

# SUCCESS STORY

## Celebrating export achievements in a challenging year inspires Southern African export firms

**USAID teams up with trade promotion agencies and national governments to applaud the resilience of Southern African export firms in overcoming the impact of COVID-19.**



*In Eswatini, Sonia Paiva, Managing Director of Eswatini Kitchen (middle) proudly displays her award for winning Exporter of the Year: U.S. Market, flanked by U.S. Ambassador Jeanne M. Maloney and Minister of Commerce, Industry and Trade, Manqoba Khumalo.*

*“Liberation Clothing is humbled and proud of the awards that have been bestowed upon us. The magic is the team that we employ...we have grown to over 700 Basotho team members over the past four and a half years. And as a (work) family, we have overcome all obstacles...and we will be back fighting again next year.”*

**– Tim Elliot, Managing Director,  
Liberation Clothing, Lesotho  
Exporter of the Year 2021**

With export firms worldwide impacted by COVID-19, a national award recognizing their extraordinary achievements was just what they needed to boost morale. The USAID Southern Africa Trade and Investment Hub (USAID TradeHub) Exporter Awards, launched in 2021, did just that. Between June and November 2021, national-level exporter awards events were held in the eight countries of Lesotho, Mozambique, Zambia, Eswatini, Botswana, Malawi, Namibia, and South Africa, respectively. The awards truly galvanized the Southern Africa export community to showcase their export successes, leading many of the finalists and winners to plan to compete again in 2022. The hotly-contested awards, were in two main categories, one focusing on exports to the United States under African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), and the other on regional exports to the South African market.

Noteworthy of the awards was the collaborative efforts seen between the private and public sectors to recognize the achievements of export firms from across these countries. A total of 16 trade promotion service providers (TPSPs) co-hosted the events, with participation from national governments through their respective Ministries of Trade, Industry, and Commerce. Speaking at the Namibia Exporter Awards in August 2021, the Honorable Minister of Industrialisation and Trade, Lucia lipumbu, lauded the challenge offered by the awards to Namibia to increase its exports, where it is most competitive, urging exporters to take advantage of trade preference programs, in particular AGOA.

The competitive spirit, generated by the awards, was evident at the Regional Exporter Awards event, held in East London, South Africa, on December 8 2021, and was a culmination of the country-level awards. Industry leaders from across the region, constituted the judging panel, and deliberated in choosing the overall winner from the eight worthy contenders of the Exporter of the Year winners in their respective countries. In the end, Namibia's *Plastic Packaging*, an environmentally conscious firm converting plastic waste into second life-cycle plastic products, emerged as the Regional Exporter of the Year 2021. Beyond environmental sustainability, the awards will live on through the stewardship of the TPSP partners, many of whom are already incorporating the export category into their existing awards events. The 2022 awards will continue to provide an incentive for Southern Africa export firms to have their export achievements deservedly recognized in these challenging times.