

Richard Branson helps open #GEW2017, first GEN startup campus in Africa

Issued by [Mark Marich](#), Vice President GEN

15 Nov 2017

Global Entrepreneurship Week jumped off to an early start this year as **Richard Branson**, Virgin Group founder, helped launch the first-ever GEN startup campus in Johannesburg, South Africa. The 100,000 square foot campus - offering direct and virtual support services to startups - is the largest known such facility throughout the African continent.



“Every big business in this world was started by an entrepreneur - and small businesses are the ones creating the jobs, innovating and making life better for everybody,” said Branson. “You have to do the hard part first to be able to get into position to make a difference.”

[22 on Sloane](#) opened to coincide with the Global Entrepreneurship Week. The new facility hosts a full slate of events throughout the week, including a range of masterclass sessions to support promising young entrepreneurs and pitch sessions for them to earn a 12-month residency. The masterclass sessions include:

- Moving Ideas to Market
- Access to Funding
- Doing Business in Africa
- Social Entrepreneurship and Impact Investing
- Integrating the Township and Informal Economy
- SME Manufacturing Techniques
- Facebook: Boost Your Business + Product Clinic

The vision for the center as a driver of a collaborative and cohesive ecosystem on the African continent came about in the preparation for the Global Entrepreneurship Congress which was hosted by the City of Johannesburg in March 2017.

Kizito Okechukwu, Co-Chair of GEN Africa, led the project from concept to creation.

“For us the campus is about building a community from all over the African continent,” said Okechukwu. “I believe that 22 on Sloane is for everyone - and anyone.”

As was the case with the Global Entrepreneurship Congress, the new startup campus enjoys strong support from the South African Government. At the launch, Small Business Development Minister **Lindiwe Zulu** stressed the importance of the effort.

“We can’t afford to let this fail because people that need to be serviced by this campus are the most important people in the economic space of South Africa. The improvement of the economy of South Africa will depend very much on your small and medium enterprises.”

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>