

YID-Textiles Programme to empower business-minded youth in SA townships

Non-profit organisation Technoserve has introduced a Youth Ideas Development (YID) Textiles Programme, aimed at empowering township-based youth and helping to revive South Africa's textiles sector.



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"The YID-Textiles Programme will provide youth around Gauteng, Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal townships with certified textiles training, entrepreneurship training and seed capital or experiential learning opportunities in relevant fashion and textiles companies for selected finalists," explains Tumelo Dichabe, business advisor at Technoserve.

The 12-month youth development initiative will empower 60 business-minded township youth from Mabopane (Gauteng), Umlazi (KwaZulu-Natal), and Gugulethu (Western Cape) with knowledge and skills in the fashion and the textiles sector.

Technoserve operates in 29 countries, where it harnesses the power of the private sector to help poor people get out of poverty.

"The programme targets specific areas for the simple reason that we can leverage existing networks that we have created, which makes things easier for us when the time comes for us to make placements for experiential learning (internships)," says Dichabe.



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Foreign dominance

Dichabe says SETA reports on scarce skills indicate that there is a dire shortage in the textile sector, which has contributed to the sector's stagnation and decline. "South Africa's textiles industry can be a big employer, but we need to be deliberate in our strategy to grow the sector. We need a proper strategy if we are going to be leaders in this sector," says Dichabe.

He adds that South Africans are very fashion conscious, but the value that could be realised locally is being lost because much of the textile creations are made in other countries like China.

“The technical aspect of the textile business is where we are lacking the most. Overseas companies bring materials already processed in the country, we are not making our fabric. Our local fashion designers need the cutting and pattern making skills within easy reach.”



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Dichabe says because there are so few companies doing this work, the prices tend to be inflated. "Consequently, our industry cannot compete with overseas players in the sector. South Africa needs to own the pattern and fabric making part of the value chain," says Dichabe.

He says there are plenty of opportunities in the domestic and the export market. "There is a big demand for products made in South Africa. We are simply letting the opportunities slip away. We also need a legislative framework that supports the industry to avoid foreign dominance of our textile industry."

The application form to be part of the YID-Textiles Programme [can be found here](#).

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