

DIGITAL SKILLS FOR DECENT JOBS FOR YOUTH NOT- IN-EMPLOYMENT- EDUCATION-OR- TRAINING **SOUTH AFRICA**



“Together and stronger” could be the slogan of Hoorah, [an e-commerce marketplace](#) founded by Basson Engelbrecht, a former triathlon athlete and young digital entrepreneur from South Africa.

E-commerce, still a new concept for many in the country, offers services to small and informal vendors. But, after participating in the joint UNCTAD-Alibaba Business School eFounders Fellowship programme, Basson felt encouraged to grow his business.

“We had to make extra efforts in order to understand the constraints they face, such as a lack of digital literacy and business management skills, in order to develop a service that would enable them (our clients) to use our platform,” Basson explains.

Today, [Hoorah](#) also acts as an incubator; Basson and his team have created a brand development service that helps high-potential entrepreneurs develop their strategies, grow, and scale up their business activities.

This is just one of many stories that can serve as inspiration for the continent, as Africa’s youth population continues to grow and as many countries undergo digital transformation. Many young Africans face barriers to accessing decent work, which the COVID-19 pandemic has only made worse. At the same time, **the digital transformation of Africa has potential to create new jobs in the digital economy and to build back better.**



The programme

The Department of Communications and Digital Technologies (DCDT), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have joined forces in South Africa to enhance digital skills for youth and contribute to the creation of decent work in the digital economy, through the implementation of South Africa's National Digital and Future Skills Strategy (2021–2025).

This initiative builds on on-going work in the country, promoted by national and international players, and it is part of a continental programme launched by the ILO and the ITU, in support of the African Union (AU) and under the umbrella of the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth, called “Boosting decent jobs and enhance skills for youth in Africa’s digital economy”. Beyond South Africa, similar interventions are also being promoted in Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda and Senegal.

The project

Name: Digital Skills for Decent Jobs for Youth – Young People Not in Employment, Education or Training (YNEET)

Location: Nationwide

Duration: 2021–2024

Implementing partners: DCDT, ILO, ITU and UNDP

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Fast facts



Youth population

20.5 million
aged 15 to 34 (2020)



Share of youth not in employment, education or training (NEET):

43%
39.9% men
46.1% women
(2020)



ICT sector share of GDP:

2.7%
(2018)



Internet usage

56%
of the population using the internet (2017)

162
active mobile internet subscriptions per 100 inhabitants (2020)



E-commerce

61%
of youth aged 25 to 34 purchased products online during the last month (January 2021)

Youth employment challenges and opportunities

South Africa leads in the region on internet usage, mobile phone penetration, and broadband coverage – all crucial for the digital economy. The Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector has high potential for job-rich growth and resilience in job creation.

The country is harnessing the Fourth Industrial Revolution to fulfill its development goals. For example, the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies recently developed the National Digital and Future Skills Strategy (2021-2025). Young people, South Africa's most important source of human capital, are fundamental to its success.

Still, of South Africa's 20.5 million young people aged between 15-34, more than 8 million are not in employment, education or training (NEET). Culprits include slow economic growth, a skills mismatch, and inequalities stemming from gender, disability, and the country's history of racial discrimination. Many young people are unemployed or otherwise can't make a decent living.

South Africa's digital skills development ecosystem and labour intermediation services are not fully prepared for the digital era. Young people need skills training and cutting-edge services to realize decent work and learning opportunities. **Once that happens, youth will both benefit from and contribute to their country's digital transformation and long-term development.**

Our goal

The goal of the YNEET programme is to enable more young people in South Africa to access decent jobs in the digital economy.

We aim to contribute to a digital skills labour market ecosystem, strengthen institutional capacity to manage data, and coordinate targeted digital skills development and labour intermediation services. **The programme directly benefits young people who are not in employment, education or training, with a special focus on young women and people with disabilities.**

Our approach

Coordinated action is the foundation of systems-level change that is sustainable and scalable. That's why, under the leadership of DCDT, the implementing partners will engage a wide range of government departments, private sector, academic and research partners, social partners and civil society organizations. The National Pathway Management Network and other connected initiatives that, under the Presidential Youth Employment Initiative, seek to expand opportunities for youth by creating partnerships, provide an excellent space to build a comprehensive, innovative, and evidence-driven approach that combines new, better data and coordinated actions.

OUR INTERVENTION INCLUDES:

- Research and stakeholders' consultation to inform national digital skills initiatives that serve the needs of youth NEET

There is a need for a holistic system-wide approach that looks at the whole of government and whole of society to identify and propose solutions and systems that better connect the supply and demand of digital skills. We will actively contribute to the national efforts aimed at increasing data-sharing by entities in the digital skills and labour market ecosystem for the benefit of youth NEET.

- Use digital case management to link young people to decent work and learning opportunities

Following a needs assessment, young people will be linked to suitable opportunities and services. The system will also monitor their progress. In total, 500 youth services staff will complete training on how to use the system and will in turn train others to do the same.

This innovative system will strengthen coordination mechanisms among stakeholders, integrating a variety of services with minimal effort that help modernize labour intermediation services for youth NEET in the digital economy.

- Provide digital skills training to prepare young people for further education or training and decent work

We will design four digital skills training programmes that are geared specifically toward the learning needs of youth NEET. These programmes, informed by a skills supply and demand assessment and review of national efforts, will cover science, technology, engineering, arts, mathematics, innovation and entrepreneurship (STEAMIE) subjects. They will also provide opportunities to apply the acquired skills in real-world contexts.

A national Digital Skills Innovation Challenge will map implementing partners that can deliver innovative youth NEET-oriented proposals, including training of trainers, curricula development and rollout to at least 50,000 youth across the country.

Actions and achievements

In 2020, following a series of consultations and workshops with representatives from government departments and agencies responsible for youth development, economic development and digital skills development; private sector representatives and civil society organizations, we validated the project scope and approach.

2021 marks the start of the project with a pilot implementation period.

Several actions are planned or underway:

- **Digital skills supply and demand assessment**, including a labour market policy review
- **Rapid Needs Assessment (RNA)** and digital skills training interventions for two District Development Model (DDM) pilot sites, OR Tambo and Waterberg District Municipalities.
- **Digital Skills Innovation Challenge** to design and deliver the first digital skills training programme
- **Feasibility study** on the platform and the digital case management system
- **Establishment of a Technical Working Group among the four partner agencies**, as well as a broader advisory committee or consultation mechanism, through a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.

Spotlight on action: Digital skills supply and demand assessment

Through an assessment that reviews employment promotion policies and strategies, **we will better understand the skills environment of South Africa's digital economy.**

The assessment will identify the current and emerging skills supply and demand, as well as gaps and opportunities. It will also detect specific skills needs that, if addressed, can generate new employment opportunities for young people.

Along with the Research Framework and Implementation Programme for the National Digital and Future Skills Strategy (2021–2025) and the National Digital Masterplan, among other available studies on digital skills in South Africa, **this assessment will inform the design of the digital skills training programmes that will be delivered as part of the YNEET project.**

Support our work

Are you ready to invest in decent jobs and skills for youth in South Africa?

We are looking for partners who can:

- Provide **financial and technical support** to implement and scale up our interventions
- Engage public and private partners to establish **partnerships and networks**, which will attract additional investments

If you are interested in supporting our work, email us at jdey@ilo.org or itu-ro-africa@itu.int

