



**spark**

**SPARK Business  
Support Centres  
Manual**

# **Introduction to Business Support Centres Manual**



**Their ability to create new jobs, spur economic growth and boost innovation make start-ups and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) an essential part of the global economy. In addition, they play an increasingly important role in addressing urgent development challenges and are crucial to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, in fragile and conflict-affected regions start-ups and SMEs face specific obstacles in doing business. These obstacles range from certain groups being excluded from the job market to legal restrictions in registering a company.**

## **Support and strengthening businesses**

Business Support Centres (BSCs) can help tackle the obstacles that start-ups and SMEs face. BSCs are physical spaces with well-trained staff that give business training, coaching and access to information and finance to help new businesses get started, while enhancing competitiveness and financial sustainability of existing ones. BSCs also keep relationships with university hubs and centres of excellence where innovative businesses ideas are developed in order to facilitate commercialisation of innovate products and services developed at universities. As additional support for start-ups and SME's in fragile regions remains much needed, we produced a Business Support Centres Manual, which can serve as a useful guide in establishing similar BSC programmes.



**SPARK**

Rwanda Kigali Entrepreneurs

# Manual

Our Business Support Centres Manual is meant to be as practical and hands-on as possible and therefore includes many real-life examples, lessons learned and ready-to-use templates. Highlighting the main elements of setting-up a Business Support Centres programme, the manual is divided into the following sections:

## **Setting up a Business Support Centre:**

- Planning sustainability of the BSC early on;
- Selecting local partners;
- Selecting a location;
- Selecting and training BSC staff;
- Communicating and branding.

## **Implementation and core activities:**

- Organizing business plan competitions;
- Providing business skills training and coaching;
- Developing and providing access to finance.

## **Measuring results:**

- Tracking business development;
- Establishing impact on business performance.

## **Making the BSC sustainable:**

- Selling services to growing businesses;
- Renting out office space;
- Investing in equity;
- Providing certified courses.

## **Conclusions and ways forward:**

- Important lessons;
- Recommendations.

# Who is this manual for

The SPARK BSC manual is written as a 'how-to' document that can guide practitioners in establishing sustainable BSCs. The possible users are those practitioners who work at chambers of commerce, non-profit organizations, universities and business associations.

## Key results:



Over 100,000 entrepreneurs have received business skills and entrepreneurship training;



Through our support, more than 7,500 existing businesses managed to grow, while over 4,000 new businesses were created;



In this way, around 30,000 jobs have been generated.



13 Business Support Centres established or supported

### SPARK

Entesar Asaker, Syrian, Mafaz  
Medical Equipment and Devices  
company, IEO Taqaddam,  
Amman, Jordan



# About SPARK

**SPARK is an independent, non-profit international development organization, with over 100 staff members working in fourteen offices in thirteen countries. Established in 1994, SPARK has over 25 years of experience in working in post-conflict regions of Eastern Europe, Africa and the Middle East.**

## spark

### Other Manuals:

You can also contact us about our manuals on:

- Cooperative support: from subsistence farming to commercial farming;
- Internship programmes for work experience;
- Entrepreneurship Summer Courses;
- Higher Education Scholarships;
- SME Coaching

**Haarlemmer Houttuinen 15H**

**1013 GL Amsterdam**

**Email: [spark@spark-online.org](mailto:spark@spark-online.org)**

**Phone: +31 (0)20 753 0311**

**[www.spark.ngo](http://www.spark.ngo)**