

# Uber Innovation Masterclass steers SA disadvantaged youth into leadership

Uber in partnership with Qhakaza Girl IT, invited 120 students in Grade 11 and 12 from underprivileged schools in Durban to attend the third Annual Uber Innovation Masterclass at the Durban Botanical Gardens. The Masterclasses aimed at connecting the youth to career advice and opportunities and with this year's theme solely focusing on Science Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) field.



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According to Women in Technology South Africa, only 23% of technology jobs are held by women, and of 236,000 Information Communication Technology (ICT) jobs women only occupy 56,000, respectively. This exemplifies how little recognition and opportunity women in South Africa are given in such a highly acclaimed industry.

Uber together with Qhakaza Girl IT, has advocated for women empowerment in the STEM field and through the Masterclass were able to effectively connect young female learners to a bevy of information and networking opportunities. The Masterclass provided these talented young ladies the opportunity to learn about the STEM industry, by connecting with experts and ended off by them building their own drones, which could be taken back to their schools to explore with the rest of the students and teachers.

## Engaging the youth

Following her visit to San Francisco's Uber head offices a few years back, Yolisa Kani, head of public policy at Uber sub-Saharan Africa, designed the masterclass to inspire the youth to think and engage on that critical STEM level. She felt South Africa needed to be on par.



General manager, Alon Lits had this to say about the masterclass: "The day was focused on giving back and engaging with students about how Uber operates and what kind of careers one can venture into in the STEM field. More importantly, to

give a sense of the opportunities and innovation that is out there for young people."

With a multitude of guest speakers, including Flippage, who is the first South African black male to create his own smartphone. Flippage served as a mentor to those in attendance that age and privilege are not defining factors when wanting to create change or chase dreams. The SchoolsNet Youth Spark programme ran parallel to the Innovation Masterclass, which aimed at encouraging other teachers to inspire their students to use critical and innovative thinking in the STEM Field.

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