

S2, Ep.3 Full episode: The small shifts that drive change and a systems approach to tackling youth unemployment _Transcript

Luvuyo Maseko: Welcome to season 2 of the Just for a change podcast, powered by the Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship. We love hearing and sharing stories about social innovation happening both locally and outside our borders in the global south.

In season 2 we put the spotlight on the changemakers behind some incredibly innovative approaches and solutions who are creating systemic change. And - we're also curious to find out what keeps them going. Join us as we discover how these changemakers are changing the way we're changing the world.

Sanbonani, Molweni, Goeie Morê, Dumelang, welcome to season 2 of the Just for a change podcast with me, your guest host Luvuyo Masako. I head up the youth innovation portfolio at the Bertha Centre for social innovation and entrepreneurship. I'm excited to dive into a topic that lies close to my heart today. Youth unemployment. I also co-host another podcast by the Bertha Centre - The Talking Tech for Good podcast - Make sure you give that a listen. It's about harnessing the power of technology for a better world. You can listen to it wherever you find your podcasts.

With more than 64 million unemployed youth worldwide and 145 million young workers living in poverty, it's easy to feel overwhelmed by the global challenge that is youth employment. According to NewCities - a global non-profit committed to shaping a better urban future - youth in the global south are twice as likely to be unemployed or trapped in low-quality jobs, limiting development and social mobility.

Though governments and NGOs have responded to this dilemma with a plethora of educational initiatives, skills training, and other programmes, on the surface it doesn't make sense why we still sit with such a massive number of youth who are not moving forward in life because they are not getting access to the right opportunities...

But scratch a little deeper and you'll find the key, in our opinion at least, which is the lack of a systems approach in tackling the issue of youth unemployment.

What we mean by having a systems approach is taking a holistic view of the structural drivers that shape youth unemployment. Key systems capabilities include collaboration and learning to be comfortable with creating small shifts, nudges, that can ultimately drive broader social change. And that's

exactly what we'll be talking about in this episode of the Just for a Change podcast - thanks for spending time with us today.

We decided to ask a few young people about the challenges they face looking for work and other opportunities. Here's what they had to say.

Voice note 1: Part of the reasons why young people are not successful with looking for work is the astronomical expenses of traveling. That is the first thing. Challenges of data - having to search search engines for jobs is difficult. Lacking social capital, who to approach, where to go and who to talk to is a main issue.

Voice note 2: Looking for work is expensive, it's tiring, and it's also mentally draining people. People fresh out of varsity - graduates - are expected to have years worth of experience. If they don't, they're put into non-paying internships. They are then expected to have means of transportation to get to work or to even maintain themselves. This is not realistic.

Voice note 3: I think in an economy like this one, without the necessary prerequisite of a good, solid education, it's difficult to try to find a job. We already see that it's difficult for people with degrees. It's difficult for people with masters, diplomas, and even honours. So the basis of a solid, good education to increase your chances of employment is obviously a Matric certificate. Hence, getting it for me was an essential step in terms of my own long-term ambitions.

Voice note 4: Life without a Matric sucks. It's very difficult. That's when you know that now you're on your own. There's no direction for you. You can't go forward and you can't go backwards. I couldn't go back to school to do my Matric because the school I was studying at, they never had such a rule. I couldn't do further studies either. The real struggle was that I couldn't find a job. cause I don't have Matric and I the toughest one was that I couldn't find a job because they don't have experience. And most jobs require you as an individual to have at least two to three years experience.

Voice note 5: I believe that our youth struggles [to find a job] because there are too many requirements and most of the youth don't fit those requirements stated on the job opportunities.

Luvuyo Maseko: It's really an eye-opener to hear firsthand about the challenges young people face on a day-to-day basis.

Young South Africans between the ages of 15-34 make up 35% of South Africa's total population. This demographic should technically be the engine of the nation's economy, society and democracy. But as we all know this isn't the case. In fact, literally half of this demographic feels frustrated, demotivated and stuck, as they face a burdensome life without work, education or training opportunities.

When faced with a wicked problem, which is an intractable socio-economic or political challenge that does not have any easy solutions we would only be fooling ourselves by viewing it as a single problem in isolation. We need to look at this issue through a systems-thinking lens if we are able to move the needle and create a better future - not only for our youth, but for our nation as a whole.

Let's briefly unpack the idea of systems thinking, if this is perhaps your first time tuning in to the podcast, because at the Bertha Centre this is something we are passionate about. Roland Flemm puts it this way in his article '*What is systems thinking and why should I care?*': "Systems thinking helps to understand the grand scheme of things and how its parts interact.

It helps to determine sensible intervention points to make an impactful change in a system."

A systems thinker would not ask "why is the unemployment rate so high?," rather they may ask, "what are the historical, cultural, social, economic and political elements that shape and inform the patterns and events that play out in the labour market. And what does this mean at the individual, community and social level?"

You see, when it comes to youth unemployment, it's not just a case of "not enough job opportunities for young people" - although that is a *part* of the problem, within the bigger system.

Education; transitions that happen between school and further opportunities, support beyond the classroom; work experience; are also part of this picture.

Employers often prefer to employ those with previous work experience and a higher level of education. Unfortunately for the youth, many of whom we work with, lack of work experience is a stumbling block that results in them finding it hard to secure employment.

Youth Capital unpacks all these major elements in an easily digestible way in their Action Plan - a plan that prioritises ten systemic challenges that need to

be addressed to ensure that young South Africans have the skills, opportunities and support to get their first decent job.

Let's take a look at Phila as an example, a young person who shared some of his story with us.

Phila: Molweni nonke makhaya. My name is Phila. I was born and bred in Khayelitsha on the 11th of May and raised by a single parent who was cut off by her parents after they learnt that she was pregnant with me. My mother had to hustle very hard for me and my brother to go to bed every night with something to eat. She always made sure that we had everything we needed and we never felt poverty. Growing up, I loved reading and writing. By the time I went to creche, I already knew how to write my name. I even told them there that I was there to study, not to sleep. So they should give me a book and the pencil so that I can write down. My teachers were amazed by this. So, I started primary school in the 2000s. So, by 2003 I had to change schools as my mother became a sit-in helper, only coming home on weekends. So I had to move to Eastern Cape where relatives could take care of me. When I got there, I was supposed to start grade four as soon as I arrived, but because the school never assessed my abilities properly, I was forced to begin at grade one, which means four years went down the drain just like that. Later on, I went back to Cape Town and jumped between schools in Langa and Khayelitsha depending on the location where my mother was working at the moment. With all this disruption of time in school, my love for books and music kept me going. In grade 11, I was part of the UCT program that was for top students from Khayelitsha. They offered me extra help and support throughout my studies. They applied for me and I got accepted at three universities, but I declined them because their fees were so expensive. Then I went to CPUT where I applied and got accepted for a National diploma in biotechnology. I did my first year under the extended program and then graduated and did my second qualification, as B-Tech project management. As I was doing my third qualification in MBA, I had to pull out because I was going through a rough patch. I then went to seek for jobs and I couldn't secure a proper job but I was able to be placed on the basic education employment program where I was busy with administration and lending, how to take care of the class. This made me fall in love with teaching. I'll be pursuing that dream next year.

Luvuyo Maseko: On that note, I'm very excited to welcome today's guests as we take a deeper look into the complex issue of youth unemployment. Today we have, Kristal Duncan-Williams from Youth Capital and our very own Dr Solange Rosa, director of the Bertha Centre. I'm really happy to have you all in studio.

Solange, my first question is for you: What are your thoughts on tackling youth unemployment with the systems approach and why is that different and important from our current ways of working?

Dr Solange Rosa: So obviously, as we all know, youth unemployment is a huge problem in our country and it is getting worse and worse. It is also a global challenge and a challenge around the rest of Africa. But I think that we have to tackle it with a systems lens in order to be able to identify all of the bits and pieces of the puzzle and be able to identify where are the areas that we can leverage in order to try and address the huge challenge of youth unemployment.

So not only do you have so many different role players. For example, government has a role with the employment tax incentive, that ETI for example, and the private sector, working with government around that, and trying to incentivise the private sector to hire more young people. NGOs have a big role because they do a lot of training and support for young people. The education sector has a huge role to play, especially TVET and higher education. Then there's the different skills levees and, um, and the skills trainings that, um, are able to also support young people. So there's so many different role players and trying to understand what are the underlying challenges.

Our economy is not growing, but how can we still, within that context, support young people to get some first opportunities, um, and get some experience so that they can, uh, move through their careers potentially as well as get other opportunities for learning and development. I think the other piece to mention is that if we just look at youth unemployment as a kind of up-stream factor, without looking at the downstream issues around dropouts and what's happening in the education system, then we're also missing that piece of the puzzle.

So trying to bring in and understand what is happening with the high dropout rate at the moment because of the pandemic and the additional 750,000 learners that have dropped out and how much more unlikely it is that those learners will have a formal job or get further training and skills development.

You've got to look at the whole picture and try and support the different kinds of interventions from different, directions, different role players and how it all fits together. That's really what looking at it from a systems lens perspective is without trying to sound all fancy.

Luvuyo Maseko: And that in a nutshell is why she's our director. Kristal, I guess one of the bonuses of being a guest in the segment is I can direct the tough questions to you. I guess on a more practical level, what are some of the practical ways that you've seen a systems approach, make a difference

within the youth unemployment space? Do you have any stories or examples?

Kristal Duncan-Williams: I think the whole point of Youth Capital's existence is to start thinking about youth unemployment in this systems approach. As Solange said, we can't think about youth unemployment as simply creating jobs, getting the economy to grow or just educating young people. Young people are on a journey, they're living beings and they face many systemic issues. Unless we look at that with a systems lens and take all those factors into account from healthcare to education, to basic living conditions and access to transport and data. Unless we take that lens, we really are going to continue to miss the point and we're going to continue to see if unemployment are rising.

If we take the story of Phila, I always think of his story as a great example of, how, if there was a systems approach in his life, how different things would have been. If you look at basic education: if there was a simple tool for tracking learners across provinces, he wouldn't have to have repeated grades when you move provinces, because there would be a national system that told the new school where he had come from and what grade he was in.

If there was a better system for him to access funding. I know for a fact that he really struggled to get funding. When you got into the post-school space, it wasn't then what it is now. If there was access to funding, then to find a job, you know, he's got a master's now and he's still struggling to find work.

If there was a way that he could signal his skills to an employer and an employer knew where to find him and he knew where to look, then again, that would unlock an opportunity and for him to get that first decent job. So if you look at the trajectory of his life, a systems approach at every step would have made that trajectory easier.

Um, I think that's an example, very practically of what that could look like. I think if you look at the sa.mobi platform that the government is launching now, they're trying to do that. They're trying to map these opportunities and make them more visible for young people. I think it's a step in the right direction to bring together all of the government interventions in one place to try to get that, that systems level approach.

Dr Solange Rosa: Um, just giving an overview of what the basic package of support is that we've designed together. And a group led by SALDRU, South African Labor Development Research Unit at the university of Cape town UCT. They led this process of designing an intervention that had a systems approach in terms of being able to identify what young people need within

their particular context, and being able to respond to that on an individual basis.

So you don't have a blanket approach to a bunch of young people, but rather being able to identify your, like Phila, an individual who's in a particular situation and has particular skills or skills gaps, or even psychological needs or childcare parenting needs, and then being able to address that person's needs in a holistic way by linking them to whatever it is that they need.

And whether it's government services like getting a birth certificate for their child, or whether it's through the private sector to get an internship opportunity, or whether it's through NGO to get some psychosocial support. So, the connection to young people and then, being designed in a way that is very, uh, kind of context-based individual based, but looking at the whole system around them and how they can be supported and then design an action plan that they then, uh, are able to implement with support from these other organizations.

So that's an idea that's being, um, supported, I think by the presidency and is being piloted with support from DGMT, maybe and others, um, in, in the very near future. And hopefully will eventually be scaled up.

Luvuyo Maseko: And what's coming through really clearly through your answer already, is that a systems-wide collaborative approach is needed. And I think one of the things that, that we mentioned in the intro section is that it's very easy to feel very overwhelmed with dealing with this problem. And for everyone who's listening and sitting about this problem, wondering what to do. The onus is on you yourself to fix it. And it's about a multi-sectorial multi-stakeholder emphasis and looking to deal with this.

A second question was third question. This is back to Kristal again, and, uh, what, in your opinion are some of the small shifts that we can make to ensure that young people get better access to employment opportunities?

Kristal Duncan-Williams: So I think if you to know to your point of this feeling like an overwhelming problem, and I think to anybody listening out there, it can feel like, well, if we're definitely like, this is a government and big business problem, we're talking about currently 9 million young people, not in education, employment, or training, what could I possibly do?

Um, and I always say, you know, if every employed adult took one young person under their wing, and that doesn't mean you have to meet to them for hours every week. It literally can mean WhatsApp chats with them once in a while, you know, that could shift that young person's entire outlook. You have social capital, so you connect them to opportunities.

You have work experience, which a lot of them are living in households where nobody's employed. So you connect them to that. And that's a simple thing that can be done. I know there's Action Coaches, a that works out of Durban and they, um, running a campaign called 'each one employ one.' Simple things around small businesses. If you can take on a young person, give them that opportunity, you can do that. And then I think some of the small shifts that are more national scale is, um, the, you know, the use of data-free platforms like sayouth.mobi. The use of WhatsApp for first round interviews or job applications. A WhatsApp bundle is a far more affordable thing for a young person than buying data and everybody's on WhatsApp. They don't have to learn how to navigate a new platform at something they're using already. So these are some of the shifts that that can be made because if we use access to wifi and apps, that's one way to sync things, to kind of get different platforms, to speak to each other, like the basic package of support and yes, and all the presidential initiatives, um, and linking that through through technologies.

Luvuyo Maseko: And I mean, what I love so much about what you initially suggested that someone brings on board or works closely with the young person and comes through like Phila. Something that we forget is that these are people at the end of the day, not just figures on a paper, right? It's easy to read 60 million unemployed youth around the world but when you get a closer understanding of what young people deal with, you can understand you have a part to play, which is something I appreciate in that. And Solange, my next question is for you: how can we get youth organizations on the same page to be more effective at overcoming youth unimpaired?

Dr Solange Rosa: Well, I think you should be the one answering this question since you are on the youth development collaboration platform as part of the steering committee. But I think that initiatives like the one that you're a part of is one step in that direction. So trying to get youth organizations that are focusing particularly on unemployment, let's say let's just talk about those and trying to understand the scale of the problem, the root causes of the problem, and to be able to think about what are the ways in which they can address the problem in ways that are effective. They don't all need to be at scale, but, um, But I think, you know, there are oftentimes when I talk to young people who've just been through skills training after skills, training, after skills training, and they just kind of stuck in this, getting to certificate after certificates, um, or adding things to their CV but they feel quite disheartened because they haven't necessarily got a job opportunity or an opportunity where they can get some work experience. So I think that being able to network with organizations working in the space and coming up with some kind of system framework around how to address the youth unemployment challenges.

Coordination in some ways around what aspect of the unemployment challenge organizations are focusing on. So not everyone will be supporting, for example, youth technology skills. So there might be organizations that are just focused on that and doing that efficiently and effectively.

Um, and then they could coordinate, for example, with organizations that are perhaps placing young people in jobs, where digital skills are required. So, some way in which a kind of network of support, similar to the basic packages of support, but at a, at a level that is looking around, how do you place, um, young people into some skills training and a job opportunity, not just in a perpetual skills training environment. I think that becomes very demotivating after some time. So yeah, that's what I think needs to happen. There are some big scale projects, like the YES Program. YES stands for Youth Employment Service. That is a national program that works with corporates and government, but there's a lot of small organizations in piecemeal efforts. Um, I think Harambie is also known as another big youth employment supporter. But so, so I think it's more those other small organizations that need to be able to plug in and support young people, uh, in more effective ways and collaborate.

Luvuyo Maseko: And I will pick up on that, not so subtle hint about the YD Collab. And I know that if any of the other steel core members are listening, they will, be very disappointed in me if I didn't use this opportunity to just share that a little bit more. The YD Collab, so you can visit the website, ydcollab.za. You can also visit us on Twitter. The YD Collab is a collaborative network of organizations and individuals working to advance youth development and empowerment in South Africa. We were recently set up and we have sort of three high level objectives. Number one is building a collective voice for youth development organizations and others in the ecosystem. Number two, mapping the youth development ecosystem. So if you're an organization working with the youth development space, you may see a survey from someone from members, from the YD Collab coming up soon. And third, is advocating for effective practice in youth development. Kristal, I don't know if there's anything you would like to add to that as well.

Kristal Duncan-Williams: Um, so I think, yeah, I'm very excited to be on the stair come for YD Collab as well because at youth capital, I think what we figured out early on, um, you know, when we started a few years ago is just this lack of engagement between stakeholders in the space. Not because they don't want to engage with one another. But because they're so busy doing the work. So, and especially as you see the small organizations or working with young people, running programs, you know, at a municipal level or provincial level, they're so busy doing the work on the ground, that there just isn't time for that collaboration. I think, YD Collab is fulfilling a big need and a gap by creating a platform and a space for that engagement. In my experi-

ence, just one conversation between different organizations and already you'll surface a whole bunch of stuff. Lessons you can learn from each other mistakes you can avoid making because somebody else has made them already. I'm really excited to see where YD Collab goes.

Luvuyo Maseko: You guys really highlight some key points and an interesting discussion points for the issue of youth unemployment within the south African context. Something that's really key to remember is that youth unemployment is not a challenge unique to South Africa. Hillary Musa-rurwa, is a current Bertha Scholar from Zimbabwe who is currently a researcher working at the UKRI Accelerator Hub where he is looking at how innovation can help accelerate Sustainable Development Goals for adolescents. We asked him to comment on youth unemployment in Zimbabwe.

Hillary: I think the issue of, uh, unemployment is not only restricted to South Africa. There are high levels of unemployment still amongst young people in Zimbabwe. They're also across Southern Africa. Uh, and you also have a high level of, uh, young people, not in education or in employment across the region. And that is quite worrisome given the fact that, uh, young people also constitute a greater percentage of the population across SADEC, I think 62% of the population are young people. And, um, what I've also seen is, uh, this, this unemployment is pretty much driven by two sides. There's a supply side and the demand side. And I think on the supply side, if you look at it, there's a lot of skills mismatch where the qualifications or the skills that a number of young people have do not match up with what the job is demanding as well as the experience. You'll find a number of, uh, job opportunities, uh, requesting for someone to have experience, and this is not helping at all when they have skills mismatch.

There's also the issue of, uh, young people not having information on employment opportunities. I think this is pretty much prevalent in areas where there's marginalization, where people don't have knowledge about employment agencies or how to go about applying for a job. And that is also now exacerbated by a situation where people in the rural areas have to travel distances, to look for decent employment and on the demand side, it's just a situation where a lot of. With COVID 19, the pandemic is, has changed, the situation in a number of countries, a number of sectors have had to shut down or to scale down. When we look at systems change, you're looking at the interrelated local needs when it comes to unemployment. And this is now look at the system, the drivers of unemployment, poverty is one major one. And with poverty also comes school dropouts. And when you have school dropouts, that means you're going to have a lot of unskilled labor that's available in the market. And, uh, that's, that's a, that's a challenge. And also the issue of marginalization would also mean that, uh, uh, a number of people do not give access to training or resources like, uh, I spoke about, uh,

COVID 19 and moving into digital, working. Very few young people have access to technology and the digital skills. So that's, that's a driver of high unemployment. The practical ways of addressing Youth unemployment is first of all, to start by acknowledging that it's a problem. In the work that I've done, I've observed that some countries under report the issues of employment or unemployment, because it has some economic impact and it also has a picture that it paints about the country. For example, in Zimbabwe, the reality on the ground is most young people are not employed, but you have a situation where statistics tell you that, uh, unemployment in Zimbabwe is at 8% to 15%. Yet you've got more than 80% of young people roaming the streets, looking for a job. So I think on the policy side, governments and policymakers have to, to be open and realistic with the statistics and the information they share out there concerning levels of unemployment.

Luvuyo Maseko: Some really interesting insights from Hillary. And I guess what stands out immediately is just how similar the context is two ours. And I don't quite know what you guys have to say about that, but I'd love to hear your thoughts on it. I'll start with you, Solange.

Dr Solange Rosa: Sure. So some of my immediate thoughts were exactly, as you say, that there is so much similarity in terms of what are the drivers of youth unemployment and the challenges. As I said at the beginning, it is not just a South African phenomena. It's not just a Zimbabwean phenomena. It is an African and global phenomena. We've got a lot of young people or they call it the 'youth bulge', a lot of young people who are not necessarily in employment, training or education. That becomes a problem also for the future, because those people are then supposed to be the working population of the country, of the economy. And if they're not participating, then your economy is going to struggle. One of the points I wanted to add to what he said is that not only do you have a low skills base, if you've got a high level of dropouts from education, you also don't have the higher level of skills that the economy needs as it is evolving. So we have, we have. Uh, situation in the global economy, as well as in the national economy, that higher levels of skills are required. Jobs require more technical expertise. So you don't have as many low skilled jobs. And so you, your population has to get more and more and more educated. And in our case is getting less and less.

What ends up happening is that young people and their families are then stuck in intergenerational poverty. So you just go around and run in circles and your kids struggle with the same thing. They drop out and so it's an ongoing challenge and then it's not feeding into any kind of me that is growing and is competitive more international because it doesn't have the right level of skills. So, so that's, that's a big challenge. And why I, as you know, I'm so passionate about the school dropout issue, because I think it is the biggest challenge. Um, the human development index has three components to it.

The human development index is an international index which talks about development of countries. There are three components to it. One is, income levels. The second one is mortality (the age at which people die in your country on average), and the third is the average number of years of schooling. And so. The higher, the number of years of schooling, the higher, your growth as a country, the higher your development aspects as a country are. So it is one of the three critical features in terms of development. And so that's why I think it is so important to not just keep our young people in school repeating grades, but actually being able to progress. So that's what I wanted to add to what Hillary said, which is really based on my core passion

Luvuyo Maseko: and Kristal, before I hand over to you and perhaps either of you can answer this and Solange touched on it a little bit in the answer and it's coming through clearly on my end. The problems that are being experienced as Solange rightly put aren't only unique to our context. So there's something to be said perhaps about the global structure we find ourselves a part of. And perhaps I know this is one of those big questions and I guess, like I said earlier, that's why it's nice to be a host, I can hand it over to you. What sort of changes do you think need to happen within the way we've structured our economies in a society to respond to this a little bit better?

Kristal Duncan-Williams: I think it's interesting because, uh, you know, just more and more in the last few weeks, I've been having these conversations around 'The Global South', you know, speaking to somebody from Brazil even, and wanting to understand the work that youth capital does. What came up repeatedly is this person just said, oh, it sounds like Brazil. Oh, it sounds like Brazil listening to Hillary. I'm like, well, that sounds like South Africa. Um, you know, talking to somebody else about the Nigerian context today. Oh, that sounds like South Africa. And so exactly as you're saying, it's a global problem and I think. We have very, at least in South Africa, we understand the schooling system a lot better than in other places. I feel like the schooling system is very conservative. You know, it's very traditional and it's not really equipping young people with the skills they need for this ever-changing economy. Um, you know, we speak about digital skills, but it goes beyond that there's issues of literacy and communication and adaptability and flexibility.

Um, you know, if I look at myself when I was in high school, The health economics wasn't even a subject you could do in a public health school that I ended up studying. So, you know, and things are rapidly evolving now, more so than, you know, when I was in high school. So I think we're not preparing young people in a basic education system for the world that exists today. We're still preparing them as though we're in the sixties, seventies and eighties. And I think that's a huge problem. Probably across all of these contexts,

Luvuyo Maseko: We're all nodding rather vigorously in the studio as well. And, um, my next two questions are, are to you. And it's a little bit more about your work at youth capital and the action plan you guys are putting forward over the next few years. So why, why don't you give us a quick overview of that on that 10 point action plan?

Kristal Duncan-Williams: So, uh, you know, Youth Capital came into existence to fulfill to two points, really one that young people's voices were missing from the conversations of youth and employment and that all the solutions were quite top down. Um, and to that there wasn't a collective and shared agenda for the space. So exactly as we've been speaking about systems thinking, um, it's nice to have a goal for a project to create X amount of opportunities or X amount of graduates in X degree, but you know, it's an, it's another thing to look at the journey, as I say, in its entirety.

Youth capital spent 2018 and 2019 speaking to young people. I personally did a lot of desktop literature review and analysis of datasets to understand the full journey of the young person and what those systemic challenges are. And through all of that, we've come up with a 10 point action plan that we believe is an action plan for the sector. It's not used capital's plan. It's the action plan that young people believe in. And we've had a host of organizations already endorsing the plan, um, and we'll be launching, um, our second publication, um, shift 20, 21 in October. Um, and we'll be bringing on board those of that have signed onto the plan so far. The plan covers three areas of education, transitions, and jobs. Um, so under education, we want all, you start to finish, regardless of whether it's basic education or post-school education and the transitions piece, you know, how are young people supported in that time between leaving a place of learning and finding a sustainable livelihood? The basic package of support fits in perfectly with our transitions piece. And then looking at jobs, um, you know, the economy is what it is and it's going to take a while for that to change. But how do we leverage existing opportunities in the economy? Solange mentioned the employment tax incentive at the beginning. We know that big corporates are accessing that through programs like the YES initiative, but what about small to medium enterprises? They, they struggle because of the red tape and the cumbersome processes to access that kind of government incentive. Um, we really don't value in. Um, work experience from young people, volunteer experience, um, and young people see that, so they don't put it on their CV.

And it's this perpetual cycle, young people, if you speak to a young unemployed person, they're not sitting at home doing nothing, but if you look at their CV, that's what you'd think they were doing. So, you know, under jobs, it's making existing opportunities matter, public works opportunities. Um, you know, things like the expanded d public works program. How do we make those things work for young people?

Luvuyo Maseko: And where can people find a little bit more information about your, about your plan?

Kristal Duncan-Williams: front and centre on the website youthcapital.com. The full action plan is there.

Luvuyo Maseko: Before we close out Solange, I wonder if you have anything to comment on around, the points that Kristal just raised.

Dr Solange Rosa: Just to say that the Birtha Center fully supports and endorses your action plan and that we hope to continue to work together on these important issues as an old person myself. It's great to have the two of you who are young people to lead the charge on these issues.

Luvuyo Maseko: Not so young, but thank you!

That's all we have time for today. Thanks so much to our guests. Uh, those both in studio, Solange and Kristal and Mr. Hillary, who joined us via WhatsApp. It's been a really interesting conversation and we're really excited to take the conversation forward.

We do have an op-ed coming out soon. That's Kristal and I, so please keep an eye out for that. Follow the YD Collab.

For this episode, we focus the discussion on the small shifts that drive change as well as having a systems approach to tackling youth unemployment. We asked some youth development organizations to tell us about the work they're doing with young people and what shifts they've noticed. Let's hear what they had to say.

Voice Note 6: I am one of the leaders in Xero Trust. I would trust a consortium of five different initiators and edit the core. They compliment each other in the interdependent on each other to improve socioeconomic conditions of those living in our tree, corporate federalized or marginalized communities.

We have a think tank, which is on of these initiatives using the shared value. Rural ended up. Youth metric for sustainability and agriculture leadership in Africa, a voluntary agricultural network, which is inspired by the model of doctors without borders, above where we have a humanitarian initiative where we believe philanthropy should also start or be strengthened from within our own borders is a country. So all these respond to a lot of different issues, but at the heart of it, So the functional value of responding to unemployment in unique and different ways. So to speak, to begin with the think tank itself. Um, recently we met a coat expanded, um, and our focus is on

research and development communications to different stakeholders of which our contribution there to employment is to really look into the issues on the ground and to communicate them. I think there's a very strong emphasis on collaborative.

Voice Note 7: Youth organizations are realizing that it doesn't serve anyone in, especially not young people to work in silos. We all do our research individually. We all run our programs individually. Um, but there is so much more impact when we collaborate, um, for collaborate to do the work and carry out programs. I think also collaboration in terms of learning from each other: Sharing best practice, as well as sharing our findings and sharing insights and data from the work that we're doing so that when we design programs in the future, we do so with a better understanding of what it is the young people of this country really need and what are some of the interventions that they respond to the best? I've also noticed that young people, I no longer waiting to be accommodated in traditional spaces. Be it politically or socially. People are finding alternative ways to make themselves heard. Um, so, you know, if, if young people feel like elections on serving them, they're going to find alternative ways to make themselves heard in their communities, whether that is through protest and activism or boycotting. I think a great example of this is the 2015 and 2016, Mr. Fore, where young people had been trying to bring the issue of fees to the attention of universities and councils and through RCL's and all of these bureaucratic processes and mapping was being done. And then the young people shut down the entire country and took to the streets. So if you're not accommodating young people, um, if you're not. If you're not giving young people, um, avenues where they can be meaningfully engaged and listened to and make a meaningful contribution to solutions, they will find alternative ways to make themselves heard.

Luvuyo Maseko: If there's one thing we hope you take away from today's episode, it's that we can't view youth unemployment as a linear problem with a simple solution.

The issue is more complex and involves multiple factors - hence why we need to look at it through a systems-thinking lens.

We should be proactive in seeking to make small shifts so that over time we'll see change in the form of our nation's youth getting the support they need.

This will result in them being empowered, able to put their skills and expertise into practice, and allowing them to become thriving, active contributors to our society and the economy.

Thank you for tuning in to season 2 of the Just for a change podcast, powered by the Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship. If you're curious about what innovation is happening in Africa and the global south and who the movers and shakers behind these initiatives are, then make sure you subscribe so that you don't miss any of our upcoming episodes!