

Key to youth employment lies in entrepreneurship

By [Baby Obuhle Sihu](#)

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Street entrepreneurship eases the burden of unemployment in countries across Africa, and should be encouraged by government and society. This emerged from a youth employment imbizo recently hosted in the Eastern Cape by Activate! Change Drivers in celebration of its 10th anniversary, this year.



Siphelele Chirwa, Activate CEO

The imbizo, hosted in partnership with Mdantsane youth hub, Kasi Konversations, curated a programme that was designed to educate and engage on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), economic growth, youth employment and the future of the township economy in the next few years and beyond. By bringing leaders in government, business, civil society, activism, and in the creative space together with other innovative young people, the Imbizo explored a variety of topics and challenges facing young people.

As a nation, South Africa is experiencing a rising level of unemployment especially among the youth, despite having large numbers of graduates from its tertiary institutions. Admittedly, not all can start their own businesses, but Activate and Kasi Konversations are committed to equipping young people with the necessary tools, skills and framework they need to sustain themselves.

Key points of discussion included: how young people can move from a place of passion to generating an income, and thereby make a dent in the high levels of youth unemployment; what are the key interventions required to make innovative financing instruments work for youth development in Mdantsane; whether the current policy landscape is sufficient for meeting the challenges of youth unemployment; and how key stakeholders can support the implementation of sustainable mechanisms to aid the youth in this regard.



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The panel was made up of Dr Pedro Mzileni, from the Deputy Mayor's executive office; Siyabulela Skade, president of South African Chamber of Tourism; Fatima Mohammed, founder and CEO of Osmosis Inc; Ayabulela Mahlathi, from the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) East London regional office; Siphelile Chirwa, Activate CEO; Ikho Gaushe, co-founder and personal development officer of Kasi Konversations.

Dr Mzileni said government needs to invest in quality education to ensure that the generation of young people in school will be equipped with the relevant skills and degrees that are needed in the job market. He added that municipalities must be active in supporting the development and growth of small-medium size businesses that are industrial in nature, and driven by young people and women, especially those who come from impoverished communities.

“Small-medium industrial businesses are the backbone of every economic powerhouse in the world. Right across Africa from Accra to Lusaka, we can see how self-reliant initiatives like street industrial entrepreneurship eases the burden of poverty and unemployment.”



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Chirwa urged young people to organise themselves in the business, public, creative, academic and civic leadership spaces of work, as well as in leadership structures to create sustainable development.

Young people in the audience challenged the NYDA to work with youth-driven organisations in assisting young people to run their own businesses. In closing, Bohlale Buzani, founder of Kasi Konversations, said the conversation should not end here. “Young people must continue to form a collective voice, mobilise and empower themselves to create sustainable development.”

To watch or recap the full programme, visit the [Kasi Konversations on Facebook](#).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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