

Getting Ready to Work

Issued by [Absa](#)

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Younger populations are usually considered an economic gift for countries. When the share of the working-age population (15 to 64) is larger than the non-working-age share, there is usually a boost in economic productivity, known as a demographic dividend.



This has unfortunately not been the case in Africa with rising unemployment, limited access to quality education and a gross mismatch between what industry needs and the skills being developed.

At 46.3% in the first quarter of 2021, South Africa's youth unemployment rate is amongst the highest in the world. While many of these young people are put at a disadvantage due to the availability of opportunities, our young people require critical work, life, business and thinking skills to help them adapt in this rapidly changing world. These include problem-solving, communication, technology and other softer skills not typically covered in tertiary curriculums, but that are key to ensure work-readiness and boost employability.

Not all young people have access to mentors to help them bridge this gap and many company structures do not enable on-the-job learning through training, mentorship, and coaching, meaning that the few who do get access to opportunities struggle once they have attained them.

A future reimagined

While our young and growing population face some of the most complex economic, political, and social challenges in the world, vast resources and largely untapped markets could provide the foundations for a continent-wide renewal.

[The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) established that young people are a driving force for the required development – but only if they are provided with the skills and opportunities needed to reach their potential, support development and contribute to peace and security.

With a future reimagined, Africa's youth have the ability to future proof the continent and leapfrog post the fourth industrial revolution (4IR). Young African leaders have a key role to play, and the urgency of these efforts is not lost on them as they have the most to lose if solutions are not enacted.

As we take hands to unlock this dividend, we should be inspired and guided by the words of Nelson Mandela: “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

Following an in-depth analysis of the African operating landscape, Absa has defocused their education and skills development initiatives and the focal point now rests on preparing young people for the workplace of the future.

This is done with a demand-led approach, and their initiatives support the development of technical, vocational, social and digital skills in line with the requirements of Africa’s key growth sectors.

Studies have shown that young people who take part in demand-driven training programmes and are then hired into jobs become valuable staff in short order. This is because they are more motivated to perform well and assimilate quickly to the work environment.

Soft skills to make young people job-ready

With this in mind, Absa has introduced young people across Africa to our [Absa ReadytoWork \(R2W\)](#) initiative, a flagship programme equipping young people with crucial life skills to improve their employability and self-employment prospects when moving from life at school to entering a new phase of life at work.

Absa has also just proudly launched the [Absa ReadytoWork app](#), that provides a free training curriculum that covers work, money, people and entrepreneurial skills to help young people transition from the world of education into the world of work. The app also provides a job search functionality and connects young people with each other.

Through the app you can:

- Complete the four modules that cover essential money, work, people and entrepreneurial skills.
- Use the CV template to create a CV that will put you head and shoulders above your competition.
- Search for your dream job by connecting with recruiters via the jobs portal.
- Connect with like-minded individuals on the chat feature.
- Watch insightful webinars by various experts and leaders.

The 548,100 young people, in the African markets where we have a presence, who have completed the Absa R2W programme from 2016 to date, have hugely benefitted from employability skills, work exposure, internships and job placement opportunities.

We are here for the ready

Absa has made a very clear commitment to our continent and its youth. We are here for those who are ready to learn, ready to lead, ready to work, grow, change and partner.

Because it's only when we make sure that "those who are ready" have what they need to start and flourish, do we ensure Africa's growth and sustainability for the long term. And we need to use our collective bravery, passion and readiness to find creative, ingenious, audacious ways to make all of this possible.

That's how Africa, its people and Absa will grow, sustainably.

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