

Corporate engagement can impact the workforce, formal economy by transforming youth development

By [Portia Thokoane](#)

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Youth development is a critical component of sustainable economic growth in South Africa. A youth unemployment rate of 63,9% is a terrifying prospect for the present and future of the country, and every single actor has a duty to show up to make a difference.

For the private sector, one of these interventions is actively supporting young people's transition into the workforce so that they can succeed in the formal economy. Meaningful corporate engagement should go beyond simply funding programmes or donating money. It requires a practical and tangible commitment to empowering young people and equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed.

Practical and relevant skill development programmes

Practical support-focused youth interventions include skills development programmes tailored to specific industries or professions, partnerships between the private sector and government, and support for agripreneurship and entrepreneurship. Skills development programmes and graduate programs allow young people to get exposure to the workplace while acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the workplace.



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Shared goals, shared success

Partnerships between the private sector and government can create social impact and sustainable communities. Corporate social responsibility initiatives can drive meaningful intervention in youth development, including supporting government initiatives, funding education and skills development programs, and engaging in volunteer work.

Nestlé ESAR has been working with Youth Employment Service (YES), a government-led initiative for the past four years, providing 400 youth with valuable skills in the agricultural sector. By supporting such programs, corporate companies demonstrate a commitment to youth development and South Africa's future prosperity.



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Supporting, developing opportunities in the formal economy

Agripreneurship and entrepreneurship present promising avenues of opportunity for youth. Agripreneurship in the agricultural sector can create jobs, stimulate economic growth, and contribute to food security. Entrepreneurship offers many opportunities for young people to start and grow their businesses.



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South Africa's young people are highly motivated and innovative; many have the skills and knowledge necessary to launch successful businesses. Access to capital, market information, and mentorship are critical factors for the success of youth entrepreneurs, and there is a need for continued support and investment in this area.

Meaningful corporate intervention in youth development requires a long-term commitment and a focus on sustainable solutions. The programmes and initiatives must be designed to create lasting change rather than short-term fixes. This requires a focus on impact measurement and evaluation, to continually improve and refine interventions based on the outcomes achieved.

Investing in the future workforce through development and support-focused youth interventions can protect the next generation's potential to make meaningful contributions to the economy. Corporate businesses can play a significant role in supporting young people, equipping and empowering them with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed.

By doing so, we can create a brighter future for young people in South Africa, unlocking their potential and driving economic growth for years to come.

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