens get involved in decision and policy making along with the promotion of social activism?

Recent government decisions on expenditures such as the State House, Defense Force and the like, have led many Namibians to complain amongst themselves and on social media, yet no further actions were taken. Could it be that citizens feel themselves to be at the mercy of a few decision makers? Or is it that their voices are not heard? Could there be mechanisms in place that ensure early and wide information flows enabling citizens to air their views and be heard before decisions are made?

The Design Challenge is to co-design channels and platforms of communication to be shared amongst citizens and decision makers.

Stakeholders: Citizens, Governments

#5 Design Challenge: How to ensure that Namibian schools gain on-line presence?

Xnet is Namibia’s National Research and Education Network (NREN) that currently provides affordable connectivity solutions to the education sector in Namibia. Amongst its beneficiaries, schools are the highest in number. Unfortunately, they are also the most disadvantaged when it comes to technology. Although over 300 schools have been connected to date very few of them have an online presence. Xnet would like to offer each and every school connection a free website and email, as part of their connectivity package.

Thus the Design Challenge is to design a self-provisioning website template that is easy to activate once a school is connected with Xnet. The template should also allow users to make some basic changes (such as colors...) and more importantly, it should be simple and easy to maintain and use given that the majority of users will be unfamiliar with how websites work.

Stakeholders: XNet, Learners, Teachers, Principals, Ministry of Education, Educational Designers
#6 Design Challenge: How can we ensure that casual workers, unemployed and homeless people are informed about jobs (casual and permanent), further trainings and other services available to them for potentially improving their life?

Namibia’s unemployment rate of 27% is alarmingly high, with 49% of youth unemployment making up that number. The current National Development Plan 4 prioritizes job creation and the reduction of the unemployment rate. While projects like “Men on the side of the road” are actively engaged in creating jobs and training opportunities to transform casual workers into permanent workers, many more services need to be created. For example, could a public job demand and offering system with rankings improve individual employment chances?

Thus the Design Challenge is to design viable services for casual workers, homeless and unemployed people to facilitate their entry into the economical system.

Stakeholders: City of Windhoek, Ministry of Labor, Casual workers, Existing projects, unemployed and homeless people

# 7 Design Challenge: How to facilitate collaboration between employers and educational institutions to jointly promote work-integrated learning at a national policy level?

Many tertiary institutions worldwide require learners to have completed internships before or during their studies. Although employers are looking for new comers with work experience they have been reluctant to offer internship opportunities, while universities experience a challenge to facilitate and assess the evidence and competence of students’ practical experience gained during work integrated learning (WIL).

The Design Challenge therefore is to design a model whereby students develop an ePortfolio as evidence to employers of their work related experience gained and to include this model as part of a workable national policy for integrating employers into educational responsibilities.
Stakeholders: Namibia Chamber of commerce and industry, Ministry of Education, University of Namibia, International University of Management, The Polytechnic of Namibia (Centre for open and Lifelong Learning and the Centre for Cooperative Education, Namibia Training Authority, Namibia Qualifications Authority.