

How the facilities management sector can help address SA's youth unemployment challenges

By [Vianca McMillan](#)

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South Africa is currently experiencing one of the highest rates of unemployment since its first democratic government was voted into power in 1994. Statistics from the Department of Labour estimate that over 34% of South Africans who are eligible for employment are jobless, and most of the unemployed are the youth.



Source: www.pixabay.com

This has put enormous pressure on provisions such as the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) and other temporary measures to bring relief to job seekers.

Among the barriers to entry in the workplace could be a lack of economic growth and an education system that does not focus on enabling young people to be entrepreneurial.

Low barrier of entry into facilities management

Facilities management is one of the areas that has a relatively low barrier of entry. It is a big sector, and it is continuously growing, therefore creating jobs on an ongoing basis. According to the South African Facilities Management Association, the facilities management sector is worth over an estimated R40bn. Servest currently employs over 25,000 people across South Africa, and this is just one company.

The cleaning sector is one of the early and soft skills sub-sectors that has high employment opportunities.

We would like to encourage the youth in SA to manage their high expectations of an income and rapid career growth. Unfortunately, a lot of young people don't want to start at the bottom to establish a growing career. The opportunities in the facilities management sector are endless if the youth are willing to start at the bottom. Thereafter, they can craft their own careers with a number of growth opportunities available.



Unemployment rises to 35.3%

29 Mar 2022



Big focus on new business growth

Every job seeker must realise and understand that every contract concluded represents job creation opportunities. There is a big focus on new business growth, especially after the past two years of the Covid-19 pandemic and every one of these opportunities will translate into employment opportunities.

There are a number of entrepreneurial opportunities available within the facilities management sector of which the youth can take advantage. For example, there are a number of tender requirements these days for enterprise development (ED) and supplier development (SD), utilising local resources. This presents an opportunity for the creation of SMMEs and opportunities to partner with organisations in an effort to grow small businesses.

Servest encourages entrepreneurship as a means of curbing unemployment through initiatives such as the Lesipho Trust. The programme focuses on supplier and enterprise development.

Shift to ad hoc cleaning work

In the past two years, since the spread of Covid-19, the cleaning and hygiene sub-sector has seen a shift from contractual agreements due to companies' offices no longer being fully utilised, to ad hoc cleaning work such as routine sanitisation requests.

As a result, growth has been flat, with ad hoc work replacing the contractual or annual contractual work.

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, many employers are opting for people to work remotely, and this has affected Servest as hygiene services offered by companies such as us are largely dependent on people being based in an office environment. There have, therefore, been a number of terminations of longer-term contracts. However, recent announcements by the government encouraging the end of remote working are promising and we expect the service requests to increase once again.



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Collaboration key

Countering youth employment is not something we can do alone, however. Private-public partnerships and collaboration in addressing unemployment challenges will be crucial in impacting youth unemployment challenges.

Increasing skills in areas such as technology innovation will also be beneficial in impacting unemployment. The fourth industrial revolution (4IR) is approaching, and our youth are at the forefront of these changes, making them crucial change agents.

Entrepreneurial youth may discover new technologies and systems that will revolutionise ways of cleaning.

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