

Talking Tech for Good Episode 3: Talking connectivity and access in SA_Transcript

[00:00:12] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:00:12] The sound of young people talking about connectivity and the issues they face every day. Sanibonani, good afternoon, good evening, whatever time you're listening to this podcast. Welcome to the Talking Tech for Good podcast powered by the Bertha Center for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship in collaboration with our partners, Capacitate, we're passionate about helping you understand the possibilities of tech and social impact to organizations.

[00:00:38] Never, have we ever had to adapt so quickly and we know this can be overwhelming. We are here to have conversations, answer some pertinent questions, and hopefully we can all move towards harnessing the power of tech for a better world.

[00:00:51] **Voicenote:** [00:00:51] What are some of the most challenging things that you've found when it comes to connectivity and being able to get online? If you guys can just share with me as young people.

[00:01:04] **Voicenote:** [00:01:04] My biggest challenge with connectivity, I would say it's the stability of the internet. I am fortunate in that at home, we have uncapped Wi-Fi and the biggest issue is the internet being unstable most of the time.

[00:01:21] **Voicenote:** [00:01:21] Connecting now to the internet is very difficult nowadays because everything that we do, we have to go online, maybe searching for a job, you have to do it online, or like applying for school, we have to do it online. Then we'd find it that it's very difficult for us because most of us are unemployed youths. So, we can't afford, data is very expensive. And then e-links, for everything we have to use e-links, they are complicated. And the more you struggle, the more time it takes to finish whatever it is you are doing.

[00:02:11] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:02:11] Mr Bygate, my partner in crime. How you doing, how's this month been treating you, 2021 has been a bit crazy, hasn't it?

[00:02:18] **Jason Bygate:** [00:02:18] Uh, my esteemed colleague, indeed, it has its uh, I think we're reaching that time of the year where everyone is feeling the pressure. I think the cumulative effects of lockdown and the pandemic are really starting to, to bring some pressure on to everyone's shoulders. And I think certainly hearing those voice notes just, uh, adds a little extra flavor to all of the things that we need to fix, um, across the country. How are you doing, my esteemed colleague?

[00:02:46] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:02:46] Yeah, I'm doing all right, I'm doing well. I started my day off with a few cups of coffee. So, I'm sort of bouncing in my seat as we go, uh, really looking forward to today's conversation, I know you and I are going to be sinking our teeth into the issues of connectivity today, which, which, which allows us to also be a little bit more, challenging and angry. I guess, uh, so yeah, that's me.

[00:03:10] **Jason Bygate:** [00:03:10] Yeah. I'm glad you said angry because I, um, I'm really itching to dig into this topic and I've given some of the, the literature and the, the media articles. It really is an issue that is, um, increasingly relevant, um, and certainly a barrier for more and more people that are trying to navigate this, this new normal that COVID has brought about. Um, but certainly it's really just an extension of the conditions that we know have been in place for quite some time. And certainly there, there should be a lot more that's being done to allow young people in particular to get access to the internet and to be able to use it, um, to find work, to improve their skills and really just to, to navigate this digital world that we live in.

[00:03:59] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:03:59] Yeah. I mean, technology has often been used as an equalizer or has been referred to as an equalizer, but in 2018, stats SA found that many South Africans just over 60% have access to internet through their mobile devices. However, less than 10% of South Africans have access to internet at home, the numbers are even more dire when one considers rural areas. Jason, what are your thoughts on what has been dubbed the digital divide Africa?

[00:04:26] **Jason Bygate:** [00:04:26] Well Luvuyo, as you know, this is a subject. I'm particularly passionate about. And I think notwithstanding what the stats say. Uh, the problem is not really even vaguely, accurately reflected when looking at the numbers. And I think as we've seen from those voice notes, it really translates into a really significant impact on young people's lives. And that digital divide, um, has

certainly been accentuated, um, in many ways by the pandemic. So, migrating into digital services and being able to access content online for so many South Africans, both young and old, that is just not even a vague possibility, both because of the access to the internet, whether it be devices or, um, internet itself, or because of the costs of, of data.

And those really haven't changed enough in the, in the last decade. Uh, the government has made some, uh, I suppose, paid arbitrary lip service to driving the data costs down but given where we're sitting on the global scale of cost, it, it really just is not acceptable to have so many people that need to be online that just can't get online. And when we're talking about the digital divide, yeah. access is one thing and we definitely need to drive access as a starting point. But we also need to start unpacking what we are doing with that access, because it's not just about getting online to, I don't know feed the Facebook monster or humor that the, the Twitter trolls, um, it's really about how we're using that connectivity to be productive. And when we're looking at a youth unemployment rate, which is climbing over 75%, uh, when you start counting and not just those young people that are not in employment, educational training, but also those that have just simply given up and the digital economy really represents such an amazing opportunity for young people.

[00:06:38] To become productive members of society, but they can't do that without the internet. They can't do that without the skills to be productive. So really, it's that digital divide and the gap that we see in particular in South Africa, where we have such vast levels of inequality, it's, it's really an issue that we need to start dealing with aggressively. And I think, I mean, Luvuyo, you and the team at the Bertha Center, working on the ground with youth, have seen this play out really, really specifically. What have, what have your impressions been of how this, um, issue is really reflected in, in the lives of young people?

[00:07:20] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:07:20] Oh man, it's, it's, as you could get a sense from the voice notes, it's something that they live with and that they have to interact with and engage with every day. Um, particularly those young people, who maybe fall within the 25% or actually that wouldn't make sense in terms of my stats, sorry Jason,

Math isn't my strong suit, but those who aren't necessarily discouraged, um, there's, there's a lot of appetite to try and engage online, but once they are there, a lot of young people are starting to feel overwhelmed, which is what, one of the, one of the, one of the participants who mentioned in the voice notes. There's, there's this assumption I think that a lot of us have that young people, as well as just internet savvy and know what to look for and I think particularly, if I think about myself, those of us who come from a more privileged background, we don't realize just how comfortable we are with navigating an online space. And I think that when we engage, engaging with, with young people, one also needs to take that skills capacity side of, of navigating the online space into consideration.

[00:08:26] I would also like to say that in terms of the wider digital divide, for, for most of us, I know inequality is something that's at the heart of our society. And for the most part it's, it seemed to be the have nots and the haves just broadly speaking. But for those of us working within the social impact space, the majority of us, I would hope are focusing on those communities that don't necessarily would be considered to be the haves. So, cross that, it's individuals who are, who are consistently struggling with connecting online and I think one also needs to take into consideration the difference between urban situation youth and rural situated youth. I know that sometimes we don't like to refer to some of our young people living in, in, in some of the communities we work in as privileged, but at least that may have an internet cafe down the road.

[00:09:14] They may be a Wi-Fi sort of, there may be a library where one can hop on to free Wi-Fi, those operating in rural space that they don't have any of that. And one also needs to, when having this conversation, think about how we need to make connectivity accessible to all and I think that's, that's kind of at the heart of, of, why we want to push this conversation forward.

[00:09:38] **Jason Bygate:** [00:09:38] Yeah, no, I think you're a hundred percent correct and certainly there's, there's a, a very wide gap when it comes to those urban and rural settings. I think for me also, there's a real concern as we're driving this, um, this issue of access that having the gap in place actually prevents, um, young people from being able to upskill. My concern is that we've got to, we're going to reach a

point where we've got a fairly significant amount of access, but really what we're starting to drive is not digital productivity. We're actually just driving another level of consumerism, so digital consumerism, where young people and I mean, indeed the, in the whole of society are consuming more and more content online, but it's actually not adding value.

[00:10:27] And if you think about, um, the plethora of, of inane content that exists across social media and how that can suck you in and, um, to your time, without anything productive coming of it. In fact, in most cases, it's, it's also negative. I think really, we need to focus on both elements of, of bridging that digital divide, achieving access, but also making sure that we're making the best use possible of that access. And that's, before we even begin to think about the third dimension of that digital divide, which is the dilution of culture, you know, If, um, if we're looking at where all of that content is coming from the major role that, um, the American market plays in defining the things that we talk about and the way that we talk about things and the point of reference that we have for what's important, there's also a real risk of us diluting the, the rich culture that we have across the world and certainly in South Africa where culture is a really important part of our identity, we need to start now aggressively looking at how we protect that culture and ensure that we are not just absorbed in this collective homogenous Facebook, Twitter entity, where we're all seen as the same and, and, um, are all using a, you know, a digital frame of reference for what's important and, and also who we are.

[00:11:53] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:11:53] I mean, you mentioned some really important points and I mean, you mentioned being a troll on Twitter and going on Facebook. It's almost as though you've been searching through my internet history, but uh, it, as you mentioned, it's, it's almost one needs to deal with this from two angles, not only getting people online, but making sure that once they're online, they're sort of accessing the right information. I remember a few years back through the Western Cape education department when they were rolling out sort of these, um, they were trying to get every school online essentially, and have a computer in every room.

[00:12:32] I remember thinking to myself, yeah. Okay. That's only one piece of the puzzle with the conversation that needs to go hand in hand with that is what is the content and what is the type of stuff that the young people are going to be

engaged with once they're on and not just as simple as putting a Facebook blocker or a Twitter block, but thinking a lot more about the way in which we direct young people to sort information and the thing about young people as well, that it's also something tricky is that they need to feel as though they're making that decision themselves otherwise you don't want to turn the online space to them as just a, another class on the thing, a space for them, where they're just being forced to do certain things. I think we should also try create a space for them to explore as much as possible. I mean, as much as the internet is this can be a dark, scary place, there's also really amazing opportunities for learning.

[00:13:23] **Jason Bygate:** [00:13:23] Yeah, absolutely. I'm glad you brought up that, that learning online because there is a really great opportunity and just revisiting the podcast that we co-hosted with the civic tech team in Africa, one of the key opportunities is in leveraging platforms and systems to be productive and it's not, it's not really about learning how to code or, you know, becoming a data scientist because I mean, that's, that's one of the key agendas that's being pushed as, uh, we must, uh, must produce thousands of software developers and coding and sack man. That bus has left, it's left the station and it's already arrived in India and Brazil and Eastern Europe and we missed it, okay. And the bus is now almost full. Um, we can run after it, it's going to be exhausting and expensive. So, how do we innovate? How do we, how do we do things differently? And given the way that technology is evolving, there's so many platforms that we could be leveraging, um, in particular, you know, low and no-code platform to be productive.

[00:14:29] So I think it's really about shifting our mindset and I know you were talking earlier about, um, how do we achieve access? We've got most people that are only seeing the internet on their mobile phone for the first time and Africa has got a very proud tradition of leapfrogging and we get left so far behind, like dial-up internet. What? Most people never heard that screech of the modem. We went straight to mobile and I think that's really where we need to be focused now, in terms of building up the skills of young people and allowing them to enter into the digital economy as quickly as possible and to turn their skills into revenue so that they can start to pay the bills.

[00:15:09] So I think there's, there's enormous opportunity within the digital environments and with, with getting online, but really, we need to firstly, make sure

that we can provide reliable, consistent access for young people. We need to make sure that they have uh, the skills that they need to be productive once they get online. And then we need to make sure that we're protecting things like our, our cultural identity, as we're entering into this new digital world, all

[00:15:37] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:15:37] All very important points there Jason, I feel like you were taking me to church there. That's why we really excited to get into the meat of our next segment. We have a guest who we know that you guys are going to be really excited to hear from.

[00:15:50] **Jason Bygate:** [00:15:50] Thanks Luvuyo. I always appreciate the time that our guests offer up to join us in conversation, because it gives us an opportunity to show that we actually aren't making this stuff up. And today we're joined by Pieter Holloway and Pieter has worked in the Breede River area for a number of years. He runs the Breede River Skills Center in McGregor, which is a small town in rural Western Cape and, uh, he's joining us today as we talk about the big topic of connectivity and access across South Africa. And I'm sure that he's got some firsthand experience in dealing with those challenges.

[00:16:22] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:16:22] It's really great to have you on the show, Pieter. Thanks again. So first I'll start off with the questions, so, Pieter, could you tell us a little bit more about the skill center that you run?

[00:16:33] **Pieter Holloway:** [00:16:33] Alright um, maybe I should go a little bit back and that is, I'm a math teacher by trade, but I was working here at the high school in, um, McGregor and I was also the woodwork teacher and they noticed that, um, firstly, a lot of the youngsters have no hand skills and uh, secondly, I noticed that a lot of the young people drop out of school before matric and just disappear off the face of the earth. And that's what actually encouraged me to start a skills training center. My father was a carpenter and a builder um, so even though I'm a math teacher, I can also work with my hands and it's one of my passions. So, I really feel um, that schools, in schools, when I was at school, we had woodwork, metalwork, home economics and needlework as practical subjects and that's all gone by the wayside and that's what encouraged me to start a skill center? And the whole idea is to, firstly teach hand skills, something you can do from home.

[00:17:38] So the Breede Center is really about hand skills and, um, not that we're limited to that, we also do a lot of life skills. Um, but, um, and we have an education center section, which is a preschool and, um, um, holiday and often activities to help, um, entertain and stimulate the children um, especially now where we're in schooling is interrupted. Um, it's a very, I think it's a very important part, but my passion is the skill development side to actually allow somebody to earn his own living preferably from home.

[00:18:17] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:18:17] Thanks Pieter. And it's quite obvious to hear how, how motivated you are around the work that you're doing. And could I ask you next? What are some of the biggest challenges you and your youth face regarding technology and accessibility?

[00:18:32] **Pieter Holloway:** [00:18:32] Well um, two things, um, the first is, um, just the cost of um, Wi-Fi and any, uh, data is exorbitant. Um, if you consider the income of people, um, in a town like McGregor, I mean, at the moment we suggest probably at above 50% unemployment rate, um, people go out and they buy data and they, the phone has been switched off, the data has been switched off for two weeks, they switch on and it just chews up three quarters of the data before they've even been able to use by updating everything on the phone. Um, the second thing that that's a big problem, um, is equipment. Um, a lot of people have old phones, very few people here have, uh, computers or laptops.

[00:19:32] And, um, so, so those two would be the first stage of it. There's, there's a few other points to bring up later, but, but those are the first two. Um, that that's a huge problem. Um, and one of the things that we've done at the Breede Center is actually look at how can we make, um, data cheaper, it's difficult to fund it that it's for free, but, but how can we make, make it cheaper? Um, that that's been one of our big focuses, especially after the start of COVID because, um, a lot of the students are now at home, part-time, at one stage even full-time and they get information sent by teachers and the same people that have been disadvantaged before get to get disadvantaged again because they don't have data. So, that, that is one of our major, major problems.

[00:20:23] **Jason Bygate:** [00:20:23] Thanks, Pieter. I think hearing you talk about those challenges really kind of echoes what Luvuyo and I were talking about earlier in that

there's, there's really a, um, a significant barrier that, that young people are facing. Um, firstly, just to get online and then to be able to navigate the digital environment effectively. And I think one of the things that we've seen across the, across the world really is that, um, young people are extremely resilient when it comes to finding ways to get online. What are some of the ways that you've seen young people try to get around this challenge and to get online?

[00:21:03] **Pieter Holloway:** [00:21:03] Well, unfortunately one of them is, is to uh, we often see youngsters sitting outside people's houses and somehow, they've managed to find the code of the person at whose house they are sitting. Um, and, and, and then this is, this is that I've heard there's somebody in town with some apps that can, can actually break the code. Um, I wouldn't mind if somebody sits at my house because I put unlimited access, so it wouldn't really affect me that badly, but that's unfortunately here in the rural areas, um, the theft of cell phones in houses, that's one of the first things people will take because it's just too expensive and I think sometimes in the cities we don't, although there is poverty there, uh, it's a different kind, everybody's salary is sort of how, of what is in Cape town, but the phone costs the same price.

[00:22:02] So, so what just happens is that, uh, students would share, you often see them sitting on the side of the road and they four or five of them sitting around one phone. But it, it it's, it's really, um, that kind of thing. Um, we, we try where we can, where we can get access to, um, computers, which a lot of people donate to us from time to time, we then try and give them, if we can, to, um, families where we know that the finance is really tight and they not able to buy it. So, so there is a lot of that. I think a lot of the, the people who work in domestics and gardeners in, in houses of people who are more affluent uh there's a lot of people are retired in McGregor. I know that a lot of them are assisting their immediate staff with things like, um, giving them their old cell phones, which are good quality cellphone. Um, not, not, uh, very simple, a cell phone that can't do all these extra things. So, um, so those are, those are, I think the, the major areas, but, um, the, the cost of, of cell phones, I mean, I've had one or two cases of some of my staff who bought a cheap cell phone and six months later it's not working.

[00:23:34] So, so. It, it really is a problem and yes, people are resilient, but, um, but I think the lack of income just in many cases, just isolates them completely. In other words, they are just losing out yet again, and this is why we are looking at ways of reducing the cost of, for example, data, so that, that doesn't become, uh, a cutoff that your income ability doesn't become a cutoff to be able to learn and to be able to access internet.

[00:24:13] **Jason Bygate:** [00:24:13] Thanks Pieter. I think you certainly highlight the need for, uh, I think policy makers and, and certainly the networks to understand the importance of connectivity is really a basic human right. And I think there are, there are a whole lot of issues that are linked to that. Certainly, even just the function of dignity in that, you have people that are having to try and find a way to get online, to access basic services and to, and to build these skills, um, before we even get to navigating the use of the devices themselves. And those, those mainstream service providers, what has your experience been with, um, trying to get them to come to the party? I know you talk about driving the cost of data down, and certainly we've seen some initiatives around [00:25:00] data must fall. What is your experience been of, um, their response to, to tech in this issue?

[00:25:07] **Pieter Holloway:** [00:25:07] Um, very difficult, we um, for a long time, it's more than a year, it was really when COVID started and we realized that we going to have to go more online with training that we then started looking at how can we access data? And it took us a long time and a lot of work to find somebody with the solution, rather than somebody, um, who's who listens to you and say, yes, I understand your problem, but you know, we can't do it, it's too expensive or whatever. So, what we have done is we have actually looked at funders to specifically fund an organization that is making it possible for young people or for, for people to, to have internet access at a reasonable cost and we've managed to get it at, uh, at these hotspots at five grand a day unlimited. And that is quite something because most of it is a one gig, two gig data and it last for so long, then it's gone but, but to have unlimited for five Rand is actually very good and we've managed to find such an organization.

[00:26:23] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:26:23] That's amazing Pieter, and maybe for, for some of the listeners who may be on a similar journey to you, how did you go about doing

that? Was it a lot of work? Did it take a few years for you to get that, that, that process in and that fund on board?

[00:26:39] **Pieter Holloway:** [00:26:39] Um, well, it's not the funder. This is the person who will actually set it up, we had to raise funds now to, to make it possible. We're hoping that by December we will have four hotspots up and running each hotspot. One will be at the Breeder center, but the other three will be run by entrepreneurs who will actually will make money out of selling the data to the clients, so it becomes a entrepreneurship process at the same time. And, um, and what we want to do is actually advertise this as much as possible because we had to go search the net until we, one day bumped into this organization is called Isizwe and they offering exactly what we are looking for.

They connect with the data providers and, um, so the service providers and they negotiate a contract with them and, um, they help set up the units at these four points so that people can come in and buy for five Rand, the day's quota on Mondays, by the way, it will be free and we've, we had to find a sponsor for that because it obviously is a cost and that's what we've been busy with. It's the equip, the setting up of the equipment and I'm sponsoring. They will also be 60 high school scholars who will get 50 rands worth of data that's 10 days' worth of data, plus the four days, um, uh, which is free, that's 14 days of data that they will have out of 30 that they will have data. So, every second day they, they ensure to have unlimited data for a day. So, we thought this was an amazing offer and we actually setting up by conference for February next year, hopefully at the grand Breede Center, but it will be an online course and it's a rural conference.

[00:28:34] And the reason why it's a rural conference is two reasons. The one is that the transport and accommodation for attending city conferences for rural people is just too exorbitant and secondly, a lot of the problems we experienced in the rural areas are not the same as in the cities, and therefore we want to connect with the towns around us, our own, uh, municipality, but also as far as even, uh, uh Berriedale and so on, we've had conversations with people and we all come up with the same problems of which this one would they be talking about now is only just one of them. Um, and the whole idea is to get an organization like Isizwe then to be online at that conference, so that as many people in the country can hear about this and copy it

so that we can start setting up these hotspots in towns and, and, and just alleviate this problem completely.

[00:29:38] **Jason Bygate:** [00:29:38] I think that's fantastic Pieter, I think certainly you've you, you touch on one of the other areas of particular interest for me, which is that of collaboration, because I think where you do find solutions to very specific problems, that the more broadly we can share those solutions, the better for everyone. And I know this is a key issue for you as well Luvuyo. If you want to jump in there.

[00:30:00] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:30:00] Indeed. It is Jason and, and Pieter as well, part of our work here at the Bertha Center is to try profile, innovative cases and it seems like the conference that you're working towards would fall under the soon to be, It would be great for us to talk about how we could collaborate around that. Just also feeding off Jason's pointed on collaboration. But the next question I have is once and perhaps this is, this is something that you may experience in the future, but once young people are connected and you've given them data and ability to connect online, do you feel like there's still work that needs to be done in helping them navigate the space? What have you guys done in terms of making them feel comfortable with being online or has that not been an issue in your space?

[00:30:46] **Pieter Holloway:** [00:30:46] Um, that's very much issue. Those are the other points I wanted to bring up and that is, how to navigate, again, due to the isolation in small towns, one is not so up to date as you are in a city, there's not just a place you can pop in and chat to somebody or, um, you know, it's just a little bit more difficult. So definitely how to do an online course, It's a completely different from a classroom situation. You've got you've, you're very much on your own. There's not somebody you can easily talk to in between because they're living all over the place. And, and then also the, the, the access to free sites, there's a lot of sites available, but just to get access to them, if you got to go, if every individual has to go and search for them, then we duplicate.

[00:31:43] And one of my things is partnerships and no duplication. I really believe in that. So, so what, what I see from this kind of collaboration of the NGOs is that we

could share sites that we have found that were effective, for example, for making things or for doing math's lessons or for, um, starting your own business or something, but that we can share it so that each individual doesn't have to spend a lot of data finding the same place that somebody else has already found. So, our whole thing is to now set up facilities to teach people how to use this data effectively and secondly, to have access to that, which is available either at a low cost or even free so that they can effectively utilize that with a bit of data that I can afford.

[00:32:39] **Jason Bygate:** [00:32:39] Thanks, Pieter. I think you really are touching on one of the areas for Luvuyo and I, which is, um, really important when it comes to solving problems and that's really the, the collective effort that's needed. And it's part of the work that we're doing with the Whitey Ecolab and trying to bring organizations together to share solutions and to ensure that they are less duplication and unnecessary wasting of resources and spending time to try and find ways to solve the problem.

And I think that's having and a mindset that is geared towards partnerships and collaborations is really the only way that we're going to be able to solve these problems and as you said, that there's so many organizations that are experiencing similar issues and it's, it's really difficult to, I think, leverage that community knowledge and, um, for us, uh, motivation and in bringing more and more organizations together under the White Ecolab but also to share stories like yours within our, um, our medium and, and using it, this platform I think is really important so that we can improve the opportunities that are available and start to address more of those collective issues. So, I think we certainly appreciate you sharing that. Issues that you've dealt with in the way that you've tried to overcome them and I think some, some great opportunity to expand on them with your, with your conference and, and also looking at where we can draw insights from other organizations, um, in particular, when it comes to digital skills and making productive use of that access, once it's in place.

[00:34:17] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:34:17] Indeed Jason. And, and maybe if I can also just direct, right, it's just having Peter here is just so fantastic to get that input as well. And Peter, if I could ask you, let's say one day you found yourself sitting in the seat of the president and you could change something with regards to connectivity and data issues, particularly for the context that you work in. What would that be? What is the

one thing you think that could look to unlock the potential that you see in the young people you work with?

[00:34:49] **Pieter Holloway:** [00:34:49] Well, it's, it's not an easy question, but the access to what is available, um, you know, we always say education is, it should be free and it should be accessible to everybody, but making it free, doesn't make it accessible. It is the, we have to make a much bigger effort at the accessibility, and that is the person that has got his phone, he's got his data, but he still can't start his own business. And for me, the, um, as, as the president, because I don't think it's, it's only a government role, uh, and my call would be to every businessman to take on at least mentorship of at least one person, um, and guide them in this process, whether it is to, in order to be educated, whether it is in order to be, um, through mentorship being taught a specific skill, but we've got so much knowledge housed in people with experience and people grow old, they retire and they die and that dies with them.

[00:36:12] And that's a sad. So, I think the call would be to each and every one of us to find one person who's your shadow and for whom you will do that as much as you can to help them forward. And I think that that already will make a huge difference to the level of education, m, my theory is that, if you were, if you're not willing to work three to five years with a person don't even start that's, that's my philosophy, because if a student has left school early and you put him on a four day entrepreneurship course, all you doing is you're giving them a lot of hope for about three days until he fails. And then you make it more the press than it was before. I believe if you start that walk, you've got to be willing to walk with him first for him or her for three or five years. And that's a big task to us, but that is the only way to really have a change. We can throw education at people, we can throw facilities at them, we can give them all phones, I don't believe any of those, It is that individual connection between two people that will actually make the difference.

[00:37:27] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:37:27] Thank you so much, Pieter. It's been great to have. So now that we've covered some of the challenges and opportunities around the issues of connectivity, I think it's time to take some of your tech related questions and we'll do our best to answer them

[00:37:42] **Voicenote:** [00:37:42] I would like to know, um, a bit more about, um, zero being, being zero rated and reversed billing and how this works. Um, and especially like in the development space, how can this be utilized, um, by organizations.

[00:38:02] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:38:02] Thanks. Do you want to take that Mr. Bygate?

[00:38:04] **Jason Bygate:** [00:38:04] Yes. Happy to. Oh, that's a great question. I think that's, there are a couple of options when it comes to, um, the zero rating and, and reverse billing, which is, I think, uh, more recently edition, zero rating has always been an absolute nightmare to, to try and navigate and to get in place. Uh, COVID has made it perhaps a little bit easier and there's some formal process to follow. There's a form that you fill out and you submit to a department of education or department of higher education or department of health, um, in particular, because you're providing as a development practitioner and organization and the sector providing services to beneficiaries. So you can follow the process and petition through the various government departments, to the networks, to zero rate your services that you're providing online. Unfortunately, the practicality of that is, is that it's often a very tedious process, and can take up a fair amount of time to get right.

[00:39:06] Um, the internet service providers are certainly, I think, willing to play ball a bit more, um, in facilitating bets that function of zero rating. Um, but the fact of the matter is that there are a lot of organizations that just can't navigate the process. And they still have a huge, huge demand for, for digital services.

[00:39:27] And as we heard before, a massive barrier to accessing those services because of the cost of data. So, um, to fill that gap there, there is a service that's provided by, um, a company called data free. Um, what they do is they provide a reverse billing function where you can, um, wrap your, um, services through a URL that they and they aggregate the access into the networks and, um, um, send a bill to you for the data that's used um, through your, through your website or through your online service and some of the, uh, the bigger organizations that have the funding have opted for reverse billing as a first stage on this journey towards, um, zero rating.

[00:40:14] Um, but certainly the cost is still high and, um, the networks are, are ultimately where those, with those cost issues are ours are stopping. So, I think there's

definitely a, um, an ongoing need for us to, to advocate for reducing those costs and, and making the internet more accessible and affordable to everyone across the country.

[00:40:39] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:40:39] So what now Jason, what would you say are the most important things for our listeners and organizations in the development space to consider when it comes to connectivity and accessible? And what would you like to see changing in the next few years?

[00:40:52] **Jason Bygate:** [00:40:52] When it comes to, um, connectivity and accessibility? Um, um, you know, I'm going to refer back to the fact that this digital divide that we have is really multidimensional. So absolutely we need to keep, uh, keep screaming at, um, at the networks and, and advocating for her reduction in the cost of data. Um, and, um, you know, pushing the, the zero-rating agenda, um, as far as we possibly can. Um, but I think in the interim we have to try and navigate the landscape that we've got. Uh, we've got to try and find ways to collaborate with organizations like Peiter's to learn from what, um, they found solutions, um, to promote organizations like, uh, like a Isizwe that are finding innovative ways to provide better access to, to the internet and to data. Um, and then I think, as I said to, to consider what we do with that access, it's not just about getting online.

[00:41:56] We want to make sure, especially for our young people, that we're making the most of that connectivity, how are we building skills? How are we building businesses through that connectivity? Um, because really that's where our future is going to lie. You know, as we're looking at this rapidly evolving digital economy, our young people are going to be the drivers of that economy and if they're ill-equipped, our future is, um, increasingly bleak, I think is, uh, uh, a euphemistic way to put it.

[00:42:23] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:42:23] You mentioned some, some really some really important points. The thing that stands out for me here is, is that we just need a new way of going about doing, doing business. And this is mainly a call to the, to the organizations and the network providers and to the rest of us operating society. I think as Jason mentioned, we need to, we need to look at the way we are engaging and dealing with our young people and, and, and tied to that is the way in which businesses go about doing their everyday sort of thing for, that's the,

probably the least academic keyword that I could think of, but I hope you get what I mean by that. And what the point I'm trying to advocate for is that we need to look at a system that doesn't solely prioritize profits. We need to look at a system that looks to advocate for the social and for the people that exist within the society that the business works in and I think that, that goes a long way in getting us as a people to change the way in which these businesses go about doing their thing. There's so much more conversation that we can have about this and, and this is why we encourage you guys to please get ahold of us. And we'd love to take the conversation forward.

[00:43:37] **Jason Bygate:** [00:43:37] Yeah, thanks Luvuyo, I think you've, um, you've definitely articulated the, the, the depth of the, the, the challenges that we're trying to overcome and, and certainly the need for a really measured approach and taking systems view. Yeah. So, I think that the issues are, are so much deeper than just getting online and, uh, I really appreciate you giving us that the systems view

[00:44:00] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:44:00] And that's all we have time for today, guys. Thank you for joining us on the Talking Tech for Good podcast. Make sure you subscribe to this channel and share this episode with anyone who you feel could benefit. The more we talk about tech and really understand its benefits. The more we can go about harnessing the power of tech for a better world.