



15 June 2021

## Youth Day: An Opportunity to Reflect on the Future of South Africa

**The 16th of June, National Youth Day in South Africa**, commemorates the youth who lost their lives during the Soweto Uprising of 1976. These young people played a critical role in fighting and overcoming the inequalities and injustices of oppressive racial order during the Apartheid regime. Almost half a century later, what does the future they fought for look like for the youth of today?

### **The Current Reality of Youth Unemployment in South Africa**

Young people in South Africa make up around 36% of the total population but represent approximately 70% of total unemployment. Despite the significant investment in education and skills development in South Africa over the past two decades, South Africa continues to face the persistent and growing challenge of youth unemployment.

Just over 1 million youth exit the education system every year, but 43% of these become discouraged within 6 months. Within a year of leaving school, nearly two-thirds of young people find themselves out of any system of employment, education, or training. This reality speaks to the persisting exclusionary structure of our economy and society and thus alludes to the poverty traps that exists in South Africa

### **The National Business Initiative's (NBI) Skills and Youth Employability Work**

The NBI's Skills & Youth Employability programme aims to address the low levels of successful transitions from education to the world of work by harnessing business expertise and resources to unlock demand for skills in the labour market and build inclusive pathways to learning and employment across the economy. Our **Installation, Repair and Maintenance (IRM) Initiative** recognises that youth unemployment will not be solved through labour absorption in the formal sector alone, and that township youth in particular face significant barriers in accessing and sustaining employment opportunities.

## How does our IRM work address skills development and youth unemployment?

IRM roles comprise approximately two million jobs, a third of these occupied by young people and the majority being within SMEs. The majority of IRM roles are in enterprises which operate outside of the formal economy.

### The IRM has four broad objectives:

Create scalable and sustainable pathways for unemployed youth into technical occupations

Effectively match the supply of skills with labour market demands

Create a replicable and demonstrated model of demand-driven curriculum delivery

Mainstream IRM pathways into the Post-School Education and Training System (PSET)

The key success factor is the creation of market linkages between township enterprises and large companies in the formal sector. If you want to be part of the solution this Youth Day, the NBI is engaging with our members and other large companies to develop Enterprise and Supplier Development (ESD) models to reach township-based IRM enterprises and increase the demand for these services.

The NBI believes that achieving social and economic transformation relies on fundamentally addressing youth unemployment and that this is a critical contribution. It is with that notion that the Social Transformation work is underpinned by the belief that addressing South Africa's increasingly challenging economic and social issues of inequity and exclusion requires urgent and collaborative action, with our member companies and key partners across sectors, that addresses both the immediate need and deeper systemic issues.

For more information on the NBI's Skills & Youth Employability work please contact Dr. Anthony Gewer (Programme Manager: Social Transformation): [anthonyg@nbi.org.za](mailto:anthonyg@nbi.org.za)



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The National Business Initiative (NBI) is an independent and voluntary coalition of South African and multinational businesses launched in 1995 by the then President, Nelson Mandela.

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