

YOUTH SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS IN MAKHANDA



The Transforming Education for Sustainable Futures (TESF) initiative commissioned the research report **"Youth Sustainable Livelihoods in Makhanda"** to explore the socio-economic challenges and opportunities faced by young people in Makhanda, South Africa.

Makhanda, a town marked by historical inequalities and economic stagnation, presents a microcosm of the broader challenges confronting youth across the country. The report aims to provide actionable insights into how education, skills development, and socio-economic policies can be reformed to foster sustainable livelihoods for the youth.

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- Examine the socio-economic conditions affecting youth livelihoods in Makhanda.
- Identify systemic barriers to employment and sustainable livelihoods.
- Assess the effectiveness of existing interventions aimed at improving youth employment prospects.
- Recommend strategies to enhance education, skills development, and entrepreneurship to support sustainable youth livelihoods.

The full report is available [here](#) via the TLT website.

Overview of Key Findings

The report offers several recommendations to improve youth livelihoods in Makhanda:

1. Socio-Economic Context:

- Makhanda is characterised by a youth unemployment rate significantly higher than the national average, with over 60% of young people unemployed.
- The town's economy is stagnant, with limited job creation opportunities, exacerbated by the legacy of apartheid, which has entrenched cycles of poverty.
- Many households rely on social grants as a primary source of income, with youth often supporting extended families, making the need for sustainable employment critical.

2. Educational Attainment and Skills Development:

- While school enrolment rates are relatively high, the quality of education does not align with market demands. Approximately 50% of youths who complete high school do not possess the skills required for available jobs.
- There is a significant skills mismatch, with a focus on theoretical knowledge rather than practical, market-relevant skills. This has led to a situation where even educated youth struggle to find employment.

3. Barriers to Employment:

- Systemic barriers such as inadequate infrastructure, limited access to markets, and lack of social networks severely limit employment opportunities.
- Discrimination based on gender and social class further exacerbates the challenges, particularly for women and marginalised groups, who face additional hurdles in accessing job opportunities.
- The informal sector, while providing some employment, is unstable and offers limited prospects for sustainable livelihoods.

4. Existing Interventions:

- Various initiatives, including government programmes, NGO interventions, and private sector efforts, aim to support youth livelihoods. However, these efforts are often fragmented and lack a cohesive strategy.
- The report highlights the need for more integrated and scalable interventions that can address the complex and interrelated challenges faced by youth in Makhanda.

Financial Mechanisms and Resilience

The financial resilience of After School Programmes (ASPs) and other youth support initiatives is critical to their sustainability. The report identifies several key financial mechanisms that can enhance resilience:

1. Diversified Funding Sources:

- ASPs must develop a diversified funding base, drawing from government grants, private donations, and partnerships with businesses and NGOs. Diversification reduces reliance on any single source of income, which can protect programmes from financial instability.

2. Strong Financial Governance:

- Implementing robust financial governance practices is essential for maintaining the trust of funders and stakeholders. This includes transparent financial reporting, regular audits, and clear financial accountability, which collectively enhance the credibility and sustainability of youth initiatives.

3. Capacity Building for Financial Management:

- Strengthening the financial management capabilities of ASP leaders and staff is crucial. Training in budgeting, financial planning, and fundraising equips ASPs to better manage their resources, anticipate financial challenges, and respond proactively, ensuring their long-term viability.



Recommendations

The report offers several recommendations to improve youth livelihoods in Makhanda:

1. Enhanced Education and Training

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- Revise the educational curriculum to include vocational training, life skills, and entrepreneurship education, ensuring alignment with local economic opportunities.

3. Strengthening Networks and Social Capital

- Facilitate stronger connections between youth and established businesses, community leaders, and other stakeholders to create opportunities for mentorship, internships, and employment.

2. Support for Entrepreneurship

- Increase financial and mentorship support for young entrepreneurs, focusing on businesses that are sustainable and relevant to the local context.

4. Policy Advocacy

- Advocate for policy changes that create an enabling environment for youth employment, including improved infrastructure, supportive regulations, and inclusive economic policies.

Conclusion

The "Youth Sustainable Livelihoods in Makhanda" report highlights the severe challenges facing the youth in this region and opportunities for change. By addressing the education and skills mismatch, supporting entrepreneurship, and ensuring the financial resilience of youth programmes, stakeholders can make significant strides in creating sustainable livelihoods for the next generation. The recommendations provided offer a comprehensive blueprint for collaborative action among government, NGOs, the private sector, and the community to drive meaningful and lasting change.