

# H&M launches science and tech initiative to empower female students in SA

H&M's newly-launched science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) initiative programme is set to take place in October 2022 in partnership with Scifest Africa. The initiative aims to inspire young women from previously disadvantaged backgrounds and provide sustainable learning and development opportunities.



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Due to the rapid technological advancements, the STEAM fields are taking a bigger role in society and businesses. To ensure future innovations and technologies are inclusive, representation and diversity becomes even more important.

Bridging the gender gap in the STEAM fields is a crucial way for girls and women to expand their employment opportunities and businesses can take equitable actions and measures to contribute to positive change.

## Empowering underrepresented youth

H&M together with Scifest Africa will share knowledge and information through this initiative with communities to empower underrepresented youth to pursue education and careers in STEAM.

The two-day initiative is a fun programme for these young students to learn about the possibilities within STEAM and fashion as well as get hands-on experience in solving real-life problems.

"The STEAM programme is an initiative we are proud to present in partnership with Scifest Africa. One of our core missions as a brand is to always drive local representation and diversity whilst uplifting the communities that we operate in. As a company that operates with data, science, and technology daily, this is a perfect opportunity for us to empower our future leaders," says Caroline Nelson, country manager, H&M South Africa.

Scifest Africa, South Africa's National Science Festival, was established in 1996 to promote public awareness, appreciation, and understanding of science, technology, and innovation.

For the last 26 years, Scifest Africa has been educating and enlightening its audiences, offering a crucial doorway into the world of STEAM for young people from across the country. Scifest Africa continues to contribute to South Africa's ongoing efforts to create a science-literate society.

"We are honoured to have partnered with H&M on this journey to launch their first STEAM programme in the country. We have a long-standing history of providing STEAM workshops in the country and addressing the skill gap that we are currently facing in the country. With the partnership with H&M we can add art into the programme and open the possibilities of what is possible in those fields," says Monica Newton, from the National Arts Festival & Grahamstown Foundation.



#### Q&A with new National Arts Festival CEO Monica Newton

Ruth Cooper 19 Dec 2019



In addition to the STEAM initiative, a three-month mentoring programme will foster the professional and personal development of selected mentees; and seek to inspire participants while developing a range of skills including soft skills, insight into industry trends, and continuous exposure to "future skills".

The mentoring programme will include one-on-one sessions on key topics with mentors from H&M South Africa selected for their expertise or experience in each field.

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