

JFAC S2 Ep. 4. Entrepreneurship as a catalyst for systems change

[00:00:00] **Fergus Turner** :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.

Welcome to season 2 of the Just for a Change podcast with me, your host, Fergus Turner. "In Nairobi, Kenya, I was amazed to see a 3D-printing business set up on a street corner, merrily printing everyday objects for passers--by," recalls Ramesh Sri-niv-a-san in his article on tech website, WIRED.

"Their custom 3D printers, which make everything from medical devices to household appliances, were cobbled together from circuits and wires salvaged from dumps and recycling centers. Not only are they a fraction of the cost of Chinese and even American printers, they are also far more robust and resilient, able to withstand the heat, noise, and elements of this East African country. Why? Because they were designed by Kenyans for their local environment and fellow countrymen."

Not all entrepreneurs are created equal. Sure, we all admire the entrepreneurial work that gets done in Silicon Valley and Sweden, and we'd struggle to get by without some of the innovations that make their way from the North to the South. With massive capital behind them, they make it look so easy. In Africa and the global south, however, the narrative is different.

Being an entrepreneur in Africa requires perseverance and passion. It's not an easy road to embark upon due to a lack of funding structures, youth entrepreneurship policies, networks, skills training and mentorship... and then of course the red tape that comes with registering a business

Today we are zooming in on an initiative that catalyses high-impact entrepreneurship in Africa, namely JASIRI. JASIRI selects, develops and invests in high-potential aspiring entrepreneurs and guides program participants from idea generation, validation, prototyping, to venture creation.

Supported by the Allan & Gill Gray Philanthropy, JASIRI believes that catalysing high-impact entrepreneurial success requires a patient, holistic, and contextualised approach. Programmes are designed to systematically identify and remove regionally specific potential stumbling blocks on the entrepreneurial journey on an individual, team, and business level. What makes it so outstanding is the fact that JASIRI is not about simply funding the idea phase of promising entrepreneurial ventures. Instead, they commit to a year-long journey with the fellows, focusing on holistic development of the individual as well as the business. JASIRI has been working with the Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship to embed a systems approach into their programme

[00:03:18] 30 Fellows across Rwanda and Kenya have been participating in this programme and today I am excited to be talking to Daniel Hampton, head of programmes at JASIRI, Akaliza Keza Ntwari, JASIRI Programme lead, Brian Simuyu and Peace Iraguha, who are current JASIRI Fellows

Thank you so much. Daniel Akaliza, Brian, and Peace for being with us today. [00:03:44] I'm really very excited for this exchange for this conversation, especially after having been honored, to share alongside colleague Kentse some of the journey with you and your team. Um, but before we move any further into [00:04:00] the real meat of the topic I want to refer back to this word, this name JASIRI, um, back in the beginning, the first session where we will all together, back in April, um, there was a real, um, exploration of why JASIRI what does this mean?

[00:04:18] And so before we get going, I'd like to ask if each of you could just, um, introduce yourselves and introduce what JASIRI means to you at this stage of the program. And I'd like to kick off with Brian.

[00:04:34] **Brian Simuyu** : For me just searing means that it is possible and we have to be bold enough as African entrepreneurs to internalize that it is possible. Uh, in fact, I will quickly quote a sense that I borrowed from just Siri and it's very quickly becoming one of my favorites. It's called the shrubs alone for audience that's spelled S C H R a double M and it argues the single most important contributor to our nation's economic [00:05:00] growth, is the number of startups that could grow to a billion dollars in revenue within 20 years, as far as African system change is concerned, especially from the

perspective of the entrepreneur. I think this will be one of the most important tenants for the remainder of the century,

[00:05:15] **Peace Iraguha:** What JASIRI is about, is now taking over the whole ecosystems changing the systems and making Africa a better place for everyone, for everyone.

[00:05:30] **Akaliza Keza Ntwari:** Yes. Well, um, you know, peace and Brian had put it so beautifully. Uh, what is young entrepreneurs are doing? Um, in these times is incredibly brave. There's, it's incredibly brave nowadays, just to, just to walk out your door, but to, to take the decision, to start a business and. Um, commit to this program, um, all this time and, uh, to take the chance on, um, meeting, uh, a [00:06:00] co-founder it's it's, it's very exciting, but, um, you know, it's a huge risk as well.

[00:06:08] **Fergus Turner :** Absolutely. If there was ever a time where being bold and really. Um, for those, those Heights of ambition that make systems change a possibility then now is probably the most challenging of times. But over to you, Daniel, as Head of Program Design at JASIRI, what does, what has that word come to represent for you? And how does that sort of describe the relevance of this program at this time.

[00:06:37] **Daniel Hampton:** Primarily, it's a, it's a call. It's a call to the potential entrepreneurs that, um, that we want to try and guide into entrepreneurship. Um, and, and as Akalisa said, it's a, it's a massive thing. It requires full commitment. What we're asking and particularly.

[00:06:52] our focus on, on market creating innovations that it requires, uh, a commitment to the unknown, uh, for the, for the fellows, uh, for [00:07:00] the potential entrepreneurs as well. It requires a deep dive, um, into areas where often there's not a lot of precedent where there's not a lot of, uh, immediate data available and a full commitment to that.

[00:07:11] Um, and that's really what. What we're trying to get to with, with, with the word is that it really, it's a, it's a jump off the cliff, um, full commitment, um, and, and, and seek out, um, seek out the way to build the plane on the way down.

[00:07:27] **Fergus Turner :** Thank you for that, Daniel. Um, it, you know, I think, um, it's very clear that from the onset, uh, you and your team has put a lot of attention into the personal and individual experiences of an inspiring and shopping near recognizing that that internal process is just as important as the process of building those market, creating innovations and doing the requisite research and tools building and practice building.

[00:07:58] And, and this, this, [00:08:00] this focus on this internal, um, sort of personal development seems to be a hallmark of the program. Of course, uh, the program runs over the course of a full 12 month track. And in a way, one could say that there's the pre-business talent investor period of the program, and then the accelerator, which of course, again, being the inaugural program, just hearing program, um, this, this is, as you say, this is also the program itself is, is, is building the plane as we go.

[00:08:33] Um, but if you could talk a little more about that. Um, these two segments of the program and perhaps a little more detail about what a JASIRI fellow may experience in the process of engaging in this program and cohort.

[00:08:48] **Daniel Hampton:** So I think, um, they're, they're the two stages along along the journey. I think that the accelerator program is a it's an [00:09:00] accelerated programs in general are quite known quantities. I think that's, that's not an area where we're going to be doing much different from what you might see in, um, in other accelerator programs. Um, so the accelerator program will start once the teams have, have, have got a sense that they found a solution that really works where they've run as many tests as they need to, to really think that they've got something worth worth.

[00:09:24] Um, worth building on, and that's a process of then formalizing that and making sure that they have everything they need in order to turn that into a business that can grow beyond that. Where we're focused at the moment and, and the talent investor, um, is really the less known quantity and where we're focusing the bulk of our attention and really where the innovation is coming in.

[00:09:47] And that's, uh, That's as, as you've explained it, the, the, the, the definition of attempt investor, which are there, there are various of these popping up, um, is that attempting to us to seek out an [00:10:00] individual and focuses on an individual, not a business. So it specifically looks for people who are not currently running a business.

[00:10:07] They may have some ideas. They may that we, we look for people that, that have. Um, deep, deep expertise within an area, but that aren't yet working on an idea. I haven't settled on an idea and haven't yet started a business. Um, and there's, there's a couple of reasons for that and a couple of reasons why that's really important within, within the African context in particular.

[00:10:28] Um, and that's, uh, the, the confluence there is, uh, high, high potential, um, entrepreneurs or, or really kind of talented young Africans. Um, tend to face significant challenges, um, that, that are quite different from,

from the Western counterparts in being able to take the initial steps into entrepreneurship.

[00:10:53] Um, and, and I think that's why we see overwhelmingly that, um, that, um, high-impact, [00:11:00] high-growth entrepreneurs tend to be, um, from Western countries at the moment. And a lot of the reason for that is that that first couple of years, um, where there really needs to be the space to be able to explore, to fail, to try things out.

[00:11:14] Um, those, the entrepreneurs in more developed countries tend to be funded by families. They tend to be funded by, uh, by, by fairly easy going fairly relaxed capital. Um, that's close to them, um, that allows them that space. Um, where the people providing that capital, are more interested in them as individuals than they are in any kind of return in the short term.

[00:11:37] Um, but what, what we mostly see, or we see, um, a lot in the African continent is that, uh, there's a lot of first-generation graduates within this really talented pool of people that have the capacity to be able to build a big, internationally, um, relevant high-growth business. Um, and they've got, they've got a lot of responsibilities, [00:12:00] uh, to their family rather than the other way round.

[00:12:03] Um, and so that risk profile for them to be able to potentially not have an income. Um, extends beyond them. Um, and, and so that, that barrier to entry for the most talented people that are really needed in order to grow these kinds of businesses, is that much higher. Um, so, so the vehicle of a talented investor that allows us to step into that space, it allows us to identify those people that that the biggest impact that can be making on the continent and on the world is in entrepreneurship. But, but their personal circumstances may not allow that kind of space to be able to have that, um, that period of time to find, to, to kind of dig beneath the obvious, to look into systems, to try to find. To find those, uh, those opportunities that are really worth, uh, exploring.

[00:12:50] Um, so, so what we want to do is, uh, is, is really to, to empower that group of people, to be able to jump into entrepreneurship and to give them the space to [00:13:00] experiment. I mean, I think that obviously becomes. But the, the, the, the, the other aspects here is that we've got a lot of asymmetrical and non-existent market data, um, on the continent, or at least it's, uh, the, the market data is very scant in comparison to other markets.

[00:13:17] And so that actually requires even more time to really dig in to try and find, uh, find these big opportunities. But it also means that there's, there's, there's a larger, um, possibility for opportunity because that, that lack

of data is both a hindrance. And it's an opportunity as it's a barrier to entry for, for other companies, for other, for other organizations.

[00:13:37] So, so we really want to provide them patient time, this blank slate and this full focus, um, to really high potential entrepreneurs, um, for them to be able to dig in, um, and, and, uh, and build a company that's really worth building.

[00:13:53] **Fergus Turner** : Thank you so much, Dan. Um, you know, th it's remarkable even just in [00:14:00] listening, you describe it, um, through these lenses, it's remarkable to, to, uh, to see the degree to which the program, um, all at once focuses so much on that context, on that context, to that experience, that individual reality, um, in the, in the, um, you know, the in the entrepreneurial space and entrepreneurial experience, but at the same time has such a, such a systems oriented approach to looking at market creating innovations, to looking at the kinds of undiscovered markets and opportunities that exist and which may be levers for massive change. But coming back to this personal experience of the entrepreneur and the grounded-ness of the program, I wanted to ask you, Akalisa, if you could share a little more, perhaps a couple of examples of the kinds of questions, problem areas, um, [00:15:00] opportunities, challenges that teams and fellows are currently looking at just to, to give our audience a sense of how to hook into the material that the fellows, the fellows are dealing with.

[00:15:14] **Akaliza Keza Ntwari**: It's been really exciting to see how many different ideas have come up. How many different spaces they're working in. We have, um, several teams looking into the financial space, obviously a technology's probably coming into play in every single, um, team that we've seen formed. So there's FinTech, um, Ed tech, uh, biotechnology.

[00:15:39] It's been very broad. Uh, What, what I think they found the most well I'll allow peace and Brian and probably to answer what they found the most useful. But, um, just from the outside looking in, uh, I think it's, it's th this prospecting stage that they've been going [00:16:00] through, um, that we've begged them to be, uh, patient and, uh, and slow in that process.

[00:16:06] Um, really getting to know who their customer is, and also. Uh, encouraging them not to, to be too hooked on the solution at the beginning and, uh, really tear it apart and, uh, presented to each other and, uh, be open to feedback and to sort of have this mindset where, whereas, you know, for myself, I, I, you know, I also.

[00:16:34] The experience of being in entrepreneurship programs and usually the ideas that you have this solution already packaged, then you're coming and presenting it and you have to be ready to defend it at all costs. And

that's the only way you're going to get your funding. Um, whereas in this program we're encouraging them to, to present it, but be very.

[00:16:56] But to be very open to, to the [00:17:00] feedback from, from their fellows and from, um, the different facilitators we're working with and to be prepared to throw it out the window and, um, go back to the drawing board and to be comfortable with that and to, um, recognize that as, as a healthy, as a healthy approach and that they should carry with them throughout the, their journeys event beyond JASIRI. So I think that's what I've been finding the most exciting and interesting to watch.

[00:17:31] **Fergus Turner** : Thank you so much that merging that. Um, courage boldness of JASIRI with the patients and curiosity can sometimes I'm sure feel like quite at tention, um, and feel quite at odds. So over to you, Peace, Brian, if you could share from your perspective, how has this program been for you both personally, but also as budding entrepreneurs yourselves.

[00:17:56] **Brian Simuyu** : So I'm privileged that instead of having [00:18:00] to travel to Silicon valley or Shanghai to internalize some of these concerns. The city has managed to create a safe space of diverse entrepreneurs, brilliant minds. I should add where you can grow as an individual guided by a mentor who helps you with self coping and as a team where you're coached by world-class facilitators, such as those who are represented by the Bertha Center, who help you with your idea progression and furthermore, for your opportunity assessment, you will have a leading industry players who consult and advise you according through a brain trust model. And, uh, personally, if I, what, to be honest, I don't think it gets any better in the continent. Uh, I believe this will be one of the most remarkable, uh, initiatives, uh, moving forward.

[00:18:47] **Fergus Turner** : Thank you, Brian. Peace

[00:18:50] **Peace Iraguha**: For me first, I consider myself lucky to be part of the first cohort of the program. [00:19:00] As I said, Allie, I believed JASIRI to be a move. We have amazing facilitators. We have access to experts in the field mentors all the way. And as Akalisa was saying, we, we, the approach we're going with is really different from what has been being done because. They give us time pressed to fall enough with the problem.

[00:19:27] And they really believe that that, uh, effect on a huge percentage, the solution you're going to come up with the sustainability of the solution you're going to come up with. So we're given time. No pressure. You sit down, get to understand the problem, talk to your customers. Get the guidance he needs the facilitator, that they're all the way and also the mentorship. So you

have everything, you have everything to come up with [00:20:00] a great market, creating innovation.

[00:20:03] **Fergus Turner** : Yeah, there's a, I think there's a catch saying in design thinking that goes something like a, um, a well-defined problem is more valuable than a badly defined solution um, and similarly in the systems, systems, practitioner, literature, they say that the more time we're able to really spend empathizing and connecting with the problem with the market, with the environment that we are curious about, uh, the more we're able to recognize our own.

[00:20:36] Um, our own part in that environment and that ecosystem, rather than seeing ourselves as these objective outsiders trying to solve for one particular solution. I want to drill down a little more, uh, Brian, your experience as it pertains to your specific problems, your specific systems that you are looking at, um, just again, to give our [00:21:00] audience a sense, an idea of the kinds of, um, questions and challenges that you're looking at.

[00:21:06] So, Brian, again, over to you, if you could just give us an insight or a, or a, or an idea, a window into what you and your team are looking.

[00:21:17] **Brian Simuyu** : Uh, we are using big data as a lens to, uh, re solve problems inherent in, uh, uh, financial literacy, uh, to be exact and, uh, the way I speak to it. Well, it will be say, it will be by saying that globally entrepreneurs innovate.

[00:21:36] That's what entrepreneurs do. And there's a lot of focus on the disruptive elements in the development. When talking innovation, because there's a lot of incumbents that need to be nudged or displaced entirely. Here, in Africa, there is a need, they are fighting between there indeed far in between the so-called incumbents.

[00:21:56] So African needs innovations that focus on struggles that [00:22:00] directly inhibits consumption, uh, keywords here have to be struggle that a lot of Africans are familiar with and non-consumption coming from the aforementioned inhibited consumption. Also a very common theme in the continent in this sense, that just theory.

[00:22:16] We turn a lot to the Clayton Christensen Christensen Institute, framework of market creating innovations that speak a lot to this concerns. I should add that these are not exact senses. And as a team, we're not moving as such, but we know that there are a great guide to, uh, the lighthouse and we feel we'll get there.

[00:22:37] **Fergus Turner** : This relationship between systems change and entrepreneurship is something that we at the Bertha Center are obviously very curious about. Um, so over to you, Dan, if you could share a little more about your thoughts and perhaps some of your learnings over the course of this program, thus far about the role of entrepreneurship as a catalyst for systems change, [00:23:00] uh, what at first glance that seems obvious, but what are some of the deeper insights that perhaps have come to you over the course of this program so far?

[00:23:11] **Daniel Hampton**: With the lens of looking at entrepreneurship and, and, and systems change. Um, I think something that's been quite interesting is. No matter, no matter the fact that we've taken this very, that we're about the most kind of in terms of timelines, patient program that, that I think I've ever seen. But, but I think given the complexities of digging into systems and trying to get really to the core of, of problems in a, in an environment that's, that's not what a lot of immediately available data really does take time. Um, and I think we've got, uh, we've got another lens now to, to just how much time and how much efforts, um, is needed in these early stages. Um, and that together with this, with this extra complication of, of, of having this cohorts, uh, find each other, find the community, you're going to [00:24:00] make the connections they need to make, uh, with each other, um, which, which are also just incredibly important.

[00:24:05] And, uh, um, and. And they're in their journey forward and finding the mix of competencies and the mix of backgrounds, that mix of experience. It really works for them to make something special. Um, but this is something that can't be rushed. Um, and, and I think as, as we've moved through this where we're getting an even deeper sense of just of just how much time is necessary, um, to, to allow this space to play and space, to explore and space, to, to, to experiment both, both in building those relationships and then, um, looking outward into, um, Uh, into the markets, into the communities around, um, as, as, as we, as we prospect for the, for that hidden gold.

[00:24:44] **Fergus Turner** : Thank you so much, Daniel. I was wondering, um, just, uh, speaking of this process of, of application, um, for prospective fellows for candidates, um, Peace, um, if you could share, um, you know, [00:25:00] recognizing that you, you associate JASIRI with. It's a move. It's move. It's it's a call, um, well, in that case, who is the ideal just candidates, um, what, what kind of characteristics so that those listening can understand and get a feeling for whether they connect and resonate with the idea of becoming a JASIRI fellow. If you could just share with us a little more about how you would characterize the ideal candidate for the program

[00:25:27] **Peace Iraguha:** I'll say an ideal candidate for the program. First has to be brave as an, as the name phase, because as Daniel says it's even the selection process is as far as possible from easy, but so as, eh, also coming up with a market, creating innovation is not easy.

[00:25:50] So it has to be brave. You have to have the hunger because it requires a deep drive for you to first get [00:26:00] selected. But then. The work now comes when you selected, you have to put in the effort, you have to understand what to actually after. You have to have that tango of, uh, engaging in national building, eh, changing the systems and going for something bigger.

[00:26:24] **Fergus Turner :** So I wonder Daniel, you could tell us a little bit more about the selection process and perhaps for our listeners to know a little bit more about how they can be involved or find out more, or even apply.

[00:26:37] **Daniel Hampton:** The applications are already opened for cohort two. Um, our selection process I'm sure Peace, and Brian would, would, uh, fill you in on it's a it's it's, it's a pretty laborious thing to get through. Um, we're we, we're trying as hard as possible in our selection process to, to, um, to make it as, as objective as we can. [00:27:00] Um, and as repeatable as we can in, in terms of trying to identify this on this. Kind of fuzzy concept of entrepreneurial potential. Um, and we've, we've got, we've got a lot of, we've got a lot of history with this.

[00:27:13] Um, the Antegrade foundation in South Africa has been following a similar model for nearly 15 years now. Um, and I think the, the stockist way to kind of put this. Most of the programs that you see of this nature, these kinds of selection programs are all based off an interview with a, with a company director or similar, um, and, and, and really rely a lot on, uh, chemistry, um, and, and, and gut reaction of, of those making the decisions.

[00:27:39] And we're really trying to bring as much, uh, scientific rigor as we can, and as much research as we can to the process. Um, so it's, it's this balance of, uh, Of psychometric evaluations of, of looking at past experience of looking at kind of depth, depth of knowledge within an industry, um, looking at entrepreneurial intention, um, [00:28:00] um, the, the level of ambition and, and we try and use as far as possible tools that, that are repeatable tools that, that are objective tools that, that, that cross cultures.

[00:28:10] Um, so, so that's so that we are, we know that we're getting a cohort that really does have the competencies, the backgrounds that we need, and that it's a process that we can. That we can repeat and repeat

and repeat. Um, so it does, it does require a lot of time. It requires a lot of effort. It's quite a learning experience for anyone who does apply.

[00:28:29] So even those who don't make it through into the, into the final group, um, the, the, the selection process has been structured as a learning journey and as a journey of self discovery, um, that, that brings a lot of value to those even who, who don't make it through the various stages. Um, so that is open, um, the.

[00:28:49] The application is up on our website, <https://jasiri.org/>.

[00:28:53] **Fergus Turner** : Thank you all for making this happen. First and foremost, it's been an absolute pleasure and Daniel [00:29:00] Akalisa, Brian, Peace, thank you so much for being unjust for a change I have this afternoon. We really appreciate your time.

[00:29:10] **Kentse Radebe**: Hi, this is Kentse Radebe hosting this positive outlook segment. The entrepreneurship space is broad and dynamic. While JASIRI focuses on entrepreneurs with past experience - be that from the corporate world or from past entrepreneurial ventures - the Raymond Ackerman Academy, also known as RAA, focuses on preparing and mobilising another group of entrepreneurially minded, or perhaps just creative, curious people...those finishing high school and others who have had limited access to tertiary opportunities.

[00:29:42] RAA is a post-matric level academy that offers an inspiring and innovative six month, full time programme in entrepreneurial development. The course empowers young people by developing them personally, building their entrepreneurial mind-sets and teaching them business skills. Ultimately, the Academy wishes to assist individuals with creating their personal and entrepreneurial vision. The approach is to grow the person, then the business.

Today, I'm excited to chat to Ayanda Cuba, an RAA alumni who launched ABCD Concepts - a lifestyle marketing tourism start-up based in the heart of Khayelitsha.

[00:30:18] Ayanda welcome to The Just for Change Podcast we're really delighted to have you here with us. I think I'm particularly excited because a couple of weeks ago we'd met with some of the RAA team members and they were chatting about the program and how amazing it is. And we were all having FOMO, just in listening to what the entrepreneurial process and support is like. So I wanted to just maybe start right there at the beginning of

your journey with RAA. How did you find out about the program? What motivated you to apply.

[00:30:48] **Ayanda Cuba:** Um, yeah, it's a, it's a mouthful to be honest, but Nkosi, um, Kentse for this, this time and recapping cause I think it was what, seven years ago now. And with the [00:31:00] RAA, I, I have a couple of friends who, within my circle that were graduates and for me, what was really interesting was they went to the program and they came up like doing like super great cool ideas. Um, and some, I became curious, like when I met Siswe were doing years express, I was like, wait, wait, wait, what is this? And then I met Lufefe for talking a lot about the spinach bread had recently just launched the hub space.

[00:31:28] I was like, wait, are all you guys like graduates from the RAA? So what's happening there. So. I had FOMO basically. And I, I kind of went on a whim, decided to apply and went on the interview. And I think it was one of the best decisions that I think we make for ourselves because. My own personal experience, as much as the guys have gone through the program before me.

[00:31:56] But when I was there, I got a different experience. So I too, at the [00:32:00] end of the six months became an alumni and we were all now RAA graduates, not just friends, but everyone will come through the same academy.

[00:32:10] **Kentse Radebe:** Sure I ended. It's so amazing that you list all of these people. I will do. I'm getting like FOMO hearing. You speak about the different people that have come through this program. But when you mentioned all of these people, you make me think about something that I'm constantly thinking about whenever I'm a is about how our space, our townships are really these spaces that bring together people in community, but also a real entrepreneurial ecosystems.

[00:32:35] And we sometimes don't think about them as those kinds of spaces. What role do you think entrepreneurship has to play in our own communities, but also around being a systems, catalyzer for South Africa

[00:32:48] **Ayanda Cuba:** For the best part I think independence is one of the things that everyone like strives for. Um, I really feel that, um, at, at, at a certain age we always aspire [00:33:00] to have control. And for most of us having that opportunity to just kickstart your idea or start a business, gives you some kind of an independent feeding where in our communities, where a lot of people are highly reliant on jobs, whether it's in government with it's in the public sector. You being able to create for yourself gives you that room to not only create something that's meaningful for yourself, but also something that

at the end of the day it gets shared with your community and just kickstart a process of inspiring other young people.

[00:33:30] So I just believe entrepreneurship as a whole gives us as township dwellers, that opportunity to really start putting the building blocks to reshaping our societies and for our generation in particular, compared to our. We are much more socially driven. So we try to address a lot of the ills that we see around us through creative solutions.

[00:33:52] And that's how we then play our role to make sure that the next generation has a start.

[00:33:59] **Kentse Radebe:** Sure. [00:34:00] Um, there's so much that you're saying there that resonates with me, but I think maybe this is a good opportunity for us to tell us a little bit about your company, ABC concepts. How did it come together? We know that you also have a business partner Ubuntu Mathole. What was that journey like?

[00:34:14] **Ayanda Cuba:** Uh, We met day one at the RAA strangely enough. And he introduced himself thinking he was the only one from the Khayelitsha and he always had this tagline. Hi everyone. My name is Ubuntu from Khayelitsha just wanting to own that. And strangely enough I was sitting in the back was I've always been that kid.

[00:34:38] Like I've enjoyed the back, the back seat, whether it was on the bus, whether it was in the classroom. 'cause it, it was kind of like, you don't get the attention, but you keep up with everyone else sitting at the front. Uh, so when we met, we, we vibed based on the energy that we will all like giving off, but also I think it was a time [00:35:00] where most of us were really looking for peer motivation. So on Saturdays, we'd all get together. We'd work through assignments. We basically assist one another on some of the things that we saw lacking. Like if I was good in computers or if I had been exposed to laptops longer than my friends. So I'm there to just show you, give you a few pointers, or if you exposed to a different industry or space, like it was just that.

[00:35:26] So 2015, we came together and with like, fam what are you doing? Um, now the program is over. And it was like, I just want to do something positive for my community. He was wanting to do something with sports. I'd been doing something with events in the past. So I was like, we might as well try sports events and then try and also work with schools and in the process, test it out, just see where this goes.

[00:35:52] So ABCD was the name we chose when we had to be formally registered, but didn't think about what the business [00:36:00] was going to

become. We just knew we want to do everything right from the get-go and we want to have a registered entity so that we never, we have to comply. We have the right documents. And then we rolled with the punches.

[00:36:13] New opportunities came, we went shy on embracing those opportunities. We just took everything as a learning experience and decided to evolve the business, the mature it became. And the older, I think the more older we got, the more experience we had, the learnings, the first year. Zero income.

[00:36:35] It was all pure passion. Like the transport was the two series that is our foot. We would walk everywhere the first year, but then you learn and you just, I think you, you learn to get through the hard times by embracing the change, but also by just taking on the hardships, if, if it was easy from the get go, I don't think we would have been really all right now.

[00:36:58] **Kentse Radebe:** That's amazing. That's [00:37:00] amazing. Fantastic work. I under, can you tell us a little bit more about ABCD Concepts, your business model? What is it that you do and what are some of the organizations that you've collaborated with?

[00:37:10] **Ayanda Cuba:** So we, we basically, uh, I think we sell access, that's what I say. And when I say we saw access, we saw access through meaningful experiences that people get to have in communities like in Khayelitsha.

[00:37:23] And that could be either a tour that could either be like an educational, um, that could even be like a partnership, like what we did with Airbnb, where working with them on the Airbnb Africa Academy and our opportunity, like for anyone who wants to venture and become a tourism entrepreneur, basically, uh, we started on Airbnb back in 2015, no, 2016, actually, when they were launching experiences in South Africa and South Africa as this as like the one of the few countries globally to now start having experiences.

[00:37:56] And in Cape town, Cape town was like the only destination in the country at the [00:38:00] time. And we were the only guys coming from to have an experience. And I think a handful of guys from any township. So that was like our kickstart into the whole tourism industry. And from there, we had to pivot and become tourism entrepreneurs as well.

[00:38:17] So we've been at for a minute now, and I think we've had a, a bigger impact. We've partnered up with Cape town tourism. We've worked recently with, um, SA tourism, where we shot something on Espresso. Uh,

we've worked with remote here, which is, um, a one year trip around the world where you get to live and work remotely in like 10 different countries.

[00:38:42] So we host them when they are here in Cape town, uh, in partnership with, they Cape Town base. And yeah, we've even worked the Mr. Gay world where we did the first ever township triathlon, um, which is just unpacking, like the three tourism components that we [00:39:00] have, which is cycling, running, and walking. But for us, we just had to make it feel like it's a, it's an authentic township concept.

[00:39:07] So the guy jogged a seven kilometer distance, took bikes from the spinach king, they cycled a three kilometer distance, and then they had to walk up the walkway, which is at the lookout hill to get to the top. So we've been trying to push the boundaries in terms of like how we have people experienced townships specifically, because as much as South Africa is a beautiful country, we don't feel that outside of SOWETO other communities are given the same recognition where they thrive and they really start owning that the identity. So we're trying to push Khayelitsha to be like that as well.

[00:39:45] **Kentse Radebe:** Amazing. Amazing. Thank you so much. I ended up, it's been a pleasure chatting with you and just learning from your experiences

[00:39:54] **Fergus Turner :** Today we have been able to look at more than one entrepreneurial journey where the models differ significantly. What we definitely can say is that, no matter which door someone enters the world of entrepreneurship from, they will need a lot of scaffolding.

It's not realistic to think that a person can simply jump ship, leave their paying job and dive straight into the world of entrepreneurship. That's why programmes such as what JASIRI offers, which fully funds a person for a year, is key.

For someone just leaving school and joining a RAA programme for example, the dive into entrepreneurship might be slightly less daunting because they aren't necessarily putting a paying job at stake. However, that doesn't mean they need less support. With sufficient support, entrepreneurs will be critical catalysts for systems change on the African continent and other countries and cities in the global south. It's an opportunity not to be missed!

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 innovations are 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!