

# With relevant skills, youth can accelerate progress in South Africa

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The Salesian Institute Youth Projects (SIYP) is a non-profit organisation dedicated to improving the lives of South Africa's vulnerable children and youth at risk. Providing education, emotional support and skills development training for at-risk young people in Cape Town since 1910.



On 16 June, South Africa commemorates Youth Day. This year, National Youth Day and Youth Month will be celebrated under the theme: "Growing youth employment for an inclusive and transformed society" ([www.gov.za](http://www.gov.za)).

South Africa's biggest advantage for a global future, a young population with an average age of 27 years, is currently its weakest link. With 60% of the total population under the age of 34 years, and many of them struggling to gain access to quality education, most young people entering the workplace do so without the necessary skills to find meaningful work.

## Protecting the most vulnerable

Inexperienced individuals, especially those who are desperate for employment, are at risk of falling into the vicious cycle of unemployment and a bleak future. Employment lies at the centre of many socio-economic ills, given its capacity to fill time, provide purpose, generate income, and drive greater equality. The Salesian Institute Youth Projects has been working with youth from at-risk backgrounds for the past 112 years, providing skills training for youth from at-risk communities in and around Cape Town.

Committed to making a difference for those who need it the most, SIYP's skills development model focuses on providing opportunities for young people who may not have completed their mainstream schooling or have access to skills training. Over the past 112 years, SIYP has been instrumental in changing the lives of hundreds of unemployed youths who would otherwise not have been able to access the job market.

## **Four skills programmes**

Four skills programmes are facilitated from SIYP's premises in Greenpoint. The Learn to Live School of Skills caters for ages 14 to 18, for youth no longer part of mainstream schooling. Basic education and vocational skills training form part of the four-year programme. The Waves of Change Maritime Programme for youth up to ages 35, wanting to work at sea; the Porsche Mechatronics Programme enabling youth to work in the automotive sector, and the last programme to come on board recently, is the NEETs Youth Employability Programme offering a national certificate in Small Venture Creation, a SETA NQF4 accredited certificate.

Life skills form an integral part of all the training whilst project-based learning is the methodology of teaching and learning in all programmes. The employment journeys of young people have been characterised by resilience. However resilience alone in the face of a crisis is not what will get us through. Resilience needs to be coupled with intentional investment and support to address our country's multiple overlapping crises which demand resilience. Building resilience is one of the key objectives of all SIYP programmes. For more information on these programmes, please visit [www.salesianyouth.org](http://www.salesianyouth.org).

## **NPOs are the glue that binds society**

NPOs are the glue that binds society, providing the social safety net and supporting the advancement of social justice and socio-economic inclusion, to the benefit of all the role-players in the social contract – business, government, and communities. The reality is that the burden of covering the welfare gap, which is becoming ever more visible since the Covid-19 pandemic, will eventually shift towards the public and private sectors. "NPOs need the support from the government, the private sector and individuals to enable organisations like ourselves to continue serving youth not so privileged by offering much-needed skills training," says Fr Francois Dufour, CEO of the Salesian Institute Youth Projects.

One alumna, Yumnah Baradien, said: "I learned everything here. Not only entrepreneurship but self-esteem, how to start your own business, where to go, who to talk to, and how to ask for help when you need it. I learned many things that I thought I would have to go elsewhere for." All programmes are designed to provide a positive alternative to drugs, alcohol, and violence, and allow youth to learn the skills necessary for employment.

The Salesian Institute Youth Projects is changing lives. Youth that were previously sitting at home, unable to find employment or support themselves, are learning the skills needed to get jobs and are beginning their careers. Many work as entrepreneurs and strive to employ others from their neighbourhoods, while others join industries and move forward in changing the dynamics of the workforce. SIYP continues to move forward with its mission, driven by their founder Saint Don Bosco's commitment to provide physical, educational and spiritual needs of youth at-risk, regardless of race, religion, gender or nationality.

For more information, please watch this short video:

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