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IkamvaYouth:
Building youth resilience in Atlantis, South Africa

Purpose

This case study describes the work of IkamvaYouth, a **peer-to-peer academic support programme** for high school students in Atlantis, a town within the City of Cape Town Metropolitan Municipality in the Western Cape, South Africa (SA).

The programme **builds resilience among youth**, helping them to tap into local and other employment opportunities.

The case study discusses:

- the **employment challenges** for young people in Atlantis and South Africa;

- the establishment of the **Atlantis Special Economic Zone (ASEZ) for green technologies**, and its job creation and poverty reduction potential;

- the importance of programmes such as IkamvaYouth in the **development of education and skills in order to build resilience to unemployment**; and

- the **importance of partnerships and networks** to support local livelihoods and employment, and promote cohesive, engaged and resilient communities who are able to survive, adapt and thrive in the face of change.

It is written for:

- cities and regions focused on **local skills development**; and

- funders and other organisations that could **support and replicate such programmes.**

KEY INSIGHTS

IkamvaYouth builds resilience among youth by:

✓ Empowering individuals through education and training support;

✓ Building confidence and networks through peer-to-peer support; and

✓ Providing a broader network of support for youth across their community.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

✓ Community buy-in and effective partnerships are needed to build resilience; and

✓ Flexibility and adaptability is necessary to address local and unique challenges.

Cape Town aspires to be a resilient city and is working in partnership with 100 Resilient Cities (100RC), pioneered by the Rockefeller Foundation. Cape Town is developing a roadmap to enable the city to become more resilient to growing physical, social and economic challenges. This case study is part of a series highlighting how Cape Town is building resilience.

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Background

The link between education and unemployment

Unemployment is a key issue across SA with **27.5%** of the national potential workforce being unemployed[1].

Education is a critical foundation for employment, given that the less educated are more likely to be unemployed.

Of those unemployed in 2018:

- 2% were graduates
- 35% had a matric qualification
- >50% had less than a matric[2] qualification

This is challenging in the current context. SA youth face many obstacles that perpetuate disadvantage. Poor school results and low awareness of post-school opportunities make them vulnerable in the labour market and lead to high numbers of unemployed youth. The current national youth unemployment rate is 39%, over 10% above the national average, and almost one in three are not employed or part of the education and training system.

Atlantis

These challenges are highlighted when looking at Atlantis, situated approximately 40 km north of the Cape Town central business district. The 2011 census indicated an **unemployment rate of 26.6% and only 32% of residents 20 years or older had completed high school (matric) or a form of higher education**.
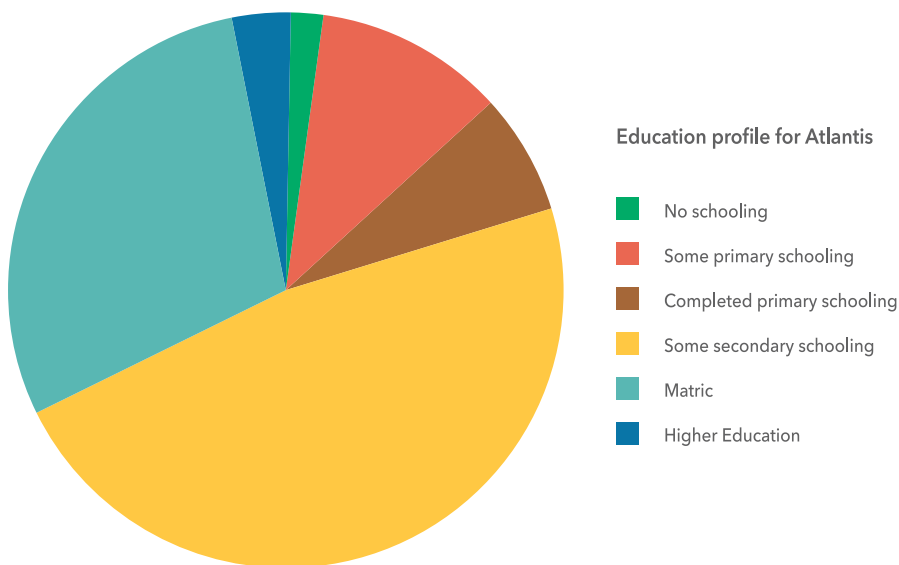
The Atlantis Special Economic Zone (ASEZ), a **greentech manufacturing hub** officially designated in June 2018, is expected to provide a major boost to efforts to **regenerate the area** and will prioritise the Atlantis community in terms of **employment** and **SMME opportunities**. However, this requires a **proactive focus on skills development, especially for the youth**.

What is resilience?

Resilience is the "capacity of individuals, communities, institutions, businesses and systems within a city to survive, adapt and grow no matter what kind of chronic stresses and acute shocks they experience." (100 Resilient Cities, 2019)

Resilience is thought to be one of the most important skills to possess in a country with a high level of unemployment (Bruin 2018).

Education profile for Atlantis

- No schooling
- Some primary schooling
- Completed primary schooling
- Some secondary schooling
- Matric
- Higher Education

[1] Taken from StatsSA Quarterly Labour Force Survey for Quarter 3, 2018
[2] In South Africa, matriculation (or matric) is a term commonly used to refer to the final year of high school and the qualification received on graduating from high school.

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Solution

IkamvaYouth, as part of a broader skills development drive, works to address these challenges through education and skills development at a high school level.

The rest of this case study will focus these resilience building efforts.

What is IkamvaYouth?

IkamvaYouth is a non-profit organisation, enabling disadvantaged youth to pull themselves, and each other, out of poverty through education.

It equips Grade 8-12 learners from under-resourced schools and communities with the knowledge, skills, networks and resources to **access tertiary education and/or employment opportunities** once they matriculate, and actively builds partnerships to allow more and more learners to access post-school opportunities.

This programme is unique as it:

— **does not only target learners with high academic potential**; it enrols students on a first-come-first-serve basis; and

— students are **retained when they maintain a minimum attendance record of 75%** which demonstrates their commitment and diligence.

Each of IkamvaYouth's programmes has the following components:

— **Supplementary tutoring and homework sessions** to help learners improve their grades;

— **Career guidance** to broaden learners' awareness of post-school opportunities;

— **Mentoring** to ensure that learners change their mind-set and access opportunities; and

— **Computer literacy and access** to equip learners with essential ICT skills and information.

How does ImkamvaYouth build youth resilience?

These components help to build youth resilience in 3 ways:

1. Empowering individuals through **education and training support**;

"Being on the ground and working in community development is an eye-opening and character building exercise. One really begins to awaken to the multiple realities of the people in the community.

You recognise the potential of the people and the community, you see and feel the willingness, but you also recognise the hurdles that need to be jumped over before we get to that ideal place we are working towards.

More than the funds, resources and expertise, you really need time and patience to see the fruits of programmes such as IkamvaYouth."

Yanga Totyi, IkamvaYouth Atlantis Branch Coordinator

IkamvaYouth provides free after-school programmes and is currently operating 16 branches in townships across five South African provinces.

To find out more, go to **www.ikamvayouth.org**

Stakeholders who form relationships with IkamvaYouth and branch staff are:

— Parents/guardians

— Teachers

— Principals

— Tutors

— Mentors

— Community leaders

— Organisational partners and donors, including greentech-related experts such as GreenCape

— Education institutions

— Government departments

— IkamvaYouth alumni

2. Building confidence and networks through **peer-to-peer support**; and

3. Providing a broader network of **community support** for youth.

1. Education and training support

The **focus on education is important** as it is tied together with employment. Education and training is ultimately a **long term strategy** to make the workforce more employable and raise the level of labour productivity.

IkamvaYouth stretches beyond assisting learners to achieve a matric pass and focuses on **increasing eligibility for tertiary education**, which ultimately increases their opportunity for all kind of placement opportunities, including learnerships and jobs.

It also includes a **career guidance** aspect, to assist learners to make the connection between academic achievement and accessing opportunities for post-school study, financial aid, leadership and work – a particular interest in terms of developing a skills pipeline for the ASEZ.

As part of this, IkamvaYouth, assisted by GreenCape and several other organisations, run holiday programmes to **expose and broaden learners' awareness of career options**.

They also run a **mentoring programme**, for Grade 12 learners, to encourage and assist them to apply to post-school opportunities.

2. Peer-to-peer support

IkamvaYouth supports a **peer-to-peer learning model**. This **builds individual and peer resilience though building motivation, self-confidence, independence and agency**, all of which can contribute to coping strategies within their community environment.

3. Community support

Although IkamvaYouth has a great academic track record and is often simplified as an academic programme, it **provides a platform for important relationships and interactions to take shape** (see page 4).

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This has ultimately developed **broad partnerships** that drive collaboration and improve youth resilience. Specifically, the development of an integrated community of stakeholders to support the students is considered vital to the programme's success, both in the short and longer term.

— At an early stage, this community of stakeholders assist to **shift perceptions of what's possible** and **understand what will be required** for their youth to access tertiary education and/or employment, and how to support them to achieve success.

— Long-term, this network can play a critical role in **equipping youth to find employment**. It can include locating opportunities for employment through information sharing, and a support mechanism for coping, alleviating isolation and enforcing a reluctance to accept joblessness.

How the IkamvaYouth Atlantis was established

With the support from GreenCape, IkamvaYouth opened its doors to Atlantis Grade 10 and 11 learners in July 2016. The programme was hosted at Proteus Technical High School but also received students from two other Atlantis feeder schools: Atlantis Secondary School and Robinvale High School.

A great deal of community engagement was done in the lead up to and during the branch opening and there was a warm reception from school staff, learners and parents who were excited by the additional academic support that an afterschool programme could provide.

In **2017**, the programme ran **over 100 tutoring sessions** and **included its first Grade 12** matric cohort, comprising of the programme's 2016 Grade 11 cohort who had met all programme requirements.

A total of **31 mentors** were recruited to provide individual support, act as role models and guide these learners through their final year of secondary school. These learners had six face-to-face sessions with mentors.

"The IkamvaYouth methodology puts the onus and responsibilities onto the learners. This is forcing them to behave like adults and take control and responsibility for the choices, and direction of their lives. This sort of individual empowerment is rare in the South African cultural context. The ability to take individual agency from a young age will empower these learners to take responsibility to succeed later in life. I think Ikamva is designed as an educational intervention, but has far reaching ripples into the social and societal development."

Mike Mulcahy, CEO, GreenCape

Impact in 2017

National impact

IkamvaYouth recorded impressive results in 2017 for its cohort of Grade 12 students across their branches in SA:

- **85%** of students passed matric and obtained 149 distinctions in total.

- **80%** of students are in some form of placement, including upgrading and writing supplementary exams to improve their results.

- **60%** of students specifically accessed post-school placements (tertiary education, vocational training, learnerships and employment), an 82% increase from the 2016 cohort.

- **73%** of these students were eligible for tertiary studies and 60% of these eligible students have accessed tertiary education – almost double the number of students placed just two years ago in 2015.

This was particularly impressive as 2017 had a record number of Grade 12 students (472 in total) enrolled at their branches, a **66%** increase from 2016.

Furthermore, this included the results from **4 new branches** with Grade 12 students enrolled, one of which was in Atlantis.

Impact in Atlantis

The 2017 results for Atlantis, the first year IkamvaYouth students wrote their matric exams, are also impressive and are shown below.

Most of the Grade 12 students enrolled in the programme passed matric (94%), with the majority eligible for tertiary education opportunities (74%).

Within this 2017 cohort, the **vast majority of students (74%) accessed placements of some kind**: 53% chose to enter into vocational training and/or improve their results in 2018 through upgrading and supplementary exams, 15% were placed in learnerships or employment, and 6% chose to pursue tertiary education.

"Our youth have to accept the responsibility of breaking the cycle of poverty in their families. This can only be done by utilising opportunities when they present themselves."

Mr V Murray, Robinvale High School Principal
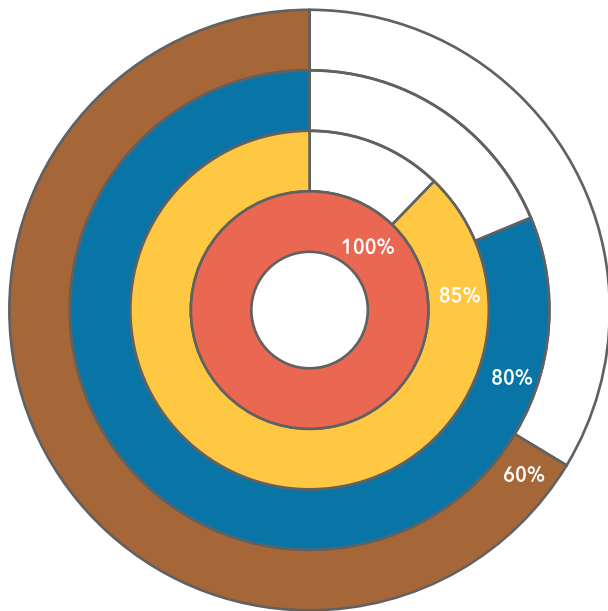
National learners participating in the IkamvaYouth Programme 2017

- Grade 12 (Matric)
- Matric pass
- Access to placements
- Post-school placements
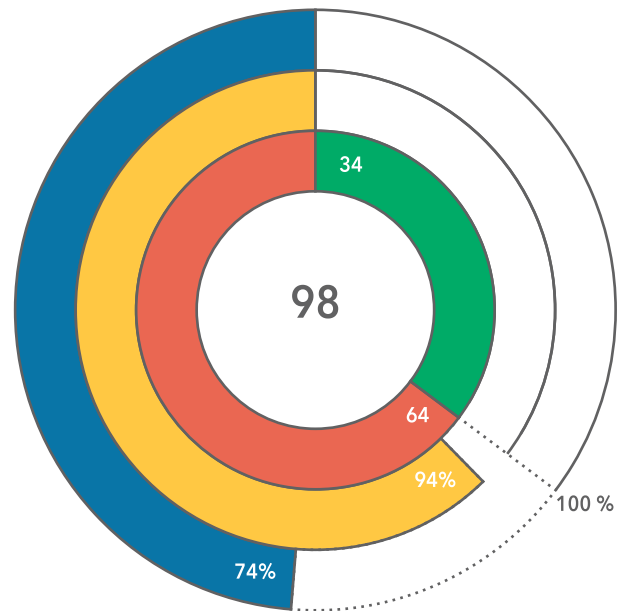
Learners participating in the Atlantis IkamvaYouth Programme 2017

- Grade 8 - 11
- Grade 12 (Matric)
- Matric Pass
- Access to placements

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	ATLANTIS BRANCH FEEDER SCHOOLS MATRIC PASS RATES (%)			
	2014	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**
ATLANTIS HIGH SCHOOL	75	82	82	71
PROTEUS TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL	62	77	72	71
ROBINVALE HIGH SCHOOL	88	91	90	87
IKAMVA YOUTH ATLANTIS	-	-	-	94
IKAMVA YOUTH NATIONAL	84	80	85	85

Lessons learned

There are several lessons other communities can learn from IkamvaYouth's work in Atlantis:

1. Effective partnerships build resilience

IkamvaYouth has demonstrated that partnerships can provide a foundation to empower youth, and assist them to empower one another through peer-to-peer support.

This is particularly important in terms of building resilience, as current experiences can shape future attitudes toward work and the types of strategies developed to overcome challenges.

2. Community buy-in is critical

Programmes such as IkamvaYouth are critical to ensure the local community are given the opportunity to develop the education and skills required to secure job opportunities within the ASEZ and beyond. However, **the effectiveness of IkamvaYouth and other initiatives in Atlantis will only be felt if the whole community bands together** to address the broader societal issues in the area.

3. Accept that there will be unique challenges based on the local context

There are several challenges to consider when replicating similar programmes. These specifically include challenges related to **learner retention** and **infrastructure**, which are strongly linked to other societal issues, such as **community safety.**

(a) Learner retention

The diagram on page 7 shows the factors that affecting learner retention in the programme.

As indicated, providing a safe environment for learning was the important factor for both learner and tutor retention.

In addition, the availability of tutors with relevant skillsets was also important for learner motivation and retention – specifically for the technical and dual language medium school (English and Afrikaans).

Retaining and recruiting a wider base of tutors was difficult due to the:

— **safety risks** caused by gang violence;

— **distances and time taken** for tutors to travel and volunteer at the Atlantis branch; and

— relatively high **travel costs** for tutors; and

All of the above have resulted in a low learner motivation to attend sessions and a high kick out rate for the programme in Atlantis.

Despite various efforts to attract more tutors to regularly attend the branch, tutor numbers have remained relatively low and the **programme is reliant on a small group of committed tutors to support the learners and staff**.

(b) Infrastructure

Computer literacy is much needed among Atlantis students. IkamvaYouth reported that **many of their enrolled students are not computer literate and struggle to access information online**. However, it was a struggle to run sessions on a regular basis and deliver the set curriculum as:

— The lab is not always available due to conflicting schedules.

— Technicians were unable to resolve issues related to poor internet connectivity at the schools.

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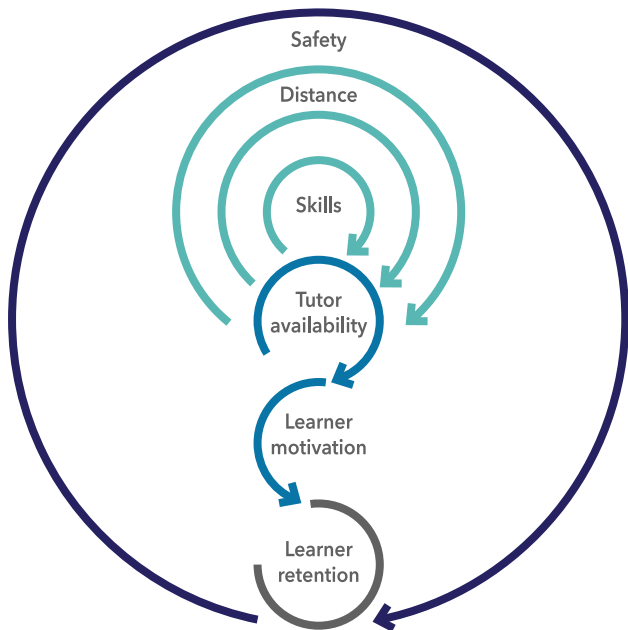Robust city

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3. Adapt and evolve

The programme engaged with various stakeholders to reflect on the challenges faced in 2017 and discuss how it could be adjusted to better meet the community's needs.

It was agreed that **the traditional IkamvaYouth tutoring model was challenging to implement in the Atlantis context** and that, in order to attract and retain learners, it is **essential to adjust the programme**.

These suggestions included:

1. Alternative tutoring strategies, specifically using an online platform to address distances from urban areas and tertiary institutions.

2. A shift from regular weekly tutoring sessions to a longer session on Saturdays to attract larger tutor numbers (tutor numbers are particularly low during the week).

3. Use the student sessions during the week to focus on literacy and career guidance.

4. Lower the intake of learners for 2018 to increase the tutor-to-learner ratios and improve the quality of the tutoring sessions

"I believe that organizations that are involved with youth development are a crucial need in Atlantis.

We must really focus on helping develop the youth into the leaders of tomorrow and it is essential for them to develop skills as early as possible. I think that should be more organizations that help the youth."

Leeroy Maans, IkamvaYouth Alumni

Developments in 2018

Although the online tutor platform was a good tool to reach a wider network of potential tutors, it was not as successful as hoped and tutor availability remained low. This, coupled with the positive outcomes associated with the lower tutor-to-learner ratios in 2018 (IkamvaYouth report that learners are more motivated and committed), suggest that **face-to-face interaction is an important component of the IkamvaYouth programme. Gang violence, amongst other community challenges, continued to impact tutor availability and learner retention in 2018.**

Despite these challenges, the Atlantis branch enrolled a total of 14 matric learners for 2018 and achieved a matric pass rate of **64%**, with **50%** of their learners receiving passes eligible for tertiary education.

The programme is making further changes in 2019 to reduce the impact of gang violence and other community challenges, and creating more opportunities for face-to-face interaction between tutors and learners. This includes hosting the programme at Robinvale High School, one of the feeder schools that participate in the Atlantis programme.

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