

Addressing the youth unemployment crisis in South Africa: A call to action

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The Salesian Institute Youth Projects (SIYP), a well-known NGO and education centre has emerged as a beacon of hope in the face of South Africa's persistent youth unemployment crisis. With a rich history dating back to 1910, SIYP has consistently prioritised skills development training for at-risk youth from marginalised backgrounds. Their unwavering dedication to providing specialised education and self-empowerment programmes has been instrumental in transforming the lives of countless young individuals.



SIYP's primary focus is on unemployed youth residing in disadvantaged lower-income communities in Cape Town. Through its diverse programme offering, SIYP not only equips these youth with essential skills but also incorporates Life Skills training as a foundational element across all training initiatives. By addressing both technical and personal development aspects, SIYP ensures that youth are well-prepared to thrive in today's competitive job market.

As part of its commitment to empowering young people, SIYP has recently redeveloped its old computer lab into a Smart Work Centre, a ground-breaking initiative that takes skills training to the next level. Their innovative approach goes beyond conventional training methods and embraces a holistic approach to prepare youth for the world of work.

With the introduction of their Smart Work Center (SWC) in February 2023, its use has been maximised by the Learn to Live School supporting 215 learners. Learners make use of the centre at least twice a week to improve their digital literacy and academic skills.

The teaching staff at the Learn to Live School of Skills have integrated the Computers4Kids and Reading Eggs programme into their curriculum. These programmes have been instrumental in increasing the literacy throughput of learners, especially those struggling to read and write.

In addition, learners have begun to show significant improvement in their learning and their enthusiasm to work on the computers grows weekly. The NEETs Youth Employability Programme is offering an NQF3 End User Computer course to their students, making them prepared and relevant in the digital world.

To ensure the sustainability of the SWC, the Rotary Club of Waterfront was able to foster a closer collaboration with the IT Academy based at Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) to onboard, Jean McKenzie, a CPUT senior student as part of an internship.

By leveraging its extensive network of industry partners, SIYP ensures that the Smart Work Centre provides youth with real-world exposure and access to employment opportunities. This collaborative approach not only bridges the gap between education and industry but also instils a sense of confidence and self-belief in the youth, empowering them to pursue meaningful careers and contribute to the country's economic growth.

"Our mission is to foster Lifelong Learning and cultivate a reservoir of skilled youth ready to contribute to the thriving Cape Town's economy," expressed Fr. Francois Dufour, CEO of the Salesian Institute Youth Projects.

The Salesian Institute Youth Projects serves as a shining example of how NGOs can play a pivotal role in combating youth unemployment. By providing marginalised youth with the necessary tools, guidance, and support, SIYP creates a pathway to success, empowering young individuals to break free from the cycle of poverty and transform their lives.

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