

'Just for a Change' powered by the Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship podcast transcript.

Episode 2: The youth's role in re-imagining our society post COVID-19

[00:00:00] **Kentse:** Welcome to the 'Just for a change' podcast powered by the Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship. First off, what you need to know about us is that thinking differently and innovatively about solving big social issues is what makes us tick. We love offering new perspectives on social innovation and social justice.

So we hope you'll be inspired to make a difference wherever you are.

We're changing the way we're changing the world.

Welcome to the 'Just for a change' podcast with me, your host, Kentse Radebe.

Living through the pandemic has taken its toll on all of us from young to old and in various degrees of severity. Many of us are coming to grips with the longer term impact of COVID-19 personally, in our communities and globally. We've seen the impact of COVID-19 on [00:01:00] the way we work, the struggles of marginalized groups like foreign migrants and those who are homeless.

We've also witnessed a sharp uptick in reports about gender based violence, issues related to mental health and the rise in food insecurity. A unique segment of the population that has been hardest hit is young people. As schools and universities have been closed for the last few months we've seen how challenging it is to ensure equitable access to education.

Even though moving online was seamless for some, the challenges, confusion, and stress that many students experienced as a result of lockdown was intense.

Young graduates and those entering the job market for the first time are doing so during a perilous economic context - the government has cut its economic growth forecast by half and this is in a climate where over 50% of young people are unemployed.

However, despite this, during this COVID-19 crisis, we have seen young people [00:02:00] take up the mantle and lead some of the most significant initiatives and responses to the pandemic. This includes entrepreneurial endeavours, leading social action and taking on positions that have challenged institutional complacency.

When we talk about life post-pandemic, we need to ask ourselves: what is the possibility and power of the youth's role in re-imagining our society post COVID-19? A keystone of systems thinking is acknowledging, understanding and working with causal relationships. So what are causal relationships? Well, in a systems thinking approach, it's about being able to recognize how elements or factors influence each other within a system.

Let's consider an example where society tends to have a simple understanding of a very complex issue. Perhaps you've heard of the narrative that the youth are apathetic and not as industrious as the previous generation. However, the reality and

the scope of the issue is much broader and deeper. [00:03:00] We know the economic inequalities spread across race, class, and gender affect the life outcomes of many young people.

And in South Africa, those who are most disadvantaged, whether it's with access to education, healthcare, or basic services, like housing, water, and electricity. There are very real structural and systemic barriers that skew access to opportunities for young people.

In the time of COVID-19 you have seen clearly the causal effects of lockdown policies globally on diverse issues, including maternal and child healthcare, hunger and malnutrition, domestic violence, and employment, illustrating how everything is interconnected. Many of these causal relationships were already known, and have merely been highlighted during this time.

A systems approach looks to identify leverage points at which to target interventions. Leverage points can be described as places within a complex system (a corporation, an [00:04:00] economy, a city, an ecosystem) where a small shift in one thing can produce big changes in everything else. Without successfully identifying leverage points for systemic action, responses will inevitably be scattered and results less effective.

All is not lost, however. And in this episode, we're going to explore some of the work youth and youth organizations are doing and the way that young people are engaging in the possibilities of rebuilding society after COVID-19,

We decided to ask some young people what it's like being a young person in South Africa in 2020. Here's what they had to say.

[00:05:00] I is being a bit challenged for being a youth in SA in this 2020, because have been dealing with a lot of challenging in our community. Um, first of all, I would like to change in the communities is to take off the youth from the street and give them activity to do.

It's difficult due to the coronavirus that is happening now, a lack of finances, you know, being retrenched at our jobs, sitting at home, watching TV 24 seven. Having no day and having no productive day.

M hopes for the future is to become a great leader and encourage the youth to come along to do [00:06:00] progress and such big difference.

I wish that there could be more people who are coming to scout talent in my community because we are a small community, first of all, that is based on the southern side in Cape Town and opportunities are scarce, they are very scarce .

In our second 'Just for a Change' episode, we chat to Alana Bond from Lucha Lunako. Lucha Lunako is a youth development lab that helps build pathways to decent work through partnership, collaboration, and innovation. Lucha Lunako envisions a world where youth use their agency and skills to access sustainable and decent work, with the ability to build aspirational careers.

We're also joined by Chad Robertson, a young innovator & entrepreneur who went through the Student Seed Fund programme - an initiative of the Bertha Centre and

the SAB foundation that is open to all UCT, UCT Graduate School of Business and Raymond Ackerman Academy students. Chad started a social enterprise called Regenize and their focus is on making recycling accessible, inclusive and rewarding.

Celebrating youth month recently has once again, been a great reminder of the power and potential of the youth as change makers in our nation. After all they make up a third of the population. Though they are faced with many challenges, many are able to change their perspectives and see some of the challenges as opportunities.

It will be crucial to involve and empower them in the [00:07:00] recovery of the country post COVID-19. And we would be ignorant and unwise to underestimate their creativity and innovative solutions they can bring to the table.

Chad and Alana, welcome to the 'Just for a change' podcast. I know we aren't sitting in the same room together. We're actually doing this online because of COVID-19, but thank you for making the time to join us and welcome to the podcast.

Chad, I wanted to start a little bit with your story. Um, I was on your website and I was reading your profile and there was an interesting statement that really struck a chord with me and I'm going to read it and it says.

Um, and this is like, sort of like what motivates you. And it says you're on a mission to disrupt social norms and discover your super powers to help make the world a better place. And I'm curious about when you talk about superpowers, and we're speaking metaphorically, what are the kinds of the superpowers that you think young people today need to re- imagine a different world for themselves?

Chad: Yeah, I guess it's [00:08:00] just, you know, belief in yourself. Um, and belief in the vision that you have, you want to bring into the world. Um, when I used the words, superpowers, you know, it could mean anything, just taking a risk, making the change, being the voice. Um, you don't have to fly, but you know, you can do something, it contributes just seeing that vision.

And so for youth, there's so much opportunities, there's so many things they could do, you know, to bring that vision into the world. And I think just taking action. Um, and like I said, speaking out, that could be a superpower in itself for the youth themselves.

Kentse: That's really interesting when you talk about taking risks, taking action I think those are really pertinent, um, I think points and, and I think that segues quite nicely into Alana some of the work that you're doing at Lucha Lunako. And you speak about creating a mindset shift in young people. And for me, when I read that and especially around some of the radical transformation that we speak about, I think over the last decade, we've seen some of the most [00:09:00] important and significant movements being led by young people. I'm thinking about 'Rhodes must fall', I'm thinking about 'Fees must fall'. Albeit these were in the higher education space, but they did have significant institutional impact. So when you thinking about mindset shifts and radical action, what do you have in mind when you use that term?

Alana: I think that, um, it's so important that young people use their, the, the amazing energy and creativity that they have for positive change. Um, and I think that, you know, we, we in South Africa and then possibly around the world are on a bit of a precipice where it could potentially go either way. Um, and you know, for me that

radical change looks like using, um, the, the, the, that, that positivity and that, that belief and that, um, that energy, uh, for creating, uh, the positive change and channeling, um, positive, um, channels.

And for me, that's very [00:10:00] important. I think that, that we engaged in, um, positively with young people and that they do so with us as well. We need to be careful about, um, You know, when we, when, when we get to the point of burning things and, um, you know, that's the point in which I think youth are so frustrated that they feel that's the only way that they're going to be heard.

And so for me, the mindset shift, and I totally understand, um, although I haven't been in that position, I can understand how young people might feel that way and that that's what they need to do in order to be heard. Um, but I think it's so important that if we're going to see change going forward, that, that, um, the young people find a way to, to verbalize and, and do that in a different way.

Kentse: So, and I think that brings me back to back to you, Chad. I mean, you follow the, the entrepreneurial route, um, which I think for a lot of young people who do have the opportunity to go to university, you know, the narrative is graduate, look for work, and then maybe, you know, if there is an opportunity you might start your own company.

And what's really interesting is that the narrative around young South Africans is often that we don't have a [00:11:00] strong entrepreneurial streak and what you were speaking about earlier taking risks. So I think linking a little bit of what Alana's speaking about with some of the frustration and some of this, this narrative that we paint about young people, how do you think we can support and encourage that spirit and that energy for taking risks and being entrepreneurial?

Chad: Yeah. Um, I think one would be initiating stories is really critical. Um, I don't think there's enough stories shared about local entrepreneurs doing great things. Um, they are not magnified. They're not highlighted enough. Um, you know, there's a story now and then. But I think they need to be further highlighted.

Um, I came across a story a few months ago of, um, entrepreneurs from, you know, a few decades ago. And it was really inspiring for me as well, kept me motivated to pursue my mission. Um, something stories and sharing those stories to assist successes is great. Um, and like you said, there's ample opportunity out there.

There's plenty of resources available. They need that motivation. Um, and I [00:12:00] think stories could, could help with that. Um, other things such as, you know, access to finance is tricky because, um, generally you need to, you need to have assets or you need to have money to get money. Um, and so new ways of financing operations is important.

Um, I know the Bertha Centre has come up with a few interesting funds that focus, you know, on impact and, and green financing, which is really helpful. Um, Especially in this social entrepreneurship context. And then I would say, this is still further need for education and training. You know, it's pointless just giving someone access to finance.

Um, they need to have that motivation then, and that could be helped by sharing stories and they need to have access to education training, and to have their

support throughout the journey. Um, and so, yeah, I think we have a climate. Is there, we just need to get the youth more involved and show them that it is possible, [00:13:00] regardless where you come from, that you can make it. And it's not, it's not the success monument for a few, but many can get over that time.

Kentse: It's interesting that you say that Chad, I'm reflecting about what you're saying about access to finance, about telling these stories. And it brings me almost back to, to align it and the work that neutrally not cause during.

And I'm thinking specifically about the youth innovation partnership that was launched with impact hub and Bertha Centre. And in that work, you touched on the fact that we've been doing youth development work for while. Um, but. Despite all of the investment and the resources that have been put into this space, we're actually not seeing some of the significant changes that we'd like to see.

And when I go back to sort of like systems language, we often would describe this as a wicked problem. And a wicked problem basically speaks about something that is complex and difficult with many moving parts. So there is no real you know, silver bullet and you propose that we need a new theory of change when we're thinking [00:14:00] about youth development. And I mean, reflecting on what Chad has been saying about his stories, about access to finance, what opportunities, what does that new theory of change look like?

Alana: Uh, yeah, I mean, I think that the reason that Chad said really resonated with me, um, and, and I would totally agree. Um, we, we've, what we've observed as a, is a theory of change that seems to exist in South Africa, which says that, you know, give young people work experience and, um, and maybe it's progressed from there to, to some workplace readiness and then young people will be able to get jobs.

Um, and I believe that I would extend that, you know, your question to Chad was around entrepreneurs, but I would extend that to, to entrepreneurs and small business owners as well. Um, and you know, I've been operating in the space for a while in my, my observations across hundreds of young people is that that's simply not the case.

And, um, the, the new theory of change that we propose, it says that we believe young people need foundations. Um, and, and those are our typical human adult [00:15:00] foundations that, that most of us will, we all build to some extent as we grow up from a young age into, into an adult. Um, and, and our observations are that, um, Africa that a lot of young people have got gaps in those foundations and those foundations aren't as solid as they might, uh, as they could be.

Um, and we also know that, uh, we know that our gender based violence in South Africa is, is, is significant. We know that poverty and inequality in South Africa is significant. And therefore I think a lot of young people and, and this is true. Of course, I think everybody across the board experiences format, to some extent and trauma sits on a spectrum. Um, and, and so some people may experience more trauma than others and, um, and, and people who've experienced more trauma are, um, are likely to, to submit, to experience more, um, results of actual trauma. And I think that then makes sense difficult. The trauma, what we found in particular makes it's difficult for young people to face certain things because of that [00:16:00].

And they might not know that young people need to be able to build enough of a foundation in terms of their character and confidence. Focused on addressing those traumas as well as being able to take advantage of the opportunities. It's the fate that they get given. That's part of that mindset shift, um, as well as then going around grasping education opportunities and other opportunities that come their way, again, that education, we believe sits on top of a foundation and we consciously throw workplace readiness and technical skills to young people. And they suddenly going to say, start extending, going to grasp that. And they're going to get a job in progress. You know, we we've, we've got to build a, uh, a set of foundations first and then just on the financial side of things, you know, um, I've seen around the world and it's, it's, it's an instance of Africa as well. It's a very privileged thing to be able to go and work as a intern for free somewhere. And there's the sense that the doing that is a sign of [00:17:00] your grit and your resilience and your commitment to learning and growing and all of those things. And I, I feel that it's, it is a privileged thing because many people get to go home and stay with their parents and they're there, their parents are paying for their transport and all kinds of things like that. And we have a large, large number of people in this country, 58% of, of young people that are unemployed.

Kentse: So, sorry, go ahead, Chad.

Chad: Yeah. So just some of the personal experiences we've had, um, which touches on a this as example, the loss. So there's an organization which gets, you know, interns from the States. Um, And they, they go through a program in Cape Town, obviously before COVID, uh, this year it's virtual, and then they get placed within startups throughout Cape town as well. Some in software development, some in data science, some in management, accounting, et cetera, et cetera, um, and you know, asked for at first. And I could see the benefits of that because these kids are coming from first [00:18:00] world countries. Um, they're students at university they're taking their summer vacation, um, and they they're using that summer vacation they're paying quite a big fee to come to Cape town, have some fun, but also learn at the same time. Um, whereas with local youth, um, you know, the, the, the, the, the whole proposition of having to work for free, it's a totally different mindset. Um, and obviously people can't afford it. Um, one, because they need transport to get to an office, they need money for food, et cetera, et cetera. Um, and from that early stages, we're seeing that this advantage just based on, you know, where people are place and obviously their income, um, and as a, I guess as a small business was now, you know, employing interns and employees, it's sucks to kind of see that because you want to empower the local youth. Um, but the local youth mindset is very much fixated on this permanent job. Um, they're looking [00:19:00] for permanency and looking for safety. Um, whereas these youth coming from first world countries, they just want to learn. They want to, they want to get something out of it and then move on and contribute to their career.

Moving forward. Um, and if, for example, government, so that it's opportunity and not just giving people, creating a job, but they think they learn, which is more important than just giving them a job because, um, lessons and education is more valued than just getting a job that is going to account for stats.

Kentse: It's really interesting that I think both of you are reflecting on the structural barriers that make it difficult for young people to find, um, and take advantage of

opportunities, whether it's in the labor market or starting their own business. And I think what's really interesting about that is that when we're thinking about, and none of this was reflecting on some of what you were saying, a lot of what you're speaking about, sort of at the mental health aspects, that education yeah. Aspects, the role of government Chad, that you were speaking about [00:20:00] is. Even though we're talking about youth development, sort of like as one composite idea, but it's actually, there's so many different players, whether it's, you know, at a policy level, whether it's NGO, there's so many different individuals that are doing different things that are having an impact wherever they're playing and within their own ecosystem. But when we're thinking about some of the transformational and sustainable change, the big, long term, you know, fixes as it were, what do you guys think are some of the, I suppose the leverage points, if we would, that we actually need to be picking on that would actually build some of that. I think some of the kinds of changes that we're trying to see?

Chad: Sure. Um, I think Alana alluded to it. Um, you know, there's, it's really starts at the fundamental stages. Um, and you know, we could really go back to quite a few things and there's a lot of aspects that on this, um, But I've seen this, this, this journey as well with, as a youth from out from, from South Africa and in Cape town, [00:21:00] um, where, you know, at the, at a certain level, things has changed for everybody.

Um, and that especially happens that stage of the high school. Um, is this, this, change it up and with there's only so much you, that gets to go to university. And the mindset for example is that if you don't get university, you're a failure. And so from a household level, I think it's really fundamental that we change that narrative of you need to get your matric and go to university also LCO failure.

Um, I think that itself, can you hate, it's a big. Um, culture in chains, Africa, where that you need to have this in order to succeed. And that really, I could say maybe it comes for all of the unemployed youth. Maybe it's just that mindset. Um, obviously not a fact check number. I'm just making an example, but you know, mindsets are important and we need to kind of get away from that, um, society where we believe that you, right.

I have to do this in order to be successful. Um, There's many people that, that don't need to go [00:22:00] to university that can make some a success. And so I think one of those factors I'll just, you know, pay it into, um, and how they bring their children up and the type of lessons they are inviting with it, to these kids.

Um, and I think, for example, as, as, as a, again, as a youth, um, my parents are quite supportive of me going entrepreneurial journey, even though I, I had gone to university. Um, but it's not the case for many people. And so maybe just an attitude change from a parenting point of view could also be a fundamental change of how this outcome is regarding, um, youth unemployment and youth entrepreneurship, and then just make, being open to, to make that change.

Alana: The reason for that is because, and you, you, you alluded to it earlier, you used the word a wicked problem. Um, and that's so true and. You know, we, we have a, we have a youth ecosystem, you know, there's lots of players in that space. There's probably lots of players that don't even know that [00:23:00] they're in that space, but you know, that ecosystem is still a bigger South African ecosystem.

You know, the youth aren't separate you know the youth are inherently part of, of, of, of who we are. Um, and, and they are inherently the part of our, um, society and our communities and our economy. It's not a separate thing. And so it's so difficult, I think to answer that question because, you know, in order for this, in order for us not to need youth development, we, we, I think need, um, to to address our gender based violence and, um, you know, all of those challenges, uh, we, we've got to address the poverty issues. We've got, you know, young people growing up in circumstances where they can't eat food and if they don't the food, how do they learn? Um, and then we know that our education system is what 134 out of 138, uh, in, in, in the world in terms of, um, its its quality level.

Um, so you know, those, and those are not things that we can solve, you know, just, we just [00:24:00] click our fingers and, and we've solved them. You know, they all are they're interrelated and you can't solve those problems without solving a bunch of other systemic challenges within our society and our economy, and probably our politics as well.

Um, and then, you know, I think the point about going to university is a, is a great one because there is a, um, a mindset in South Africa and it's not necessarily even a youth mindset. I think it's very much a corporate business mindset that if you don't have a degree, not really worth something. Um, and, um, and we've, we've got to change that.

And we've also got to change this challenge of the cost of university. Um, you know, I, I am sadly no longer a youth by a few years now, but if, if you know, I did the maths when we had the 'fees must fall.' And, and I think that I worked up that, um, education tertiary education was somewhere between two and three times the cost in real terms of what I paid in my last year of [00:25:00] university, you know, that's not inflation related. That is, that is huge. And, and, you know, I come from a privileged background, um, as a, as a, as a white person, and know my mom had to work at UCT so that I could afford to go to university and not have a student loan.

So, so the cumulative effect on most of our society is huge. And then there's also the issue of matric. So, you know, if I were to pick something that we could. Maybe influence as opposed to changing this whole system, all of its cogs and things like that. I would probably pick them metric because I don't have the stats in front of me.

But if you look at the percentage of people who start school, I think it's something like only 50% of young people finish school. And only a percentage get matric exemption or, sorry, let's say pass matric. Um, and for almost any job in South Africa, that metric is a, is a requirement. So, and that's one of the things we're focusing on is pathways to getting a trick or a matric equivalency, because that [00:26:00] opens up so many doors for young people.

It opens up doors for further study. It opens up doors for jobs. And it opens up doors for, um, you know, future, future partnering to, to better, better paid jobs. Again, I don't have the stats in front of me. It's in our report that we did that some crazy percentage, young people earn or people earn more, more than if they haven't yet check and a tertiary qualification versus if they don't.

Kentse: I think what's really interesting about both of your responses as I'm reflecting on them is how in as much as we're talking about, you know, entrepreneur having an

entrepreneurial mindset or having a mindset that allows you or motivates you to take risks and opportunities, some of the foundational issues that you're pointing to.

Um, Chad, you were speaking about your family support, having that and knowing that you could go out there and start your business, knowing that you had your family to support you. Um, and it's interesting. Um, and I guess I'm bringing it all back to the reason why we thought this, you know, we would bring both of you together is that you were involved in, you know, entrepreneurial endeavors in your own [00:27:00] individual work. And I'm reflecting that we're bringing this back to issues that might not necessarily be considered, you know, issues that entrepreneurs would traditionally deal with, you know, mental health that we spoke about earlier. Um, we're speaking about, you know, inequality and poverty. What do you think? Um, whether it's small business owners or entrepreneurs, what can they learn?

And to these conversations that we're having. Well, we're thinking about a social issue that is connected to a much other bits and pieces in the system, as you were saying, Alana how do we bring those pieces together in your own experiences where you've seen that work, and maybe I can start with you align it and some of the work that you're doing?

Alana: I've observed that the young people in this country, I don't know if it's country specifically, but seem a very, very afraid of failure. Um, and, and, you know, The, the, the very nature of being an entrepreneur means you need to embrace failure. In fact, I've done quite a bit of work at the very early stage of, of, of businesses, social [00:28:00] enterprises, and, and trying to get funding for that.

And people love to talk about innovation and, and then they want to preserve their capital. And I'm like, you know, that innovation equals failure. So there's, there's this, um, there's almost this sense that failure is a bad thing. Um, and, and it's really not. What we need to do is learn from failure as opposed to let failure cripple us.

And there's a, there's a very interesting movement um, around the world, which I've, I've had access to via impact hub. And I don't think I can probably say the whole word, but, um, it's called F-UP night and you can extrapolate on that. The podcast, I will I'll keep it clean. Um, but they actually deliberately go with the whole word and it's, it's this, it's this fantastic evening where you know, for entrepreneurs come and they talk about one of their mess up and how they failed. And it's a very liberating thing. And I think that it's liberating for entrepreneurs who are afraid of failure, but I think it's that kind of thing can be very liberating. Even for [00:29:00] young people in this country.

Again, it comes back to the storytelling that Chad was referring to earlier, which I think is so important because as humans, we are actually wired for storytelling. It's, it's how, it's how we, all of our knowledge was passed down before we could read and write, um, with storytelling. And, um, I think that if, if we can, if we can allow people to get that, that sense, it comes back to mindset shift as well that failure isn't. isn't this terrible thing that cripples you, it's, it's a way of learning and you just simply pick yourself up and you move forward.

Chad: As an entrepreneur myself. I'm not coming from a very privileged background. I had that fear myself. Um, and I don't think I would have been as comfortable with

failure if I hadn't, you know, gone and studied and actually worked professionally before starting my business.

Um, if I'm being honest, um, and it, and again, it's almost like this, um, I would say very first world rhetoric where, you know, you need to fail, fail and fail fast. But the reality is, you [00:30:00] know, in South Africa, people don't have that comfort to fail because they don't have, you know, um, a big savings. They don't have their mom and dad to take care of them. They need to go into work. They need to bring money into the family, into the household. Um, and so, yeah, I think that that comfort with failure is not just a thing of mindset, but it's a thing of I have nothing to fall back on. You know, I don't have this, this comfort of just going back home and staying with my parents and living in their garage.

Um, and so how we go about, you know, allowing people to be comfortable with failure, that is a interesting topic, which I love to explore more. And I think we should be, I think the thesis about that, um, because that would allow us then to. Get more South African youth to become entrepreneurs because that, that fear of, you know, losing it all, you always see the narrative businesses closing down. There's too much feed on that. People want safety, they want jobs, they want to be able to contribute. Um, and [00:31:00] basically just get to the point where they can be comfortable. And so. It's almost. Yeah, it's it's, uh, South African entrepreneurs, um, are really big risk takers especially ones who can't fall back on safety nets, um, and how we allow more people to take this risk and fail

Maybe that's where we should be investing money and not investing it in programmes and various funds that never gets to the entrepreneurs. Maybe just call it a failure fund, which hopefully settle the President Cyril Ramaphosa could start up instead of, you know, trying to create all these jobs and putting these lofty pockets of job creations, which we don't know how sustainable they are.

Kentse: Um, I love the idea of, of a failure fund and it makes me, um, You know, think of, um, of the work that you're doing aligner in, you know, youth development and the different players that, that you engage with. What do you think are some of the barriers that prevent the multiple players in the sector from engaging to perhaps create something like a failure fund [00:32:00] that could potentially maybe reduce the risk of young people wanting to start their own businesses or any other kinds of ventures?

Alana: Look, I think that, I think there's a couple of factors. Um, I think that. I think a lot of people out there are very genuine about wanting to create change. But I think that there's also a lot of fear around, um, around funding and money. Um, and, and I think one of the things that prevents people from, from collaborating is a, a fear of sharing what I've got with what you've got, because in case you get the money that that's allocated to me or that I need in order to, to sort of survive as my organization.

And, um, I would, uh, I don't have the, the, the stats or the evidence, but I'd hazard a guess that a large percentage of organizations in the youth development space, are probably NGOs. Um, as opposed to organizations that are generating their own revenue streams, um, and you know, we already have challenges with competitiveness in the business world, and we're told that [00:33:00] that's a good thing.

And to some extent it is, but you know, that's also debatable in terms of economic theory. Um, and, um, you know, you, you seem to end up with competitiveness in this NGO landscape because there's, there's funding that's out there. Um, and yeah, and you know, to be honest, sometimes people also, you know, we are all human and we like to take credit for the work that be done.

And I think that sometimes the desire to take credit for the work that your organization has done can, um, or that you perceive that you've done can be a stumbling block to actually collaborating with, with others. Because if we work together, then, then who gets to claim what credit. Um, so, and, and I, I, I don't want to put that in a negative light, but not.

So I'm, I'm trying to, I'm trying to put it in a sort of. Uh, reasonable lighters as possible, but I definitely think that that is one of the challenges. Um, and you know, when it comes to a failure fund, um, again, I think mindsets here are important and difficult to overcome. Um, I mean, Chad's [00:34:00] comments were absolutely right.

You know, in South Africa we don't. I was coming again from a position of privilege, you know, in terms of, of, of failure. But, but most people in this country don't have the, the opportunity to fail. Um, what they, what they've done in, in some of the Scandinavian countries is you've got a basic income and therefore you can go off and do something, you can try something new, you can do something like that because the, the, the potential for failure doesn't mean you don't have a home and food to eat and things like that. You've got the basics in place. The challenge in South Africa, I think is we still have. A mindset, um, that the things failure is a bad thing.

Um, you know, to put, to put public money and often NGO money and money from government is typically public money into a fund where we're calling it a failure fund, I think is an actually fantastic idea. The problem is that. When, when I've, when I've spoken to other individuals about this, the issue is that, um, that's that's well now we're going to fail with public money and now we haven't shown the return for [00:35:00] public money and, and there's a focus on the financial return rather than the impact return.

And we have to then come up with a, um, I think a very strong case for what is an impact return look like. And we have to show that that impact return is much greater. Then just the sum of, well, we gave some money to these businesses and they failed because it's much, much more than that. People had jobs for a certain amount of time. They've got experience, they got skills. Businesses, entrepreneurs do tend to fail, but they tend to also get up again, especially if they've got that support. So, so for me, I think, um, it's, and I've actually done quite a lot of work in, as I said, early in the impact investing venture philanthropy space. There's no money out there for failure funds. And if there is, I haven't been able to find it. Um, and, and I think it's what's needed. Um, so I think Chad is right. Uh, but how we do it, I. You know, we there's a lot of [00:36:00] now venture, um, NGO money going into impact investing. And, and I think a switch in focus for financial return. And if we can harness some of that money to say, guys, you know, let's, let's stop impact investing is a good thing, but let's stop. Let's not only put money into that now away from NGOs, let's look at a more addressing or systemic issues. Um, and, and putting a fund together for that and then that's broad money that, that don't expect to get back, but we are expecting certain outcomes.

Kentse: No, no, I appreciate, I mean, these on TZ challenges and I, and I recognize that the questions are complex and there's no, and there's no easy answers, but, but thank you for like, you know, in grappling with these, because I think that's the only way we can sort of get to the place where we want to go. And in systems change, we acknowledge that the work that we do to create transformation in society and adjust an equitable society is slow work. Um, it's not quick work. Um, so I think that's something that we always have to, you know, have the back of our minds, but this almost brings me then back [00:37:00] to you, Chad, and the work that you're doing at Regenize. And I, and I recognize that one of the things that we've done in, in those podcasts is that when we speak about youth, you know, we speak about, you know, those cohesive. As if it's a cohesive group, but we recognize that youth and the challenges that you've faced, aren't cohesive. I mean, if you're living in an urban area or in a rural area, the challenges that you are facing are vastly different. And Chad, you mentioned if you have an opportunity to go to university and if you don't, you know, the labor market and how it responds to you is going to be very different. So I'm wondering Chad, when we're thinking about centering the voices of young people, whether it's, you know, in activism, whether it's in policy development or even, and just, you know, the corporate space, how do you think we can leverage off of that better to bring out the voices that perhaps we're not hearing? And I appreciate that. I'm not asking you to speak for the whole community, but your experience and the work that you're doing, particularly because you're also working with people who were in the informal sector and now you're moving them into the [00:38:00] formal sector. So you're getting two sides of the story. And what that experience has been like for you?

Chad: Conversations are really important, um, and understanding everybody and where they're coming from, et cetera, et cetera. Um, especially our lessons working in the space with informal waste collectors. Um, you know, it was a big. Big learning curve for us as organization to understand firstly, you know, what is it that they will, what is it that they want? Um, At the beginning, it was all about, we see this vision for ourselves and the region, his mission and the vision. And, you know, as we, as we grew that we kind of realize it, but we haven't made it yet as inclusive as we thought we were. And sort of about that word inclusivity, which there's so much levels of it, then there's the actual, you know, ladder of inclusivity.

And I think a lot of people overuse done by just saying we're inclusive because we including people, but it's all about not how deep you want to go. And we, we had patients, we've [00:39:00] asked them from a structural point of view, how should it work? You know, watch what is needed because we don't have all the answers. Um, and when you conversing and having the thinking the time for those meaningful, meaningful conversations only then can we really get to understand what it is that needs to be changed? Um, and this is just talking about our experience working with them. Um, but from a, from a, from a general youth, um, Position. It's really tough. Um, like I said, wish in itself. Um, there's so many youth of different issues, different backgrounds, um, youth in organizations or corporate world they facing their own issues, um, that they'd like to see changes in. Um, and that STEM some in various aspects. And then you have, you know, the unemployed youth, who's struggling with finding work, um, just to get an opportunity.

Um, and I don't have the answer for it. I wish I did. Um, it's such a complex issue with, I mean, the not highlighting, you know, the labels unemployment. [00:40:00] Um, and

all I can really say is that, you know, we at least trying to develop that inclusiveness, um, in the way we build forward instead of just using.

Going things. I'm going to study business as usual BAU. Um, and I think it's important that this moment now this moment, do we in this lockdown , this pandemic, it's almost like a pause. Um, Where we can really start reflecting on everything and how things are being done and having conversations like this, and actually start making that changes moving forward and implementing those changes.

Kentse: Alana and Chad, thank you so much. I know that the questions were challenging, but thank you for engaging with them and grappling with them in earnest. Um, and as I said earlier, they are no, no easy answers.

Kentse: As you'll discover through this podcast series, we enjoy sharing real on the ground success stories and our [00:41:00] goodness segment today, we'll be chatting with some inspiring young people from an on the ground youth organization from fragrant here in Cape town.

Fergus: Hi, this is focused Turner and I work on the systems justice team at the Bertha Centre. Today, we'll meet activists and entrepreneurs from the Vrygrond Unite for Change Movement, the youth movement for social action and systems justice making waves here in Cape Town. In just four weeks Vrygrond United for change was formed as a community response to COVID-19 collaborating closely with the museum bird community action network.

Things happened fast. The group of volunteers ensured that everyone in the community had access to at least one meal a day, relatively close to home. They identified existing community kitchens, set up 10 new community kitchens and equip these kitchens with growing urban food guidance. In addition, they launched a fundraising campaign and set up food distribution systems.

They [00:42:00] were able to gather lots of resources to assist in their efforts, including sewing machines, printers, stoves, pots, and available spaces. They gathered seamstresses, social workers, business mentors, local traders, and women willing to cook. On top of that, a group of young women started at dignity drive, distributing sanitary pads and toiletries to the women in the community.

Let's find out more from Vrygrond United for Change team. Welcome. Thank you so much for being with us here today. Um, so when it comes to youth in South Africa and being a young person in 2020 during these very interesting times, um, what have you been up to, uh, specifically in Vrygrond? Uh, if you could let us know a little bit more about the vision around Vrygrond Unite for Change.

Guest: Okay. Uh, the element of what we started, it was a fully started back then the time of the pandemic, started earlier instead of [00:43:00] in March, uh, cause the forecast, it was beaming the space where you find this like, uh, be unprivileged upon certain tools that government can provide to us. Uh, we don't have like the full services that are more can help us as a community. So we've met up with the group of us. Some of us we've heard of different initiatives, like, uh, like from Amave I'll do do, there was a program called . So the invitation for that, and then the meeting of the CANS. So there was been like this process of people building, uh, CANS to work against, like the COVID-19 such a mobilization.

Fergus: Why start now?

Guest: Um, we saw the need because people, most of the people were unemployed, so it was difficult for them to provide food for their families. So we started a, something like kitchens, where we cook for the families where, uh, kids and older [00:44:00] people will come for a meal. So, which was very helpful to them because they didn't have enough to spend, like to buy groceries

Fergus: If you said, tell me, like with this idea of thinking big, because there's a lot of big thinking here about how the experiences here come Vrygrond to Muizenberg relate to the broader experience of young people in the country. Tell me, where do you think point United for change might be in a year's time?

Guest: Our forecast is to use these, um, like mobilizing groups and creating our new spaces that can, uh, pick them at the average and also grow, uh, communities from townships to villages. So we'll start with hub. We'll create like a, how element from scale of now to set up like a business hub center with also social work center and also have also entrepreneurial spaces for people to run kitchens and events companies.

Fergus: What are the lessons you've learned, what really works and getting young people involved in [00:45:00] taking action?

Guest: Yeah. What I can share like firstly, uh, you must be driven by passion, uh, of, uh, changing the space that I'm in. Secondly, from the experiences that I've had and seen from maybe a neighbor or a family member, even to myself, uh, challenges that we've passed through, they also create, uh, an end of the spark to a person that who just stand up on your own if maybe something are not happening. In fact, cause one thing I have seen like this one feeling of, um, the person accusing you, that new taking charge of learning and also using that, um, the element of saying each one, teach one or like, yeah, for me to understand things rather, you don't provide like a fish rather teach me how to fish so I can so that I can utilize my timeframe. If you you're not around, you're gone, then I can continue. Then I can share this too is also because that's what's needed now in the [00:46:00] lifetime that we live in.

Fergus: So it's changed from the inside out. Is there one other lesson that you can share from your experience? Mobilizing young people in Vrygrond and Capricorn.

Guest: Mobilizing young people was not an easy thing. What I've seen that is that, um, some of them have a low self esteem. So what we normally do, we just reach out to them so that they could come closer and see

Fergus: What our vision is for the role of young people in the creating a better South Africa, uh, during these times of crisis?

Guest: Um, my passion is more based on arts. Uh, I'm, I'm, I'm fully in love with art. And also, uh, I put out like apparel, uh, clothing concepts, cause I'm in the mission of, uh, studying the movement that presents the authentic element of being in Africa as a [00:47:00] child and also through using forms of art, using forms of music and fashion. So my direction is to run a program like that will tell a clear story of us as Africans, but through, um, like, like visuals by wearing something or like the message that we might spread, like that spirit of Ubuntu. Uh, like, like the statement is like Aluta like fighting a concept. That's small conscious. I like to share a conscious side to people and change this negativity of me I'm this I'm that. To a positive element. Like now I'm in a

direction of creating an awareness of being African it's. So very blessed to be an African and the arts and the stories and the narratives that already exist, a powerful and help to change that consciousness.

Guest: Yes. Um, my vision is that, um, is helping people. I, [00:48:00] I do like, I love helping people. Like, for example, when I'm serving people in my kitchen, I normally look at the faces. When I see the young kids, the little kids that come and pitch food from our kitchens. I see the joy they have

Fergus: Thank you so much for being here. And thank you so much for sharing your lessons and your perspectives on not just the feature of your project and no movement, but the feature of all young people in South Africa.

Kentse: It's no secret that the youth of South Africa are a powerful force of nature when empowered, supported and believed in despite the many challenges they face. South African youth also have a knack for spotting opportunities and wowing the world around them with their innovation, creativity, and perseverance.

We should be on the edge of our seats as we witness how they are going to influence the reimagining of our society. [00:49:00] Post COVID-19. Thank you for tuning in to, 'Just for a Change powered by the Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship, the podcast where we offer new perspectives on social innovation and social justice.

If you're curious about solving social issues in your community and believe we can make a positive, tangible difference in the world. Then make sure you subscribe so that you don't miss any of our upcoming episodes. Also remember to have a look at the show notes, if you're interested in finding out more about the Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship.