



# Quick Brief

A news update from the NBI on its programmes, business leadership and issues on sustainable development.

12 September 2018

Dear Jo-Anne

## Information Session on an Initiative to Expand Labour Market Opportunities for Youth in Technical Fields

The National Business Initiative (NBI) and Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator (Harambee) recently jointly hosted an interactive information session to discuss an Initiative to expand entry-level opportunities in the post-school system for youth in technical fields. One million young people enter the labour market annually and the current skills mismatch between supply and demand requires urgent intervention. In an environment of high and growing youth unemployment, it is essential to engage with innovative Initiatives to enable young people to break through the logjam and access meaningful and sustainable pathways to technical occupations that are in demand in the economy, in installation, repair and maintenance roles.

In her welcome address **Makano Morojele, NBI Head of Social Sustainability**, said the Initiative is a culmination of years of NBI and Harambee working together in the construction, hospitality and solar water heater installation and maintenance sectors, to find ways in which to enable the transition of youth into the labour market. **Dr Anthony Gewer of the NBI/Harambee**, contextualised the project in terms of the twin objectives of harnessing the potential of young people to enable them to transition from education into technical careers and to enable employers to establish a pipeline of a well-trained future workforce.

Against the background of six million NEETs in South Africa (young people not in employment, education or training) the Initiative has been designed to act as a catalyst that will enable implementers to rethink education-to-work transitions to ensure that they are driven by industry imperatives for skills (rather than simply by supply or qualification pressures) and result in meaningful employment for high potential young people who are often marginalised and face social exclusion.

The project seeks to create scalable and sustainable entry pathways to technical occupations in large companies, SMMEs and micro-enterprises. The Initiative will unlock entry level, cross-sectoral opportunities in the areas of Installation, Repair and Maintenance (IRM) across a range of sectors. It will integrate engineering theory, practical skills and work-readiness

behaviours to provide young people with a springboard to enter the workplace ready to engage in on-the-job training and development. Employers will benefit from access to a technical skills talent pool for entry-level employment needs, enterprise and supplier development incubation or apprenticeship opportunities.

The IRM Initiative is geared to facilitate entry-level pathways for young people to technical careers that are less restrictive than those for artisan training and also to lower the many labour market entry barriers that face young people who emerge from various engineering study programmes at public Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges.

The first 100 college graduates recruited for the pilot rollout strategy are undergoing an eight-week practical bridging programme delivered by the Artisan Training Institute and Resolution Circle prior to a twelve month on-the-job placement period with employers in the insurance and property supply chain sectors. The second cohort of 120 candidates will commence in October 2018. The initial sector level Initiatives are in three spheres: Green Skills; Automotive and Property.

The success of the Initiative as it unfolds over the next few years as a partnership-driven model will be dependent on co-ordination of the relevant ecosystem in terms of demand management, design and development of the model and proactive participation of the key delivery partners – the NBI, TVET colleges as well as private training providers with funding from the Confederation of Danish Industries and the Nedbank Foundation.

During a robust discussion session after the presentation, employers present from a range of organisations, both large corporates and SMMEs, welcomed the Initiative. They highlighted the need for active management of career pathways for young people with a focus on meeting the demands of industry in the sphere of installation, repair and maintenance of machinery, equipment and infrastructure in a world of rapid technological change.

In his closing remarks, **Sylvester Moepya of Harambee** stressed the critical role of the project in creating meaningful participation of young people in the economy aligned to a pipeline of employers to meet the technical skill needs of the economy in the private and public sectors as well as the township economy.

The information session ended on a high note with unanimous support for the Initiative. This was crisply summed up by one of the employers present, Johan Pretorius of Aerosud Aviation, who commented: *“What we need in South Africa is a sandpit where everyone can play.”*

Provision of purposeful entry-level work opportunities for young people is clearly a sandpit where we all need to play as a national strategic imperative.

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**Business Action for Sustainable Growth**

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