

Amy Foundation tackles youth unemployment through YSD Programme

Roughly 6.21 million young South Africans without jobs, leaving many feeling hopeless and discouraged by the lack of opportunities available to them to earn a living wage and fulfil their aspirations. It is this gap that the Amy Foundation, in partnership with Astron Energy, intends to fill with their Youth Skills Development (YSD) Programme which aims to upskill the youth and enable them to become economically active through employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.



Image source: [Amy Foundation/Facebook](#)

Amy Foundation managing director Kevin Chaplin says, “One of the biggest challenges confronting the Western Cape and the rest of South Africa are the millions of young South Africans who want to work but are unable to find employment. While the Western Cape has the lowest youth unemployment rate in the country, it still stands incredibly high at 29.9%.”

It is estimated that approximately half a million jobs remain vacant because of a lack of appropriate skills. Added to this is the fact that school-leaving South African youth generally have little to no experience of formal employment, thus making it extremely challenging to get their feet in the door.

Contributing to YES programme

“The YSD is a sustainable and holistic youth development programme, focusing on the attainment of soft skills, vocational skills and workplace experience, thereby giving our youth the best chance of success by becoming economically active and contributing to society. We see this initiative as one pillar of a broad and comprehensive effort to create opportunities for young people and contribute to the Youth Employment Services (YES) programme as established by President Cyril Ramaphosa,” says Jill Koopman, policy, public and government affairs manager at Astron Energy.

Chaplin adds, "We run the programme from our centre in Sybrand Park, Athlone. Here we provide practical training and experiential learning interventions in the disciplines of hospitality, beauty and wellness, and craft and design. Successful learners are ultimately linked with our development partners for placements or further training in the private sector. Many of them also go on to establish their own small businesses.

"The YSD database currently tracks the progress of 637 learners who have completed the programme, exceeding our target and reaching 79.1% having placed learners in full-time or part-time employment, internships or started their own small businesses. Importantly, 63.7% of our learners are female, and we are noticing a growing trend of eager young women coming through our programme. The foundation hosted 372 practical and soft skills workshops in 2018, with the overall attendance in excess of 4,300 young people."

The plans are to expand the YSD programme to positively impact the lives of more unemployed youth. The target is to grow the number of learners to 900 by the end of 2019, with a placement target of 78%.

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