

## JFAC- Ep11. - Transcript

[00:00:00] **Kentse Radebe:** [Welcome to the **Just for a change** podcast, powered by the Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship. First off, what you need to know about us is that thinking differently and innovatively about big social issues is what makes us tick. We love offering new perspectives on social innovation and social justice, so we hope you'll be inspired to make a difference wherever you are! **We're changing the way we're changing the world.**

[00:00:36] Welcome to the **Just for a change podcast** with me, your host, Kentse Radebe. There are roughly 200,000 social development organisations listed on the department of social development database - many of them focus on youth development. At first glance, this may seem like it's a great thing - so many people put their time and energy into developing and advancing South Africa's youth. Yes, that is a crucial part of making sure our nation moves forward. However, the sheer number of organisations doing the same, or similar work, is also evidence that our youth sector is facing a severe fragmentation issue.

At the Bertha Centre, we are passionate about youth development because we know the youth of today will shape the world of tomorrow. Within the Bertha Centre, the Youth Innovation programme was established to support Africa's young people transitioning from education to employment by uncovering effective, affordable, and inclusive solutions and by supporting the accelerated uptake of these solutions in low-income settings.

On today's Just For a Change episode we are going to be hearing from some inspiring guests as we place the youth development sector in the spotlight by looking at this issue of fragmentation within the sector. We will also discuss the role of technology in driving integration and using technology as a leverage point to create more opportunities for young people.

[00:02:25] **Voice note:** [00:02:25] Online schooling was difficult near the beginning because of the workload. For some reason, I felt like there was more work than it wasn't we were doing normal schooling and it was difficult for me to. Develop a schedule and develop my own time table that goes with like my home life and my school life.

[00:02:43] I find it difficult to kind of find the balance between the two and to have a happy medium where I can have time to do my work and have time to rest and to relax because my home environment wasn't my work environment. So I had to work on that [00:03:00] and I had to work on keeping a time, your schedule to keep on track, to like not fall behind.

[00:03:06] My experience for online learning is that I've learned, firstly, I've learned that soft discipline and self-confidence plays a massive role and it teaches you the basic steps of responsibility, learning to adapt to circumstances you're not used to is part of, of, of it's part of growing up in and adapting to things because.

[00:03:31] It is at the end of the day, it is very important because at the end of the day, no one is going to help you. You all on your own.

[00:03:38] **Kentse Radebe:** [00:03:38] It's clear that things are changing for all of us and most, especially for young people, this change has many moving parts, challenges, and opportunities. In systems thinking, we talk a lot about leverage points. Leverage points are

places in a system where as systems theorists, Donella Meadows puts it a small shift in one thing [00:04:00] can produce big changes in everything. One such leverage point in the youth development sector is the use of technology. We all know the technology is progressing at an unprecedented pace and in 2020, more than ever, we've seen the significant role technology can play in driving integration.

[00:04:18] As noted in a comparative study on the response of NPOs in education to the COVID-19 pandemic technology has been being abler of the work and study from home solution instituted by NPO is in the country and around the world with growing recognition, that technology is a critical part of the new normal moving forward.

[00:04:38] On the flip side, even though technology has been dubbed an equalizer in South Africa, that definitely remains a digital divide as access to technology remains a hurdle in 2018 status, a found that many South Africans more than 60% have access to the internet through their mobile devices. However, less than 10% of South Africans have [00:05:00] access to the internet at home, the numbers are even more dire in rural areas.

[00:05:06] Moreover recent statistics from the national education infrastructure management system indicate that even at school sites on my learning would only serve the privileged out of over just 23,000 school sites. Only 20% had access to internet connectivity for teaching and learning purposes. A further 12,000 schools, the majority of which are in Limpopo, the Eastern Cape.

[00:05:28] And wasn't an adult indicated that they had no computer centers whatsoever. As a country, we need to ensure the creation of an inclusive enabling environment where opportunities are not determined by one's income, race, class, or neighborhood. The birther center's youth innovation program works to create an environment in which young people have opportunities to improve their lives.

[00:05:51] They do this by targeting young people between the ages of 15 and 35 and through skills development in social innovation, personal development [00:06:00] entrepreneurship and workplace skills. And secondly, through youth development, by capacitating youth development organizations, to be more systematically effective and impactful.

[00:06:11] On that note today I'm joined by Jason Bygate and Luvuyo Maseko. Jason is a digital disruptor solutions analyst and social entrepreneur with experience in mobile technology, ICT for healthcare international development, banking, automotive, and the gymnastics. Jason heads up capacitate, a social enterprise driving, social and economic change across Africa.

[00:06:35] Luvuyo heads up. The youth innovation portfolio at the birth of center is passionate about holistic community development, youth empowerment, sport, and contributing to programs in which young people have the freedom to be the authors of their own stories. So Navea and Jason, welcome to the, just for a change podcast.

[00:06:53] I'm really looking forward to having this conversation with both of you. And we're so glad to have you join us.

[00:06:58] **Jason Bygate:** [00:06:58] Thanks for having us looking [00:07:00] forward to.

[00:07:01] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:07:01] Hi Kentse. Really good to be here.

[00:07:03] **Kentse Radebe:** [00:07:03] I want to start with you because you and I have had this conversation a number of times where we've spoken about your work with the youth innovation portfolio at the birth center and the fragmentation that you see.

[00:07:16] In the sector. And earlier on in the introduction, we were speaking about how there's over 200,000 youth organizations in the space for somebody who doesn't have a sense of the youth development sector and what happens in the sector and the work that goes on. Can you speak a little bit about what that fragmentation looks like and just give us a lay of the land?

[00:07:36] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:07:36] I think the answer, at least the way I see it is two-sided. Um, and I think it's also important to just state that on the DST database organizations that you refer to our social developed organizations in general, the majority of who my director towards user engagement, you and have a youth audience in mind.

[00:07:54] So there's not necessarily that all 200,000 deal directly with a youth, but [00:08:00] essentially it's a vast majority of those. And, uh, I think, like I mentioned earlier, the answer's twofold. There's one from. My point of view, which obviously is informed and isn't just taken from thin air and the Bertha Center point of view and position as well. And then the other from the organizations.

[00:08:16] And I think from our point of view, what we've seen is that, um, competition across organizations is, is one of the key barriers to collaboration and engagement and leads to the fragmentation that we see in this space. So there's competition for resources, competition for funding and the competition for beneficiaries.

[00:08:35] And sometimes it's not as simple as just reaching out to the organization and saying, why aren't you, so why aren't you collaborating and thinking and adopting this collaborative mindset, because at the end of the day, having a collaborative mindset is something that we all agree at least on paper, right?

[00:08:51] So very few organizations are going to say now we don't want any collaboration at all, but at the end of the day, it's about saying that you're open. I'm saying that you're open to [00:09:00] collaboration is easy, but following through is where organizations fall short. So I will say takes, it also takes a lot of work to make collaborations happen.

[00:09:09] You need dedicated resources and you need people who have the time and space to look up from their own programmatic work. So I'm guess what I'm trying to say is that it's also an issue of resources within the space. And I think this comes to real rather clearly, through our engagement with different youth development organizations.

[00:09:27] So one of the piece of work that we're planning on doing within the youth development is running a course on building collaboration capacity within youth development organizations, as part of our work for that, we've been engaging with organizations to find out where the gaps are. And I'm going to read verbatim from, from a few of the answers here.

[00:09:44] But a lot of the people who we interviewed said that time is often a challenge. Collaboration requires planning, structure and effort, as well as the unpacking of how. Um,

so not only is it about getting organizations to the [00:10:00] table, but there needs to be work done in terms of capacitating those organizations to take those collaborations forward.

[00:10:07] So the fragmentation and the reasons for it sit across a number of levels. And I think one of the things that really has come through through our experience is competitiveness, um, shows up in collaboration. And this again is reading verbatim from one of the answers they say competitiveness and ego people just need to check their egos at the door.

[00:10:26] Um, so I guess as I mentioned, I could talk about this all day, but that is how we see sort of the main issues and the main causes for some of this fragmentation across the space.

[00:10:35] **Kentse Radebe:** [00:10:35] So sort of if I had to pull on that thread a little bit more and maybe push back a little bit, because you're speaking about collaboration and the benefits of collaboration and why this is good in the youth sector, somebody might come and say, well, actually we have a myriad of problems in the sector, you know, from unemployment education, access to resources, we could even look at, you know, Location, rural visits, urban, we could look agenda [00:11:00] and someone might say, well, actually we need all of these different organizations to be focused on these different areas, because you can't have one organization looking at all of these different pieces.

[00:11:08] How would you respond to somebody who says that? And perhaps maybe if you could explore, what are some of the incentives that are built into the system that prevent people from thinking about collaboration, the way you talking about it?

[00:11:22] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:11:22] I'm not necessarily preaching to you and you would know this better than others. What about complex problems, wicked problems. And the problems that we deal with is that they're multifaceted and you need a sort of holistic systems approach to dealing with an unpacking with it. Sometimes it's hard to tell where one sort of social problem starts and the other begins. So it's about color.

[00:11:42] It's about setting up a network of supporter on the young people that we're working with. So not to, um, limit the importance and the impact of an organization that is doing a work dissimilar to yours outside of yours. But to think about how we can find synergies, um, to build off the work that [00:12:00] we're doing.

[00:12:00] So it's about incentivizing and creating. Um, I think there's a bit of advocacy work that needs to be done as well. That looks to highlight the importance of collaboration and where collaboration can look to fill the gaps and look to improve the work. There are already great impactful work that's being done on the ground.

[00:12:18] But I think there's a lot of organizations doing really good work. And the issues with regards to collaboration often come from an issue around our own resources within the organization and time to look up from your own programmatic work. Um, and I think again, to address the second part. Of of your question around the structural barrier.

[00:12:36] I think as well, we need to think about the way we bring funders into the conversation. And we need to look at how we are looking to incentivize working across organizations. Um, and, and I think because of the way funding structures are set up, I think

it does lead to an air of competitiveness. And again, I think I'd like to revert back a little bit to what was mentioned in, through the answers I mentioned earlier, and that people [00:13:00] do need to check their egos at the door to a certain extent.

[00:13:03] I think, um, a lot of the time we do a lot of this work with our hearts, which makes it hard for us to take a step back.

[00:13:09] **Kentse Radebe:** [00:13:09] Sure, thanks for unpacking that. And you spoke a little bit about the gaps and I want to bring Jason, I want to bring you into the conversation now because we all was, you know, telling us about the work that you've been doing at Capacitate.

[00:13:20] And part of this conversation is to explore how we can utilize technology to perhaps close some of these gaps. And these barriers that Luvuyo was speaking about a little bit earlier. So perhaps Jason, you can tell us a little bit about capacitate and the work that you're doing to transform the space.

[00:13:35] **Jason Bygate:** [00:13:35] Yeah, many thanks. So I think that, um, there is certainly a lot of work to, to be done in the sector. Um, and in particular, looking at integration from outside of capacitate, our focus is primarily on providing strategic advisory for things like integration, but also driving the use of technology for. For impact and also leveraging data for more effective delivery.

[00:13:59] So our [00:14:00] focus is principally across technology for development, but also looking at how data can be used more effectively and also how we can build relationships across the sector for more impact. So the area of integration is certainly one that's close to our heart and for us technology plays a critical role in driving that integration.

[00:14:23] And I think just to pick up on one of the points that you made earlier around the need for so many different organizations, because of the complexity of the system for us, I think that that is where the opportunity lies for technology to facilitate better integration. And certainly there, there is no one organization that can fulfill all of their requirements across the sector.

[00:14:45] And actually what we need is more diversity, but diversity in a way that is better integrated. So that we can manage a more seamless journey for a young person as they're transitioning from, from school, into the workplace.

[00:14:59] **Kentse Radebe:** [00:14:59] So, Jason, I [00:15:00] like everything that you're saying, but I almost want to take a step back. Cause you said something just now about facilitating that transition. Could you unpack in layman's terms? What does that mean? What does that look like? What is the student journey? What does it look like for somebody who wants to support organizations doing that work? Can you paint that picture?

[00:15:18] **Jason Bygate:** [00:15:18] Sure. Well, I think that the transition that we talk about as Israeli looking at that journey of a young person as they're, they're leaving the school and in some cases before they leave school and how they make a transition into the economy as a productive member of society. So there's, there's been a fairly significant amount of research done, um, in particular by, by UJay and UCT in looking at that journey of a young person.

[00:15:47] And really there are multiple components to facilitate that, that process of transition. So looking at how a young person becomes a productive member of society and, and enters [00:16:00] into the economy. And I think that within the South African context, what we have is, um, a pathway that that is a difficult one that's characterized by significant barriers or, or gaps in service. And a lot of that pathway that we now have for young people has been predefined through the legacy of, of our own social structures, specifically things like, um, segregation and apartheid that have limited the opportunities and institutionalized the barriers for young people as they move out of the school environment into a working environment.

[00:16:39] So there is a lot of complexity that has defined the landscape that we now we're now faced with and certainly has contributed significantly to the enormous level of unemployment that we're, that we're challenged with currently.

[00:16:54] **Kentse Radebe:** [00:16:54] I think Jay Jason, as you're speaking, you're bringing up some aspects that Lavelle, I think raised a little [00:17:00] bit earlier. So if we are, want to lean on you a little bit here, because I think with Jason is unpacking and sort of like all the different moving parts that almost need to almost come together to make that journey. As you said, Jason, more seamless and I'm wondering the, we are from a policy perspective, what are some of the barriers that are currently preventing that from happening? Because we know that. Policies can be a leverage point to, to bring the kind of change that we want to see in a particular system. What's what's the context like in South Africa?

[00:17:29] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:17:29] One of the things that we also need to remember is that in try and with filler institution is the idea of co-operative governance with that. The heart of it is around working together. But I think that that sort of idea can be applied across, across the whole space. So I, what, what, I will also take a step back and say, it's not necessarily up to me to decide. Where the gaps are. It's up to the organizations that, who we're looking to bring on board and amplify their voice to identify that you mentioned earlier that the youth development space is, is, and [00:18:00] Jason also touched on it is, is very broad.

[00:18:02] And there's a wide range of smaller organizations operating within the space and what we're trying to do with another piece of work, that Jason is also part of called the YD co-lab, which is which we'll get to talking to a little bit later. But one of the key objectives of that is, is for the. RD itself, the collective to act as a connected voice that looks to amplify the needs of smaller organizations.

[00:18:27] So I think it's, it's around first and foremost, getting a seat at that table for a lot of these smaller type of organizations to then dictate and, and, and, uh, influence a policy level. Um, decisions.

[00:18:40] **Kentse Radebe:** [00:18:40] So it's interesting that you say that lovelier because when you speak about that and I, and I think it's a critique that anybody who's done in governance and politics study or any social science degree has come across that critique around policymaking and South African that we write really well, but we implement really poorly.

[00:18:55] And I was reading an article. Um, I think it was a while ago about scaling up and, and what [00:19:00] it looks like when you take a program or an intervention that maybe

worked in a particular area or in a particular school or in an organization, and try to implement that in, uh, an entire government department.

[00:19:10] And one of the points that was brought up around that is that when you actually scale, even if your program got really positive results, At a smaller level that is actually really difficult to replicate that at a macro or mezzo level. So I want to bring you in Jason A little bit, because oftentimes when we talk about tech, we think about it as one of those enablers that allow us to scale.

[00:19:30] I mean, oftentimes I'll hear people speaking about how in Africa, in Southern Africa, we can utilize tech to like leapfrog a lot of the developmental challenges that we have. And I'm wondering in this particular case, is that the same answer is tech going to allow us to be able to scale a lot of these interventions? And even if that is the case, are there any potential drawbacks in doing that?

[00:19:52] **Jason Bygate:** [00:19:52] So I'll sense a double-edged question that you can say, but I think that, um, Absolutely. [00:20:00] So with the caveat, I'm a, I'm a tech guy. So, um, I look to take, to solve a lot of problems first. Um, I think that technology can, can certainly accelerate the process of scale and, and also provide some of the structures to allow us a broader reach.

[00:20:16] But I think that the important point around the use of technology is, is that it it's, it's just a tool. So unless you've got the, the other mechanisms in place that are required, Um, for the tool to operate, um, it just really becomes, um, an, an another tool that's thrown at a problem. So I think that there is, there's a lot of additional work that needs to happen around the application of tools, like technology to drive scale, and also to manage the complexity that's intrinsic in the environment itself.

[00:20:47] **Kentse Radebe:** [00:20:47] Thanks, Jason. I think that perspective is very helpful and it helps paint a much more vivid context, but I want to shift gears a little bit and we, I want to bring you back into the conversation because earlier you raise the issue around funding. And I think [00:21:00] when we're talking about funding, we're talking about resource flows.

[00:21:02] We're talking about power. And for me, you spoke earlier that you wanted to chat to us about the YD Co-lab project. And from what you've shared about that, it really sounds to me like you're trying to challenge the current narratives around who are the dominant players, because there really isn't a lot of information sharing in the sector. Can you tell us a little bit more about what the YD Co-lab project is about and what you hope to achieve?

[00:21:24] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:21:24] Essentially it is, it is a collective of organizations looking to achieve three overarching goals or objective. I mentioned one earlier in terms of amplifying the voice of small organizations, but I guess the official official sort of objective we have in our document is building a collective voice for youth development organizations and others in the ecosystem.

[00:21:47] Mapping the youth development ecosystem and advocating for effective practice within the youth development. Uh, space. And one of the work streams that we're also going to be looking to develop through that [00:22:00] program is, is, is funders and how, and we've been still thinking about how we, how we bring them on board.



[00:22:06] And you mentioned earlier the power dynamics that exists within the youth development space. And it's something that we're also very much aware of. And even before we think about introducing funders and having a conversation around the way funds are managed within the space, uh, we had a. Even to take a step back before that we had a conversation about whether or not it should be one of the overarching objectives of the collective as a whole, but we thought that maybe going forward, we would think about setting up a separate work stream that looks to engage and deal with funders separately because it is a very delicate conversation to manage.

[00:22:42] So you mentioned rather pointedly that. One of the things that we're trying to do is shift power dynamics, but even amongst the nine organizations that sit amongst the steering comm now with some pretty powerful organizations and what we were trying to do, at least in the conversation that we had last week is to try and [00:23:00] include some smaller organizations and tried to also include a space for more marginalized voices within the youth development space.

[00:23:07] So even amongst these conversations that we having amongst parties like the YD Co-lab, There's there's an under-representation of the smaller organizations. And I think as we look to move forward with it, what we need to do is really dedicate a few days, a few months to thinking about how we can look to challenge some of those existing dynamics within the space.

[00:23:28] And that what that takes is for the organizations that form part of the steerco to, to, to step forward and be willing to, to, to eat a little bit of humble pie, for lack of a better word. And to understand how they in certain places are barriers themselves, smaller organizations actually, um, be lifting off the ground and, and, uh, and, and growing essentially.

[00:23:50] **Kentse Radebe:** [00:23:50] So picking up on that thread of, you know, funding and the issues that are, you know, located in that space. I want to bring you in Jason. And I think for me, as [00:24:00] Luvuyo was speaking, I was thinking about, well, I'm located in Cape town and I understand that, you know, the tech sector here is, is quite as you know, it's bustling, it's innovative.

[00:24:08] There's lots of money being funneled into that space, but I don't necessarily know if that's. The correct assumptions that I'm making. But I'm curious about hearing what Louis was speaking about around some of the work that they're trying to achieve through Y D co-lab hearing that and listening to that, how do you think tech can support those organizations when they're trying to do that work and potentially, maybe even exploring how funding tech in that particular context should play out.

[00:24:35] **Jason Bygate:** [00:24:35] Thanks. Kentse, well, I think that's the role of the funder across the ecosystem is, is obviously a fairly critical one. The challenge has been that the way that funders are investing in social outcomes has been determined in a way that is disconnected from many of the challenges that exist on the ground.

[00:24:55] And in particular, the funding that's allocated towards [00:25:00] organizations is, is usually quite project specific, which means that there's very little funding available to build out infrastructure such as technology, which might better support the sorts of social outcomes that we're looking to achieve. Um, and that's, before we start thinking about how



we're able to share information across organizations, If the, the underlying technology infrastructure is, is weak or non-existent, it makes it very difficult for organizations to collaborate, even if they did want to.

[00:25:32] So technology is, is certainly, uh, a way of, for us to, to drive that integration and to provide a framework for, for collaboration and sharing. But unless the funders are aware of that need. And the need to support and to fund the necessary technology infrastructure organizations are going to be trapped in this state of perpetual paper, if you will, where there . Where they're [00:26:00] constantly having to generate reports to satisfy funders and don't have the systems in place that would firstly allow them to better report to funders and investors, but also allow them better visibility of. What is happening within their own organizations and the results that they're achieving so that they can make better strategic and operational decisions.

[00:26:19] **Kentse Radebe:** [00:26:19] I think Jason, you're painting quite a, I think for me a picture that I would love to see for many jurors when I was working in the NGO sector. When you spoke about the paper load and all of that, I could just imagine. I could almost take myself back to those days. And I guess maybe the question that I want to ask you is if you had to sort of imagine into in the next 20 or 30 years, what kind of role do you think technology will will have? And maybe if we had to paint a good positive story, how do you imagine that would look? What's the ideal.

[00:26:50] **Jason Bygate:** [00:26:50] Well, I could go completely mad scientists on your own on this particular point. But I think that there, there are a lot of different ways that we could, [00:27:00] we could reshape the landscape. Um, I think that the underlying requirement is, is the intent to collaborate.

[00:27:08] For me, what would be an ideal outcome is, is really that point of digital or technological maturity, where the technology almost disappears. And we're not even aware of the fact that it's, it's doing all of this work for us. We simply have access to the information that we need when we need it. And we're able to provide services, um, in a way that is directed and purposeful.

[00:27:34] And, and also meets the requirements of both the individual and the country as a whole. So for me, the, the sign of, of truly mature technology is, is when it starts to disappear. I think we've got a long way to go. Um, in particular, if we look at the, the digital maturity of most organizations across the sector, and this is something that we are going to be teasing out in the, [00:28:00] the series around, um, Talking Tech For Good is how we're unpacking, um, the challenges that organizations face and making that transition towards digital maturity.

[00:28:11] And how do we assess where organizations are sitting and what are the steps that they need to take in order to accelerate that transition within the organization that would drive. More efficiency and effectiveness and delivery.

[00:28:25] **Kentse Radebe:** [00:28:25] That's an amazing future. And I think Luvuyo I could possibly ask you the same question, what do you imagine your, your emphasis on collaboration and breaking down those barriers and not working in silos in the next, you know, half a decade? What kind of picture do you think we should be seeing in the, in the development space?

[00:28:44] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:28:44] I'm probably not going to go as mad scientists as Jason, uh, on stuff. But I think that the key outcome that I'm looking forward is if you imagine, uh, range of organizations working in a certain community, and [00:29:00] each of them are building off the programmatic, uh, successes of, of each of their work.

[00:29:07] So for you example, if you were to look at a high school, let's say in Gugulethu, and, uh, the organizations each addressing a sort of a youth development outcome, Are engaging consistently in conversations around how to address an issue such as a high school dropout, for example, um, if, as we know that there's many different reasons that lead to high school dropout.

[00:29:29] So for example, you may have a academic type organization that's looking to address content. Then, then you may have an organization looking to address teenage substance abuse. And then you have an organization looking to address a child headed homes. If, for example, all of those organizations are working around the same co cohorts of youth and young people are across these nodes across Africa.

[00:29:53] That's kind of what I view to be success. Um, so, so part of what we need to do in order to [00:30:00] get to that stage is we need to begin to, uh, emphasize advocate to run programs that look to capacitate organizations with the, with the key frameworks and tools required to develop. Innovative and impactful collaborations. So that's the hope.

[00:30:16] **Kentse Radebe:** [00:30:16] I love both of your answers because it's very inspiring. And I think we often say this is the podcast team at the end of each episode, we're like, Oh, we're so inspired. So many people are doing amazing things in South Africa and the continent across the world. So we often, when I hear people speak the way both of you have spoken, I get so excited.

[00:30:32] And I guess I want to, I want to bring us back down a little bit to earth as we sort of get to the last question for today's conversation. And to say that oftentimes when we think, and imagine these new horizons, these new futures, as amazing as they may be, oftentimes we're already planting the seeds for those new systems for those new networks.

[00:30:51] Well, there's new ways of working and we've just while we haven't completely come out of it, um, we're still sort of in the thick of the impact of COVID-19 and the way that [00:31:00] it's really reshaped the way organizations work and operate. So I'm wondering that in these amazing futures that both of you have painted.

[00:31:08] Are there any seeds or ideas or just things that are happening now that you think will really inform what happens in the future? Perhaps there's examples from organizations that you can pull through that you think what these guys are doing is really going to help build the kind of future that we're trying to, to get to. I'll start with you, Jason.

[00:31:30] **Jason Bygate:** [00:31:30] There are a number of initiatives underway that's that are starting to, to shift the landscape for me, I think there has been a silver lining to COVID-19 in accelerating, digital transition, and also an awareness and interest in the use of technology to improve programs and even operations.

[00:31:51] And I think that's a lot of the opportunity that I see is, is around the management of data and the sharing of data and, [00:32:00] um, how data is made more accessible and

available in particular, when it comes to, to young people themselves more often than not it's through, through various programs. Um, and I don't think it's exclusive to, to the youth sector, but often, often beneficiaries and participants of programs are completely disconnected from their own data.

[00:32:19] They have no idea of what information is being collected about them or for them. And they certainly don't have access to that information. And it, firstly, it's a matter of, of, um, freedom of access as well as privacy and confidentiality. But it's also having access to information so that I could make my own decisions about my own life.

[00:32:41] And I think that the initiatives that are underway with the Youth Explorer and twist with the SA youth.mobi, as well as the work that we're doing with UNISEF and PWC around the establishment of a national youth record, those are the sorts of initiatives that our hope can improve access to [00:33:00] information and allow us to better direct.

[00:33:02] Interventions across the sector, because for me, I think that's one of the key things that's missing is a better view of, of what, what is happening, who is doing, what, where, how are they doing it? And what's working and what's not because that's the sort of information that can direct the work that we're doing better.

[00:33:19] So that the outcomes that we can achieve can keep improving and keep adding value.

[00:33:25] **Kentse Radebe:** [00:33:25] Sure. That's great.

[00:33:27] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:33:27] I think, but also to be honest, thinking about, wait, what may happen in the future as one of those questions that more recently has made me a bit more anxious, but who's to know. And who could have we been envisage?

[00:33:39] What has happened over the last year? But I think one of the things that's come out and perhaps it's something that we can see, you'll look back on and seeing it as it develops is a sense of resilience that exists across I think the wider social development space. And I think that resilience is something that for most part is something that's really [00:34:00] encouraging and inspiring to me.

[00:34:01] No matter what the circumstance is, organizations are able to pivot and organizations are making the best with what they have in order to deliver some form of impact. And I think one of the things that, that, that has come through other clearly, and again, not to not to play the point is this appetite and openness to change that COVID has, has forced upon us across the social development space and across all society as well.

[00:34:27] And I think in terms of practically examples and thinking back to, to the answer that I gave in the previous segment around what the goal is, I, I think of an, I am slightly biased because I used to work there for a little bit, but the Amandla Safe Hub model, which looks to also incorporate and bring on other organizations, um, at Nyanga junction, for example, Ikamva Youth is there, there's a bunch of organizations working holistically to support young people.

[00:34:54] And if we were to NF and looking at that, that, that for me is a source of inspiration and looking [00:35:00] forward. And again, Uh, to hop back on what I said earlier, the resilience and the appetite to continue to go with something that, that, that, that I know

will continue in the future without me necessarily forecasting what will happen. That's that's kind of how I see it.

[00:35:16] **Kentse Radebe:** [00:35:16] Thank you. I mean, Jason and Luvuyo, you've shared so much with us today. I'm definitely left with a lot of food for thought, but also really, really excited and inspired that we have individuals like yourselves as well, working in the sector who were thinking about these questions were thinking about these challenges.

[00:35:31] I think that's really, really exciting. So that was some food for thought. Actually something exciting that Jason and Luvuyo we are mentioned in our conversation is that the Bertha Center's Youth Innovation portfolio team is launching its own podcast in collaboration with Capacitate in the near future.

[00:35:47] We'll keep you posted because it's something you're not going to want to miss the podcast aims to provide practical tools and insights to organizations working in the youth sector to transform digitally and serve their beneficiaries better. [00:36:00] Next up is our positive outlook segment hosted by Fergus Turner

[00:36:04] **Fergus Turner :** [00:36:04] Initiated in January, 2012. Activate change drivers objective is to equip young people of South Africa to be innovative, active citizens, influencing and provoking positive change. To date they have provided more than 4,000 young South Africans with training to change their lives and the world they inhabit. The organization is present across all nine provinces from cities to rural areas.

[00:36:31] These young people or activators as they are called are consciously and critically engaged in multi-sectoral initiatives across the economic, political, and social spectrums. Today, we are welcoming Tarryn Abrahams. From Activate Change Drivers. We're happy to have you. Yeah, Tarryn.

[00:36:48] **Tarryn Abrahams:** [00:36:48] Hey, thank you for having me. I'm quite excited to be here.

[00:36:52] **Fergus Turner :** [00:36:52] Perfect. So I'd really like to know a little more about what exactly an activator is.

[00:36:58] **Tarryn Abrahams:** [00:36:58] So an [00:37:00] activator is someone who has completed out is essential training program, which we ran from 2012 up until 2019. Unfortunately in 2020 COVID happened and we could no longer host it residential trainings.

[00:37:13] And so there's no cohorts since then. Um, and hopefully when things change and open again start doing those residential trainings, again, essentially, they are passionate about change within their communities, as well as South Africa. These young people, um, or activators are consciously and critically engaged in multi-sectoral initiatives across economic, political, and social spectrums.

[00:37:37] **Fergus Turner :** [00:37:37] So despite the pandemic shifting Activate Change Drivers work, and, but. What can you tell us about the Activator Alumni Community and how they continue to engage with one another and with activates work?

[00:37:54] **Tarryn Abrahams:** [00:37:54] So they are still active and we've moved a lot of our programs into the digital space. So we still host webinars [00:38:00] for them in the online

spaces. So via WhatsApp, um, creating spaces for them to engage with thought leaders with other organizations, but on digital platforms. Due to the fact that we cannot sort of be in the same room, was colored, um, being what it is.

[00:38:21] **Fergus Turner** : [00:38:21] Well, this, this, this echoes what was discussed earlier in the feature of the, uh, of this episode, uh, recognizing technology's role as a key leverage point, um, in youth development.

[00:38:35] Um, so perhaps you could tell us a little bit more about how activate in general, uh, recognizes its role in the sector, um, and perhaps share activates sense of it's theory of change.

[00:38:49] **Tarryn Abrahams**: [00:38:49] So Activate video change says that if young people are provided with a provocative platform to meet, connect, and be inspired to actively contribute to the common good strengthen, [00:39:00] develop their abilities and skillset, then they can be innovative and active citizens who can drive positive social, economic, and political change for South Africa and the global good.

[00:39:11] So we've also both the Activate Academy, which is on an online learning management system that provides digital courses to just, not just the activators, but to beyond the activators, um, and the jaded public at large. And we've sort of expanded on that theory of change in that space where we look at the lack of access to relevant knowledge, skills, and information prevents meaningful and effective transformative change. And our theory of change basically says that access to the dynamics of knowledge, skills, and information will encourage, empower individuals to take responsibility for their own lives and ultimately make choices that will benefit the greater good.

[00:39:58] **Fergus Turner** : [00:39:58] And in reference to sort of [00:40:00] what, what, what sometimes is referred to as blended learning models, how do you incorporate blended learning models in that mission? That mission to create my inclusivity and create a more radically inclusive digital landscape in South Africa. Um, and what those, um, what do those models look like? How do they work? Um, and have you seen any success with them?

[00:40:24] **Tarryn Abrahams**: [00:40:24] The blended learning approach, the whole idea behind that was to provide a digital space. For learning and information, as well as the face to face space, because we do feel that sometimes just having the one without the other, doesn't give that in-depth learning that one needs. So we've incorporated social, emotional learning. Into all our content that's created. We have a combination of masterclass and self-led courses.

[00:40:56] Masterclass courses are inclusive or [00:41:00] facilitated sessions, so that's sort of online lectures. And then we also found that recruiting that I team and providing resources and infrastructure will ensure success just to get back to sort of the blended learning, um, question. We also had fortunately found ourselves in a position last year where we couldn't gel out the blended learning exactly as we had planned due to COVID. We have started, you know, on a small scale this year. So we ran a project in partnership with, for life we've just completed the pilot of the pilot should be finishing soon where we took a group of young people in Limpopo and they went through the course that we had uploaded onto the platform that teaches you about growing your own garden.

[00:41:56] And so we had a facilitator out in Limpopo who would meet with these young [00:42:00] people. Obviously I can open it cause you all giving a garden. So it's fairly safe with COVID protocols in place. Of course. Um, and they would then go their own guidance and go through that course and learn about what it means to grow your own garden, what you need to know.

[00:42:16] Cause it's not as simple as just planting a seed, right. So that's our first pilot that's, that's gone out and we hoping to see how that's, how that's panned out.

[00:42:27] **Fergus Turner** : [00:42:27] Thank you so much time for sharing your work at Activate Change Drivers. Uh, I, for one have been greatly inspired, but also just, um, incredibly interested to find out more.

[00:42:38] **Kentse Radebe**: [00:42:38] What I'm taking away from today's episode is the technology is imperative in creating more opportunities for youth in South Africa. What we need to address, however, is the access issue and finding a way to overcome that. The other matter that seriously needs to be addressed is fragmentation within the youth development sector, David Ehrilchman co-founder and coordinator of the converged network [00:43:00] notes that leverage points were present opportunities where participants can have greater impact by working together than they can by working alone.

[00:43:07] He says that in collaborative efforts, they have worked with common leverage points that participants have identified include increasing public awareness of the problem, securing resources as a network to continue or enhance their ability to collaborate or drawing on the strength of their collective voice, to influence public officials and policy makers.

[00:43:27] Ultimately, we know that it's the youth that need to benefit. So we need to ask ourselves if having such a myriad of youth organizations and initiatives is accomplishing or hindering that. What if we could bring the various role players in the youth sector together, what if we could see more collaboration and less competitiveness in the fight for funding?

[00:43:51] Thank you for tuning in to **Just for a change**, powered by the Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship: the podcast where we offer new perspectives on social innovation and social justice. If you're curious about solving social issues in your community or believe we can make a positive, tangible difference in the world, then make sure you subscribe so that you don't miss any of our upcoming episodes!

[00:44:15] Also remember to have a look at the show notes, if you're interested in finding out more about the birther center for social innovation and entrepreneurship.

Links:

Donella Meadows: <http://donellameadows.org/archives/leverage-points-places-to-intervene-in-a-system/>

A comparative study on the response of NPOs in education to the COVID-19 pandemic: <https://www.jet.org.za/covid-19-research-response/south-african-bootcamp/theme-2>

Stats SA: <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0318/P03182018.pdf>

Education, inequality and innovation in the time of COVID-19: <https://www.jet.org.za/covid-19-research-response/south-african-bootcamp/theme-9>

ACTIVATE: <https://www.activateleadership.co.za/>  
<https://activateacademy.org.za/>

Bertha Centre Digital transformation webinar: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p3j1DsXb1E0>

David Ehrlichman Leverage points:

<https://medium.com/converge-perspectives/identifying-leverage-points-in-a-system-3b917f70ab13>