

# IRock



## **INTRODUCTION**

iROCK UK!, referred to as iRock, as a social enterprise (not for profit business) providing employability and mentor programs for young people/women of African origin under the age of 25 years old. It is currently being managed by Viola Ncube as CEO and Tarisai Masamvu as Operations Director.

## **MISSION**

The mission of iROCK is to empower women of African heritage with skills and confidence to enable them to find employment, create successful businesses and become influential leaders in their communities. Through mentoring programmes and networking events, iROCK aims to create the opportunities for women to come together and find synergies for personal growth and career success.

## **BACKGROUND**

iROCK was founded by Viola Ncube and registered in 2011.

The need for iROCK became evident when the economic crisis that started in 2007 revealed worrying levels of youth unemployment and discontentment amongst the under 25 year olds in the UK. This culminated in the countrywide youth demonstrations that took place in 2011. Since then, the rates of unemployment amongst the under 25s has continued to climb, increasing the risk of further social unrest in the future. Sadly, the highest levels of unemployment were amongst young people from ethnic backgrounds who had finished high school or university and were struggling to get into employment. The main reason for them not getting employed was three fold: a) a lack of employability skills; b) a lack of relevant work experience and c) a lack of suitable role models within their community for them to emulate.

The aim of iROCK is to provide a place where these young people can gain the skills they need, get access to work experience opportunities and meet inspirational people from their communities or background.

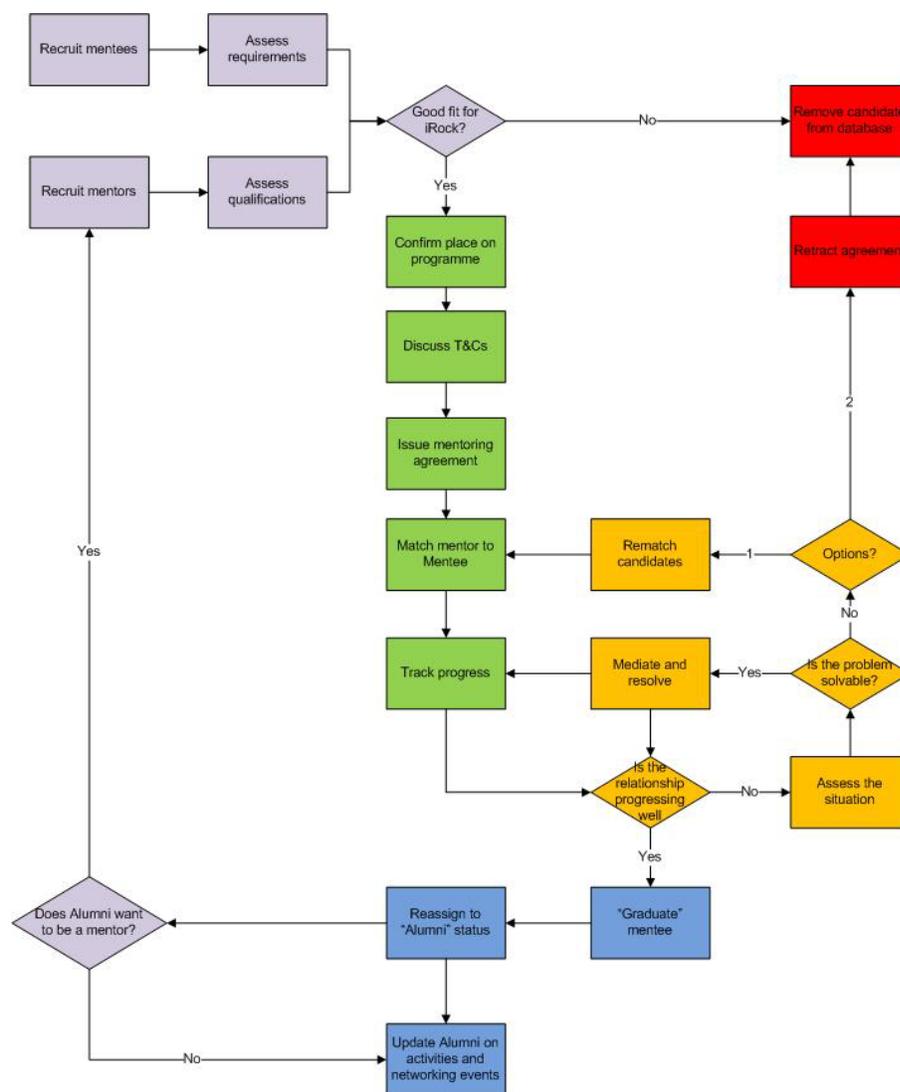
# OPERATIONS FROM 2011 TO 2015

To date, iROCK has implemented the following programmes and events:

## 1. Sister2Sister

This is a “women only” monthly mentoring program ran on an annual basis for a group of young women under the age of 25, looking at both employability opportunities and how to start a business. The programme comprised of both 1:1 mentoring and group mentoring sessions.

The mentoring process used in iRock’s Sister2Sister programme is illustrated below:



The first Sister2Sister programme ran from October 2011 to May 2012, the second one ran from January 2013 to October 2013. The 3<sup>rd</sup> programme started in January 2014 and is currently in progress.

### *Recruitment of Mentees and Mentors*

The first recruitment drive for mentors and mentees was in 2011 – through Viola’s personal contacts and networks. The second major drive was in 2013 on International Womens’ Day (8<sup>TH</sup> March 2013). The event was advertised as a “join iROCK!” evening with drinks & canapés at hotel in Central London. The event was an interactive session with prospective mentors and mentees, with presentations from Viola and Tarisai about what iROCK is, how the mentoring programme worked, the role of Mentor/Mentee as well as the benefits of mentoring. The event also provided women across different age groups to network.

## **2. ToolsForLife Workshops**

These workshops were designed to help young women with life skills. They were attended by an average 25 people discussing topics such as interview skills, personal budgeting, marketing, seed capital, and business plans.

Workshop titles included:

- Do Black Girls Have it Harder?
- Employment opportunities
- Financial Management
- Dress for Success
- CV Clinics
- Interview Skills
- Career development
- Personal Budgeting

The workshops (7 in total between 2012 and 2013) were at various locations in central London to ensure maximum attendance.

The workshops proved quite popular initially as it gave the mentees and mentors an opportunity to discuss and brainstorm ideas in a friendly and supportive environment. The challenges of the workshop over time were the sporadic attendance by mentees, which broke the continuity of the programme. To encourage attendance, an 80% attendance quota was imposed but this did not have the desired effect.

## **3. Fundraising Events - Tribes of Africa**

In 2012, iROCK successfully organized a fundraising event called “Tribes of Africa” which was a Black tie dinner with an attendance of 233 people at a 5\* London hotel. The event launched the iROCK brand and its mentoring programs. The organizing committee consisted of iRock mentors who all worked closely with the mentees to ensure the successful execution of the event. This event positioned iROCK in the market place as a high-end brand

with an ethical and professional ethos. It garnered a large amount of interest in the Sister2Sister mentoring programme within the African community.

#### *Successes of the event*

- The Class of 2011-2012 organized the event under direction of mentors and supporters, many citing this as key “work experience” for their cv’s and practical employability skills
- Sold 220 tickets, covering cost of the meal
- Received table support from corporations as Brand South Africa, attendance from key potential delegates from Deloitte, Bank of America, SA High Commission,
- TOA nominated for “Event of the Year” awards
- Press – with both the Press launch in February 2012 and the TOA gala, press such as BBC Africa, OK Nigeria, Pride Magazine, Africa New Women, FAB, Ghana.com, South African News, Nehanda Radio, NewZimbabwe featured iROCK’s cause and TOA from February – May 2012
- Due to the high level of execution, iRock received applaud for hosting a “crème de la crème” event, siting the location it was hosted, the prompt time management, the décor, and ambience

#### *Challenges of the event*

- Failure to receive sponsorship for the event meant it was funded entirely by the founder at a cost of GBP 16 000.00).
- Ticket sales were a struggle at the original pricing of GBP75.00 per person, leading to the team discount tickets to GBP50.00, which only covered the meal per person, and no other overheads.

#### 4. External events attended by iROCK with mentees/mentors

External Networking events mentees attended	External Short Courses for Mentees	Award/Dinners Mentees taken to(at cost to iROCK! UK)
Women's Dinner with Gus O'Donnel (Cabinet Secretary)	How to start a company with no investment	Miss ZimDiamond – Young Entrepreneurs
Apprenticeships Skills Exhibition Excel 2011	Business Plan	CAN (AIDS) Gala Dinner
Acumen Fund Angels pitch @ Hub Westminster	Website Woes	Positive Runway -Fight Against Aids
Access to Law - Women in Leadership @ The Common Wealth Club	Visual Communications	Zimbabwe Business Network
World Travel Market 2011 - 2 Mentees interned	Self employment rules	HTE School Christmas Dinner
St Mathews Primary School "Yes I can" networking evening - with Caroline Marsh	Branding & PR with <i>Rich Visions</i>	BEFTA Awards 2011
Pitch Africa November 2011		Diana Awards 2011
African Women in Business		Zimbabwe Achievers Awards 2012

#### 5. Findings & Lessons learnt from the Sister2Sister Programme and the Tools for Life workshops

*For the Mentees:*

- Whilst many under 25's felt the workshops were a necessary "evil", many very despondent as to the next step/progress even after attending workshops such as ours:
- Even after being skilled, many felt there was a lack of opportunities due to high ration of unemployment 1.9million graduates.
- Internships was only for "elite" few – the normal person could not afford to take an internship full time
- The NEET<sup>1</sup>s felt like the faceless generation
- There were not enough first job opportunities to gain the necessary "skills set" required by most

<sup>1</sup> Not in Education, Employment, or Training

employers

- The mentees struggled to understand the value of a mentor when what they need is a job
- Young people feel overwhelmed with other personal issues and are unsure how to balance them e.g. family pressures especially for those in the diaspora, relationships, transport cost to attend workshops/training, clothes/toiletries for an interviews

*For the Mentors*

- The ratio of mentors who could commit long term was much lower than that of mentees
- Mentors found the process time consuming (alongside their formal employment) and felt frustrated by the inconsistent commitment from the mentees
- Some were unclear about the scope of their responsibilities (only employment issues or personal as well)
- They found the journey frustrating when the “end goal” was not feasible, i.e. guarantee of employment for their mentee

## **CHALLENGES FACED BY IROCK!**

### **Cultural attitudes**

The target market of African diaspora under the ages of 25 did not appear to value the concept of mentoring. At the onset of each Sister2Sister program, an average of 30 prospective mentees would sign up, but the attrition rates would always be high, resulting in only a handful completing the 6 month programme. This was the same with the 1:1 mentoring programme where mentees were matched with high level executive and were required to meet with them monthly. Only 3 out of 10 successfully completed the 6 month program, with failing to attending meetings with no explanation.

### **Financial**

Since its inception in 2011, iROCK has been funded solely by its founder, Viola Ncube. As newly set up organization, iROCK! found it challenging to access sponsorship and funding from corporations and government organizations. The running costs from 2010 to present have been as follows:

- Running cost of 2010 to 2011 (£3.500)
- Running cost 2011 to 2012 (TOA - £16K, Mentoring sessions £4500)
- Running cost 2013 (£6500)
- Running cost 2014 – current (£1300)

The funding required was to cover basic costs which included:

- Office/Desk space
- Meeting space and catering
- Funding to host workshops and hire of professionals to organize/host
- Funding for fundraiser events
- Paying expenses for volunteers and part-time assistance
- Website design and updates

The lack of financial stability has meant that iROCK has found it challenging to operate at an optimum level. As the organization has not been generating any money or received any sponsorship, it has been unable to pay any salaries. As such, it has been reliant on graduate volunteers to undertake administrative tasks. Due to other pressures (trying to find paid employment, or finish education) their commitment was been short-term and sporadic which had an impact on the organisation's growth.

## **IROCK IN 2015**

iROCK is looking to expand its services by providing an e-mentoring platform that will bring professionals working in corporates together with young people at universities/NEETs. iROCK will facilitate this through its e-mentoring programme ensuring professionals and young people are matched to achieve the best results for both parties

### **Why e-Mentoring?**

The experience gained from 2011 to 2013 highlighted that one of the key issues for the lack of engagement by mentees was finding the time to meet their mentors. Most of GenY have grown up using technology and would be more engaged in a platform that would allow easier interaction with mentors and their peers.

E-mentoring ensures that:

- Distance between mentors and mentees is no longer a factor
- Time is managed between the participants at their convenience
- Space is not required as mentoring is digital via various audiovisual technology as Skype, Facetime,
- Funding
  - Once platform, website and marketing have been implemented, overhead costs will be minimal

### **Projected Outcomes**

For iROCK:

- E-mentoring will allow a faster pace of growth for iROCK and a wider reach of both target audiences (Mentees & Mentors)
- Once the technology is in place, e-mentoring platform will cross borders & seas to the most needy of markets (developing countries)

E-mentoring will provide measurability outcomes:

- number of mentees/mentors per allocated semester
- on impact of the mentoring programme (gauge by mentees/mentors)
- Time spent per month/year per mentee/mentor, alerts when minimum times are not met
- Views into website/programme, numbers that signed up, peak/trough periods of the program
- Next Step by each mentee/mentor and projected outcome
- Progress after completion of the program and impact in the community
- Alumni program

## **Benefits**

### For Mentees

- Easier accessibility to mentoring resources across boarder
- International exposure without costs incurred normally required to travel
- Personal Development Plans can be shared easier and more regularly
- Employability skills can be tested via Skype calls/FaceTime
- Structure and sense of direction and guidance towards a chosen career/business field
- Accountability

### For Mentors

- Easier accessibility to impacting potential mentees
- Exposure of challenges and opportunities faced by young people
- Fulfillment in enriching/positively impacting a young person

## **iRock Enterprise**

As a social enterprise, iRock is looking to grow the business side of the organisation. This will ensure that iROCK! will eventually become financial self funding and sustainable. Sponsorship from corporate partners will be used to implement and sustain the e-mentoring (social) side of the business. iROCK! Will also be applying to various relevant government funding bodies that support social enterprises, but iROCK! Will not be reliant on donor funds in the long term.

## **PARTNERS**

### **Corporates**

By utilising existing networks, iROCK is seeking to engage corporations that are based in the UK who wish to engage with youth in Africa. Africa has the highest youth population in the world with ever increasing levels of youth unemployment. Through an e-mentoring programme, corporates in the UK can help these young people to build their employment skills which will in turn help to reduce the social risks associated with unemployment in the region.

There are several key of benefits for the corporates who participate in this programme:

- it would demonstrate a commitment to a sustainable CSR programme
- it would provide an excellent programme for staff development and help to develop leadership skills

- it would create a pool of potential candidates for local positions within the company
- it would create great *organic* brand positioning and advertising in the community
- find more strategic and measurable benefits?

iROCK is seeking to set a pilot project in 2015 and is looking to work with South African companies based in the UK who are seeking to expand their mentoring CSR programme as part of their career development programme. These companies will be matched up to a carefully selected South African university whose students are seeking career advice, exposure and personal development. iROCK would work with the university career counselling departments to ensure the students on-site receive support and guidance through the process

### **University Partner**

iRock has approached Fort Hare University as a possible partner for the 2015 pilot. Fort Hare has been selected as it is a university with a significant population of students who are from an underprivileged background and who are unlikely to have contacts with professionals in industry. For these students, exposure to international professionals would be extremely beneficial to them as it will help to build their confidence as well as give them something to aspire to.

- Located in the Eastern Cape of South Africa, Fort Hare attracts students mainly from the surrounding rural areas but also has students from neighboring SADC countries (Zimbabwe) who have very little access to professionals in their field of study.
- The pilot project will be run in conjunction with the Accounting faculty and will be championed by Professor Lana Hanner Weldon, Associate Professor in the Department of Accounting and Denny Emslie, Senior Lecturer at University of Fort Hare.
- The accounting department has approximately 900 undergrad students and 100 post grad students. The

## **PLAN FOR 2015 PILOT**

### **Synopsis of key milestones for Pilot e-Mentoring programme**

#### **January 2015 - March 2015**

- Once sponsorship/funding is secured, iROCK will purchase the online mentoring tool, finalise website design with the tools, set up administration process for managing the process
- Launch website and e-mentoring programme in beta phase and trial with one university and iROCK staff to test the system, understand needs of the mentees and agree on SOPs
- Discuss and agree with partner corporations on the mentors they are providing and match them to the university mentees
- Official launch of final e-mentoring website
- Kick-off Class of 2015 mentoring group over 6 month program for April 2015 - September 2015

### **Projected Financials**

#### Summary of Key Projected costs in year 1

- Website creation (£3000)
- Purchase and implementation of e-Mentoring Tool online (£15 000 – one off) + yearly license fees tbc
- Marketing of the iROCK+ Corporate Partner program (£8000 p/y)
- Workspace – either with Corporate sponsor or Hub's
- Capacity required (UK & SA) –
  - 1 x Full time liaison for both UK & SA stakeholders & sourcing funding/sponsorship (£40 000 p/y)
  - 1 x Part time employee UK – training participants, managing reports and all iROCK administrations (£18 000 p/y)

## CONTACT DETAILS

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