



JOINT STATEMENT from *BICYCLE EMPOWERMENT NETWORK NAMIBIA* and  
*PHYSICALLY ACTIVE YOUTH NAMIBIA* TO COMMEMORATE THE DEATH OF  
COSTA SEIBEB, ONE OF OUR OWN

Costa started racing with team BEN Namibia in 2008, at the age of 16. Costa was just a kid, but his talent had already been noticed by the Namibian Cycling Federation, and when he came to us he had already been training with Hella Rust, the God-mother of Namibian cycling. So Costa already knew his way around a bike, and it didn't take him long to win his first race, the 30km event in the Nedbank Cycle Classic.

I didn't truly understand the value of sport in young people's lives until a group of our mechanics and their friends proposed starting Team BEN Namibia. But what I learned was that so many Namibian youth are crying out for a chance to show the world what they can do.

Some of the guys from our team went on to apply the discipline and focus they learned from training and competing as cyclists to other parts of their lives, like work, study, and relationships. In Costa's case, he chose to build on his natural talent for cycling and make a career of it. I'm convinced, as are most people who knew him, that Costa was bound for further greatness in his cycling career, and in his life.

What Costa taught me, more than anything, was the value of giving young people opportunities to be their best. What we gave Costa was very little—a bit of structure for training, some spare parts and bike maintenance. What Costa gave back through his hard work and dedication, to his country, and to a generation of young cyclists looking for a role model, can't be measured. And he gave it with a smile, always.

My heartfelt condolences to Costa's family and close friends. I'm sure you already know it, but what Costa achieved in his life made a difference to his country and his sport, and it inspired all of us who knew him. And we'll always remember him, with a smile.

**Michael Linke, Managing Director at BEN Namibia**

For the PAY programme participants, Costa was a symbol of success and possibility. The possibility of success, even for them, kids from the disadvantaged communities. Children need heroes who look like them and live like them in order to believe in the possibility of success. PAY participants take pride in being able to say that they knew Costa or saw him at our after-school centre. Costa's death is a terrible loss to all young Namibians growing up in difficult circumstances and aiming to succeed in life.

Like with most situations in life, we have a choice in our response. How do we turn this tragic turn of events into a landmark of positivity in the story of cycling and Namibia moving forward?

So many of the young "developmental" cyclists who show potential face the same challenges. Often these challenges are thought of as a sign of rebellion or bad behaviour. And yet Costa had an iron will and resilience like very few. He was intelligent and analytical but he never felt quite safe and therefore his vulnerabilities were well hidden with his tough guy attitude. This often left him feeling even less safe and more vulnerable. It's tough to be at the top of a game, and cycling is itself a tough game, when you don't necessarily have all the needed support structures.

Costa's death has been a blow to our Namibian community as a whole but let us decide today to turn this event into a reflection process, followed by commitment. Commitment that will help us truly understand how we can come together as government, civil society and private sector to offer our talented cyclists who are so often vulnerable and who need our collective effort and voice, because when they win, Namibia wins as a country. Let the victories of our young black cyclists be the lasting legacy of Costa Seibeb.

Costa died on the 1 of May, a day that commemorates the rights of workers and I think that when the 1st of May rolls up again next year, we should be celebrating the success of supporting developments cyclists and other development athletes in the way they need to succeed, not in the way we need or understand. Because when our youth succeed and win, we all succeed and win.

Go well Cost you have done your part ..... May you rest in eternal peace.

**Marie Jeanne Ndimbira, Co-founder PAY Namibia**