

# Key areas of focus for youth development and entrepreneurship in Africa

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With the onset of the Covid-19 crisis further catalysing the existing 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR), future of work and global innovation demands, it is critical that businesses, governments and social impact organisations alike 'walk the talk' when it comes to supporting the development and success of young people in Africa.



Source: [www.pexels.com](http://www.pexels.com)

Below are some of the key areas of focus for youth development, as well as examples of corporate governance and programme initiatives that are playing their part when it comes to youth empowerment and social transformation in Africa:

## Education and skills development:

A lack of access to education results in many young people in Africa working in the informal sector, with very poor earning potential, limited opportunities and little to non-existent job security. Worse still, a large segment of youth in developing countries cannot secure work at all, due to a lack of education and/or skills. Tertiary education or training is generally out of reach for many young people, severely impeding their chances of progress. This is especially true for vulnerable communities where taking care of the family's basic needs far outweighs the consideration of spending (often scarce) money on education. This scenario necessitates the urgent need for free education and training programmes, including bursary sponsorships, to help youth transcend the limitations of their financial situations.

In addition to traditional education and learning, the 4th Industrial Revolution and Future of Work trends mean that digital skills are becoming increasingly necessary. Initiatives such as the Trace Academia online learning app offers free courses aimed at tackling youth unemployment in Africa by upskilling young people who may not otherwise have access to such training. Courses range from digital marketing to practical skills courses such as basic electrical work.

## Youth leadership and entrepreneurship

Both financial aid and mentorship are critical for supporting the entrepreneurs and job creators of tomorrow. To break the cycle of poverty and generate socio-economic growth for the continent, Africa needs a future generation of entrepreneurs

able to significantly contribute to the economic and employment landscape of the continent. This requires financial support, as well as skills development when it comes to the critical leadership and transferrable skills needed to succeed.

## **Contests and incentive initiatives**

Incentivised contests or competitions are also an impactful way of harnessing the potential of youth when it comes to solving Africa's challenges and moving the continent forward. This includes both platforms directed at youth as well as initiatives that promote the youth employment environment in any way, including job creation, innovation for social development, education, mentorship and other support infrastructure.

For young people who are committed to being part of the solution – for themselves, their families, communities and the continent – it is vital to recognise that despite the challenges facing Africa, there are immense opportunities for progress and success. Additionally, this support system needs to grow exponentially in order to make a significant impact when it comes to achieving the continent's growth goals, particularly as it is predicted that by 2050, more than half of Africa's population will be under the age of 25 years. In the spirit of *ubuntu*, we need to come together to ensure an inclusive and progressive future for the continent and its people.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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