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JOB CREATION

PATHWAYS TO WORK

BUILDING BRIDGES TO OPPORTUNITY FOR SOUTH AFRICA'S YOUTH

From enterprise funding to job placement platforms, organisations are tackling youth unemployment through a connected system of support, skills and access, writes **VUKANI MAGUBANE**

Youth unemployment continues to cast a long shadow over South Africa, but foundations are stepping in to build pathways to employment opportunities for young people who need them most. Rather than relying on a single solution, organisations are tackling the challenge from different angles. Some are funding businesses that can create jobs, others are building employment opportunities directly, and some are working to connect young people to existing jobs. Together, these approaches reflect a broader shift: job creation is a system, not a single intervention.

ENABLING JOBS THROUGH ENTERPRISE

For Old Mutual's Group Social Investment (GSI), job creation begins with supporting businesses that employ people.

"At the core of Old Mutual's job creation are three flagship initiatives – the Masisizane Fund, the Old Mutual Foundation's education programme, and the Enterprise and Supplier Development Fund. Together, these have invested billions of rand to support small and medium enterprises, empower women and youth, strengthen teaching and generate thousands of sustainable jobs across South Africa," says **Ndumiso Zulu**, GSI's CEO.

The multipronged approach is based on a multiplier effect, tackling job creation from different angles. When businesses and education systems are strengthened, they create both employment and skills that ripple across communities, he adds.

BUILDING JOBS THROUGH PROGRAMMES

Some organisations are taking a more direct approach, creating employment opportunities through programme-led interventions. The Lulalab Foundation focuses on combining

THROUGH PLATFORMS SUCH AS SA YOUTH, JOB SEEKERS CAN REGISTER, BUILD PROFILES AND BE MATCHED TO OPPORTUNITIES WHILE EMPLOYERS GAIN ACCESS TO A BROADER, MORE INCLUSIVE TALENT POOL.

UNLOCKING ACCESS TO EXISTING JOBS

For Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator, the challenge is not only the number of jobs available, but who can access them.

Harambee works with government, business and civil society to connect young people to opportunities at scale.

"Our partners, who are committed to results that can work at scale, include government, the private sector, civil society and over five million youth," says **Zengeziwe Msimang**, Harambee's chief communications officer.

Through platforms such as SA Youth, job seekers can register, build profiles and be matched to opportunities while employers gain access to a broader, more inclusive talent pool.

"To date, Harambee has supported more than three thousand businesses to fill entry-level roles, often helping young people access work for the first time," she says.

A SYSTEM, NOT A SINGLE SOLUTION

Taken together, these approaches show that job creation is not driven by one solution alone. Funding businesses, building employment programmes and connecting young people to opportunities each address different parts of the problem.

Without capital, businesses cannot grow. Without targeted programmes, skills may not translate into work. And, without access, opportunities remain out of reach.

From enterprise funding to job placement, these efforts are beginning to reshape how employment is created and accessed. For many young people, the impact is not just about securing a job, but also gaining a foothold in the economy – often for the first time. In a tough labour market, that foothold can make all the difference. ●



Zengeziwe Msimang



Palesa Mopeli

skills development with real work opportunities.

"South Africa's youth unemployment rate sits at 45.5 per cent for those aged 15 to 34. For 15- to 24-year-olds, it is over 60 per cent. Behind those numbers are millions of young people ready to work, but who cannot find the pathway in," says **Palesa Mopeli**, the foundation's relationship manager.

Programmes such as LulaRides, which trains and deploys youth as delivery drivers, and LulaBPO, which develops contact-centre and digital services talent, are designed to link training directly to employment.

The impact is not only economic, but also personal. Nokuthula, 22, from Soweto, says: "I didn't just get a job. I got my confidence back."

Scaling these initiatives depends on partnerships with employers, training bodies and corporates, aligning skills development with real demand.



Ndumiso Zulu

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