

Inclusive investing is changing the face of entrepreneurship

South Africa's rising youth unemployment is widening the skills and inequality gap and institutional investors like the Allan Gray Orbis Foundation are ready to fill that void. These funds are investing in high impact solutions and changing the face of entrepreneurship with this more inclusive approach to funding.



Institutional investors are changing the face of entrepreneurship. Source: Joshua Kettle/Unsplash

Nontando Mthethwa, the foundation's head of public affairs, points out that there has never been a greater need for inclusive entrepreneurship: "Youth unemployment figures are alarmingly high. It's clear that we need new solutions to this challenge, as the channels and vehicles currently used to address the problem are not having the desired impact."

"Many people think of entrepreneurship as a route to self-enrichment; a glamorous job option that can lead to fame. But, while it's certainly true that there are a number of entrepreneurs who have gained global renown through their ventures, we are more interested in the potential impact of the kind of entrepreneurship that has a ripple effect throughout society," she says.

Allan Gray promotes this idea through the [Entrepreneurship Challenge](#) (which seeks to democratize entrepreneurship education by making it available to all South African leaders), scholarship, fellowship and association. These programmes have been carefully designed to include academic learning, entrepreneurial training, mentorship and social support, to nurture a pool of entrepreneurs who have the potential to create businesses that speak directly to today's social challenges.



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Mthethwa explains that this curriculum equips beneficiaries with skills that will serve them in any context, but which are especially geared to helping them become a generation of disruptors. The foundation describes itself as "more interested in the problems (the youth) want to solve when they become adults, because this is the type of entrepreneurship we need."

Audacious goals

If South Africa is to meet the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, or the demands of Agenda 2063 (which provides a framework for Africa's socio-economic transformation), the country needs to look beyond the current, tech driven idea of entrepreneurship.

The foundation has set an audacious goal. It aims to have supported entrepreneurs in the creation of 500 new ventures, 10 of which will be worth R1bn, and generate one million new jobs by 2030. For this to happen, entrepreneurship needs to move away from the margins to become accepted as a mainstream job option, as viable as any profession.



"We need to make it clear that entrepreneurship is for everyone; not just the mavericks whose connections can help them get a business off the ground or those whose desperation at long-term unemployment led them to starting a venture," says Mthethwa. "For South African entrepreneurship to thrive, we need to create a pool of potential entrepreneurs who are representative of our demographics."

Inducing change

This pool would give rise to change agents, innovators, and disruptors whose ability to meet the changing demands of society lead to the development of new industries, creating more opportunities for economic participation.

For this form of entrepreneurship to become a reality, it will be necessary for all members of the entrepreneurship ecosystem to pool their resources, amplifying their strengths and leading to a more coordinated effort to develop

entrepreneurship. It is equally necessary for the private sector to lend its clout to the implementation of the legislation and policies already enacted by government.

"Entrepreneurship isn't a magic panacea that will solve all of society's ills, but it is one of the best tools at our disposal for creating jobs – meaningful jobs that tap into the needs of our time," Mthethwa concludes.

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