

Corporate Citizenship Newsletter

Second edition 2025
Turning Purpose into Progress



Your story matters





Editor's note

Reflecting on the journey, celebrating progress and embracing purpose

As we draw close into the final quarter of 2025, the story of **Absa Corporate Citizenship** continues to unfold – one community, one programme and one story at a time.

Following the 2025 first edition earlier this year, our goal was simple: to create a space that connects every colleague to Absa's purpose in action – a space where our values, achievements and shared humanity come to life. Since then, what began as a communication platform has grown into something far more meaningful: a chronicle of collective impact across our markers.

This has been a year of **momentum, collaboration and deepened purpose**. Across our markets, we've seen new partnerships take root, innovative programmes expand their reach and measurable change unfold in real time. From the streets of Lusaka to the wetlands of Seychelles, from lecture halls in Johannesburg to digital hubs in Nairobi, the evidence is clear: **our Force for Good is alive, visible and growing stronger by the day**.

Our **2025–2027 Corporate Citizenship Ambition** has moved from strategy to action. We've advanced our **Financial Inclusion Through Entrepreneurship (FITE)** strategy; strengthened **education, employability and entrepreneurship programmes** through the **Absa CSI Trust**; and expanded our reach through initiatives like **ReadyToWork, financial literacy and women entrepreneurship**. We've aligned our purpose to the pulse of the continent and fostered inclusion, sustainability and shared prosperity in every story we touch.

This second edition brings that journey to life through voices of progress and partnership. You'll find stories of transformation, including a chemistry student breaking barriers through Gradesmatch, tech pioneers emerging from WeThinkCode and colleagues dedicating their time and talent to communities during Mandela Month. You'll see how Absa is influencing systems through thought leadership, policy

advocacy and shared value initiatives that blend business success with social impact.

What stands out most is how **our people** are at the heart of every milestone. Whether volunteering, mentoring, designing solutions or simply showing up for others, our colleagues are turning purpose into tangible change. Together, we've shown that purpose and performance are not opposing forces, but powerful allies.

As we look ahead to 2026, our focus shifts to embedding what we've built and ensuring that our strategies mature into sustained systems of empowerment. We'll continue to measure what matters, scale what works and celebrate every story of progress.

Because in the end, our legacy will not be measured only in numbers, but in **lives transformed, confidence restored and hope renewed**.

Thank you to every colleague who has played a part in this remarkable year of growth. Your actions – big and small – are shaping Africa's tomorrow, today.

Together, we're **turning purpose into progress, and progress into legacy**.

“Across our markets, our **Force for Good** is alive, visible and growing stronger by the day.”

Strategic highlights

Our 2025–2027 Ambition in motion

The first three quarters of 2025 marked a pivotal step forward in delivering our **three-year Corporate Citizenship Ambition**, a roadmap that continues to integrate measurable impact, social value creation and colleague engagement across all Absa markets.

With the FITE Strategy as our anchor, we have sharpened execution, scaled proven models and expanded collaboration across functions and markets. These efforts continue to demonstrate how our purpose is being turned into progress – one partnership, one programme and one person at a time.

“From strategy to execution, our progress reflects the shared belief that **sustainable growth** is achieved when **inclusion, innovation and integrity** move together.”

Key themes of progress:



Stronger integration of the FITE Strategy: Financial inclusion through entrepreneurship education remains at the centre of how we build inclusive economies because it links business growth, skills development and youth empowerment.



Deeper collaboration across functions: Across CIB, Personal and Private Banking (PPB) and Business Banking (BB), our teams are increasingly embedding social outcomes into business activities to drive shared value through partnership-led delivery.



Programme innovation: Both ReadyToWork and the Absa Fellowship underwent strategic refreshes to enhance competitiveness and alignment with future skills needs, including digital fluency, systems thinking and entrepreneurial leadership.

Expanded financial literacy impact: Citizenship programmes have expanded to serve small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) and thus empower entrepreneurs to make stronger financial decisions, enhance business resilience and manage risk effectively.

Robust measurement culture: Our measurement philosophy and Balanced Scorecard continue to guide evidence-based decision-making, transparency in reporting and continuous improvement across all impact areas.

Corporate Citizenship 2025 quarter 3 progress update

As we conclude our 2025 delivery and medium term 2027 targets, the past half has reflected strong alignment, measurable progress and continued momentum across all strategic focus areas.

As we advance towards our 2025 delivery and medium-term 2027 targets, the third quarter of 2025 has reflected strong alignment, measurable progress and continued momentum across all strategic focus areas.

Our strategic ambition

Absa's Corporate Citizenship FITE Strategy seeks to positively impact one million lives by 2030, to enable sustainable, inclusive growth across Africa.

Our delivery is anchored on three strategic levers:

1. **Accelerating execution** of the Pan-African Corporate Citizenship Strategy
2. **Scaling flagship entrepreneurship education programmes** across Absa Regions
3. **Institutionalise the Integrated Corporate Citizenship Scorecard** to measure, articulate and elevate Absa's story of impact across applied measurement, policy influence and thought leadership.

Progress highlights:

- **Administrative excellence:** Initiated the 2025 Absa Group Integrated Reporting Suite, which reinforced governance, transparency and citizenship accountability.
- **B-BBEE Scorecard:** R140.8 million (82%) disbursed to date, and achieved 5.6 points towards the eight-point full-year target (R172 million).
- **Pan-African Citizenship Strategy deployment:** Sustained uniform delivery across ARO markets through expanded entrepreneurship education programmes. Efforts focused on improving spend efficiency and activating 2026 plans for scale and deeper market integration.
- **Financial literacy and inclusion:** Over 177 000 individuals reached through financial education programmes across Absa Group markets, advancing financial capability and economic resilience.
- **Education, employability and entrepreneurship:** Accelerated delivery through youth-focused initiatives, including YAEI, Visa She's Next, JASA, Allan & Gill Gray Makers and Universities South Africa (USAf) Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education, to collectively reach over 4 000 young people.
- **Colleague volunteering and social impact response:** Over 11 900 colleagues engaged in Force for Good initiatives across markets. Preparations are underway for the inaugural Colleague Volunteering Awards, which will celebrate peer-led community impact.
- **Absa CSI Trust Programme:** Building on the 2025 impact study and AGM Report, the CSI Trust's delivery under the E³ nexus (education, employability and entrepreneurship) now reaches approximately 5 850 beneficiaries through four active programmes.
- **Shared value creation:** Citizenship programmes have yielded tangible business and social outcomes, including more than 15 000 programme-linked transactions expanding financial inclusion.
- **Thought leadership:** Continued to elevate Absa's influence in shaping Africa's social and economic development agenda.
 - **CSI Trust Impact Report** published, with insights and lessons featured in the weekly Newsflash.
 - **Absa Spaza Shop Expo** hosted under the theme "Unlocking Sustainable Growth of Township Economies", showcasing township entrepreneurs and driving discourse on inclusive banking models.
 - **Absa Future Fuelled Youth Festival, Ghana**, provided a Pan-African platform for young entrepreneurs to connect, learn and access funding opportunities.
 - **Women Creating Wealth Entrepreneurship Summit**, co-hosted with the Graça Machel Trust under the theme "Breaking Barriers, Building Wealth", advanced the dialogue on women's economic empowerment and access to markets.
 - **Launched the Absa Seychelles Men's Forum**, which promotes colleague wellbeing, leadership and gender inclusion.
 - **Thought leadership advertorials** featured in the 2025 *Triologue Business in Society Handbook* and *Financial Mail CSI: Human Face of Business*, expanding Absa's external influence and visibility.

Corporate Citizenship in the news

Amplifying Absa's story of impact.

Our work continues to attract attention across media platforms, affirming that Absa's citizenship narrative resonates far beyond our offices.

Absa Fellowship Programme on *Expresso Morning Show*

In an inspiring feature that aired on 8 September, Dr Reaan Immelman, Head of Education and Financial Literacy, shared insights into the Absa Fellowship's transformative journey with the *Expresso Morning Show* (available on YouTube). He was joined by **Bonke Msibi**, one of our fellows. The segment explored how the programme is breaking barriers of access and nurturing a generation of socially conscious leaders.

Dr Immelman highlighted that:

"The Fellowship is more than funding. It's a leadership accelerator equipping young South Africans with courage, character and competence."

Bongi's testimony added depth to that vision and illustrated how mentorship and wellness support have empowered her to succeed against all odds.



Mandela Day 2025: A nation united in service

Absa once again played a leading role in honouring the legacy of Nelson Mandela. Partnering with **Rise Against Hunger Africa**, our colleagues helped pack over 71 000 meals for vulnerable children, contributing to a nationwide total of 650 000 meals.

Group CEO **Kenny Fihla** led the charge, reinforcing Absa's belief that corporate leadership must extend beyond the boardroom:

"Being a Force for Good means standing shoulder to shoulder with our communities, not just on Mandela Day, but every day."

Over **250 employees** participated in the initiative, supported by our **Colleague Volunteering Programme**, which continues to grow through matched funding and volunteering leave.

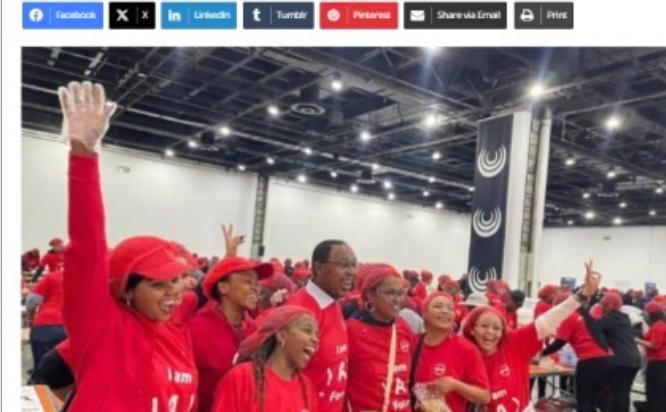
SANDTON CHRONICLE

Corporate South Africa unites to pack 650 000 meals on Mandela Day

Major South African corporates, including ABSA, Standard Bank, and Nedbank, joined Rise Against Hunger Africa at the Sandton Convention Centre on July 18 to pack 650 000 meals for children in Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres nationwide.

July 18, 2025 X 2 minutes read

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Absa colleagues at the Mandela Day food packing drive. 71 000 meals packed. Countless hearts inspired.

Visa and Absa announce winners of She's Next South Africa 2025

The programme by Visa, in partnership with Absa, is aimed at empowering women entrepreneurs across Africa. Held at The Forum in Hyde Park on 23 September, the event brought together finalists from across South Africa who showcased their businesses and shared their visions for impactful growth.

Visa And Absa Announce Winners Of She's Next South Africa 2025

BY STAFF WRITER | 2025-09-26 NO COMMENTS 4 MIN READ

DON'T MISS

She's Next

Meet the 2025 winners

Congratulations to Our Winners! **Christine Masaiti** Grandstage Trading

Congratulations to Our Winners! **Zimkhitha Dube** Uuka Bricks

Congratulations to Our Winners! **Telburga Molotsi** Stitches Uniform

For more details, see [Visa and Absa announce winners of She's Next South Africa 2025](#) and [She's Next: Empowering women entrepreneurs \(Visa\)](#)

Corporate Citizenship in the news continued

Absa's G20 Task Force and working groups

Absa's influence on the global stage continues to grow, with **Corporate Citizenship colleagues appointed to the G20** Engagement Groups focusing on Inclusive Economy, Empowerment of Women, Employment and Education. We see this as a recognition of our expertise and commitment to shaping inclusive and sustainable economic growth. The appointments reaffirm Absa's dedication to contributing meaningfully to international dialogue on development and equity, while advancing our strategic pillars in alignment with the G20's mission of promoting strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth.

Our colleagues will contribute their specialised insights as follows:

- Nonhlanhla Magagula, Head: Corporate Citizenship Youth Employability, and Dr Reaan Immelman, Head: Education Delivery, will be part of the **Employment and Education Working Group**.
- Mpho Nhlabathi, Head: Citizenship Strategy and Partnership, will join the **Empowerment of Women Working Group**.

Through these roles, Absa continues to champion Africa's voice in shaping global solutions that drive opportunity, equity and resilience.

For more information, see [What's stopping women entrepreneurs from reaching their full potential?](#)

Absa Bank Kenya staff join hands in nationwide mentorship and climate action initiative

Absa Bank Kenya made headlines in Citizen Digital for its inspiring, staff-driven initiative combining mentorship with climate action. Led by **Charles Wokabi**, Head: Sustainability and Corporate Affairs, the two-day campaign, titled "Be the Difference Day", mobilised employees across the country to make a tangible impact in their communities.

The initiative reached **over 150 secondary schools and colleges nationwide**, where colleagues engaged learners through mentorship sessions focused on career guidance, life skills and environmental awareness, while simultaneously planting trees to promote climate resilience.

Spearheaded under the **Absa Kenya Foundation**, Be the Difference Day reflects Absa's integrated approach to sustainability in its blending of human development with environmental stewardship.

For more details, see [Absa Bank Kenya staff join hands in nationwide mentorship, climate action initiative](#).

Corporate Citizenship in the news continued

Business and Financial Times spotlights Absa's Water for Life project in Ghana

Absa Bank Ghana's Water for Life initiative was recently featured in the Business and Financial Times, highlighting its transformative impact in providing clean, accessible water to underserved communities across the country.

Sitting under the **social impact response pillar** of Absa's Force for Good agenda, the project is a practical response to one of Ghana's most pressing needs: access to safe, reliable water. Each installation is guided by community need, meaning a clinic in coastal Accra and a rural settlement outside Sunyani can both benefit from the same inclusive plan.

As of **August 2025**, Water for Life has delivered **21 boreholes** across **11 regions**, directly impacting an estimated **37 000 people**. The ripple effects go beyond access: **children are arriving at school on time, businesses are opening earlier and families are reclaiming hours once spent fetching water**.



For more details, see the Business and Financial Times article: [Absa Water for Life project: Impacting communities with accessible water](#)

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Corporate Citizenship in the news continued

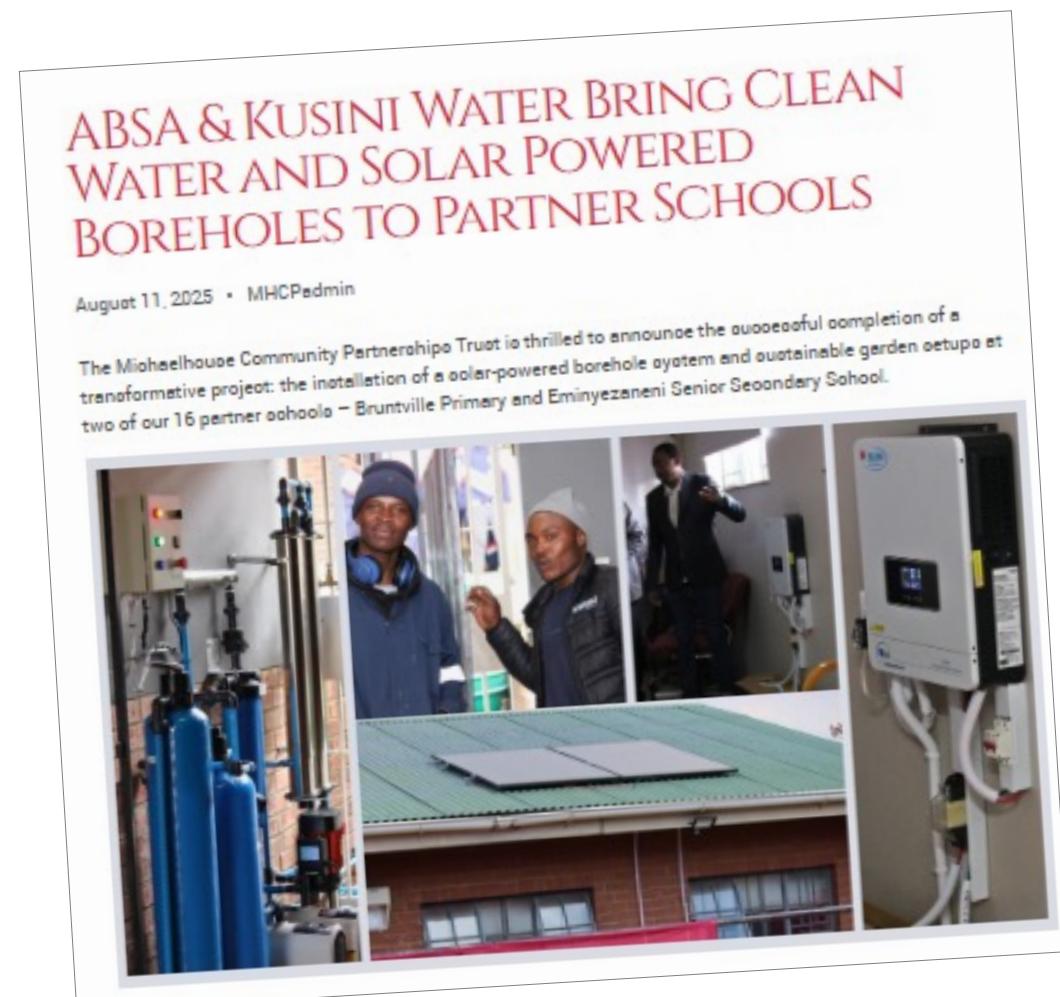
Absa X Kusini Water deliver clean water and food gardens to KwaZulu-Natal schools

In August 2025, Absa partnered with Kusini Water and the Michaelhouse Community Partnership Trust to provide solar-powered boreholes and sustainable food gardens to two KwaZulu-Natal schools: Bruntville Primary and Eminyezaneni Senior Secondary.

Each school received a borehole with irrigation, 12 garden planters, 1 000 vegetable seedlings, compost and tools with which to create self-sustaining food sources and reliable water access.

At the joyful handover ceremonies, learners, educators and partners celebrated a partnership rooted in dignity, sustainability and community upliftment.

The initiative goes beyond clean water by also reducing operational costs, improving learner nutrition and building climate resilience across the school communities.



For more details, see [Absa and Kusini Water bring clean water and solar powered boreholes to partner schools](#)

Absa x Nelson Mandela Legacy Ride4Hope: Turning purpose into pedals for progress

Absa once again proudly partnered with the **Nelson Mandela Legacy Ride4Hope** to use sport as a platform for social impact. The 2025 four-day ride began at the Mandela Capture Site in Howick and ended in Soweto, with 10 Absa Colleagues strapping up to join over **100 cyclists** participating nationwide.

Absa hosted the **Day 2 leg from Ladysmith to Newcastle**, which coincided with the handover of **three new classrooms** at Thembisizwe Primary School as part of the #Classrooms4Hope initiative. The classrooms now serve **120 learners**, complemented by a donation of **150 pairs of school shoes** through Intercity Express.

This partnership showcases the power of collaboration among sport, business and communities to create lasting opportunities for learning, dignity and inclusion.



Spotlight on ARO markets

Local innovation, continental impact.

Across our African footprint, colleagues continue to demonstrate that Absa's purpose of empowering Africa's tomorrow, together ... one story at a time is not just a slogan, but a lived reality. From entrepreneurial ecosystems in Zambia to environmental action in Seychelles, our ARO markets are translating strategy into impact.

Zambia: Women in Business masterclasses

Women entrepreneurs in Zambia are charting bold new paths, thanks to Absa Zambia's Women in Business Masterclass Series. Designed to provide mentorship, financial literacy and leadership skills, the series tackles the everyday challenges faced by women-led enterprises and helps them unlock growth opportunities.

Facilitated by industry leaders and Absa experts, the masterclasses explored topics such as building strong business foundations, accessing finance, navigating digital commerce and balancing leadership with resilience.

"These sessions gave me confidence to expand my small business and improve my record keeping," said one participant from Lusaka.

Through the series, Absa Zambia continues to champion gender inclusion and entrepreneurship, and thus empowering women to thrive, compete and contribute meaningfully to economic growth.



"When women lead, communities rise.
Absa Zambia is investing in that rise."

Uganda: Empowering students at the 2025 Career Expo

In partnership with the **National Social Security Fund (NSSF), Absa Uganda** co-hosted the 2025 NSSF Career Expo, a nationwide initiative that equips university students with critical employability and financial skills.

Under the theme "Financial Literacy: Smart Money Moves", the expo toured 10 universities across the country, reaching thousands of students with practical workshops and interactive panels.

Since its inception, the expo has empowered **over 300 000 students**, and this year's collaboration with Absa expanded its reach and relevance through expert-led sessions on:

- Budgeting and personal finance
- Entrepreneurship readiness
- Career and interview skills
- Managing credit and savings.

"The expo bridges the gap between academia and employment," said an Absa Uganda facilitator. "We're helping young people enter the workforce with both confidence and competence."

Students also gained access to job opportunities and internships from Absa and other NSSF partners. Our involvement reinforced our commitment to enabling work-ready, financially literate youth across Africa.



Spotlight on ARO markets continued

Seychelles: Championing wetland conservation at Petit Barbarons

Absa Seychelles continues to lead environmental stewardship through its long-term commitment to **wetland conservation**. On 9 August 2025, the bank partnered with the Department of Climate Change and Energy and Nature Seychelles to commemorate the International Day for the Conservation of Mangroves.

Held at the Petit Barbarons wetland, a site adopted by Absa under a memorandum of agreement with the Ministry of Agriculture, Climate Change and Environment, the event brought together 50 participants, including Absa colleagues, local youth and conservationists.

Activities included:

- **GPS mapping and monitoring** of mangrove zones
- **Species identification** training
- **Propagation and planting** of 200 mangrove seedlings.

This was Absa Seychelles' fifth conservation initiative at the site since 2023, reinforcing our commitment to long-term climate action and biodiversity protection.

“Sustainability begins with stewardship,” said a volunteer. “We are preserving these ecosystems for generations to come.”



Absa Seychelles: Protecting wetlands today to sustain life tomorrow.

Absa CSI Trust

Empowering the youth, one opportunity at a time

Bold vision, real progress, tangible change

Since its inception in September 2023, the **Absa CSI Trust** has continued to make measurable strides in driving systemic change for South Africa's youth by building bridges from learning to earning and empowering tomorrow's leaders through education, employability and entrepreneurship.

Core mission: To drive broad-based economic empowerment for black South Africans, especially the youth.



Big goals, bold moves

Launched as part of Absa Group's landmark B-BBEE transaction, the CSI Trust's goal is clear: **to empower 300 000 young South Africans by 2030** through access to education, skills and income-generating opportunities.

2025–2027 progress update

- **Investment deployed:** Approximately R70 million committed
- **Beneficiaries reached:** More than 5 800 young people.



Absa CSI Trust continued

Empowering the youth, one opportunity at a time

A smarter, bolder, more inclusive 2025 strategy

Effective 1 March 2025, the CSI Trust adopted a sharpened strategy grounded in **innovation, evidence and inclusion**. Anchored on four pillars – **education, employability, entrepreneurship and ecosystem strengthening** – the strategy empowers South African youths with specialised skills for high-growth sectors, creates pathways to employment, fosters innovation and enterprise and builds resilient institutions that drive inclusive, sustainable economic participation.

Delivery is focused on three priority growth sectors: the **digital economy** (future-fit tech talent), the **green economy** (sustainable jobs) and the **informal economy** (thriving township and rural enterprises).

The trust's programme portfolio is intentionally designed to create a **continuum of empowerment**, that is, to support young people in their transition from **learning to earning**, and ultimately to **enterprise creation**. In 2025–2026, delivery is advancing across the following impact pathways:

- **Enhancing skills and improving education outcomes** through initiatives such as Gradesmatch and Feenix, which provide academically capable but financially constrained students with **bursary funding, mentorship and leadership development opportunities** to ensure that talent, not circumstance, determines access to higher education.
- **Increasing youth employment and employability** through partnerships with organisations such as WeThinkCode and Youth Employment Service (YES), to equip young people with **market-relevant digital and technical skills** and creating **pathways to workplace-based learning and employment** in high-demand growth sectors.

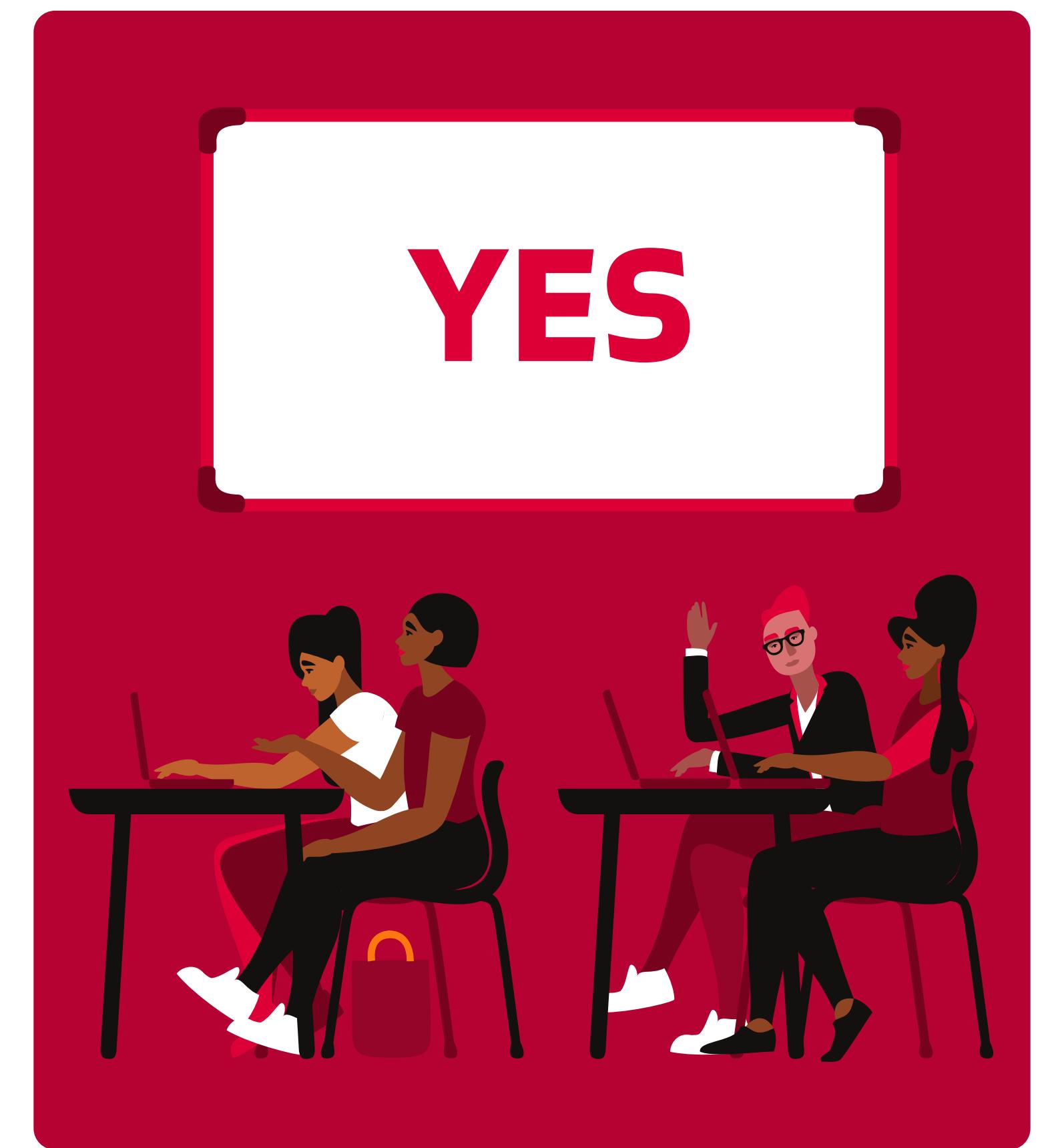
This strategy is aligned with **South Africa's National Development Plan**, the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals**, and the **African Union's Agenda 2063**, ensuring that every investment contributes to shared, systemic progress and long-term inclusion.

Partnering for impact

Among the year's defining collaborations is the trust's partnership with **Feenix** to address historic student debt. The trust is unlocking degrees for approximately **350 graduates** from historically disadvantaged institutions such as the University of Venda, University of Limpopo and Mangosuthu University of Technology.

“This is not a blank cheque, but instead a **focused intervention** to unlock certificates and futures, **one graduate** at a time.”

Another significant milestone is the approval of YES, which offers year-long paid work placements for young people in high-impact sectors. The initiative blends professional experience, digital learning and psychosocial support to enhance employability and drive systems-level change in youth employment.



Absa CSI Trust continued

Real stories, real impact

Behind every data point lies a human story



Anele Ngcobo is currently studying towards a BSc Honours in Chemistry and credits the Gradesmatch programme for helping him thrive academically and socially.

"The programme empowers students to know how to act in a social and professional space. It helped me cope psychologically, maintain my focus and not neglect my social life." Anele has gained digital literacy skills, soft skills and financial literacy skills, and now feels more optimistic about his future – including about further study and entrepreneurship.



Matsatsi Mabala's story is one of transformation. With only a high school education, she once doubted her dreams of working in IT.

But WeThinkCode changed everything. "I envied people in IT and engineering but always had low self-esteem. WeThinkCode paved a way for me that would've been impossible elsewhere." Now she's building projects, engaging with industry experts and thriving in the tech world with confidence and ambition.

Driving transparency through measurement

The CSI Trust's inaugural **Impact Report (2024/2025)** marks a new era of evidence and accountability in its capturing of lessons and results to guide future programmes.

Key highlights include:

- 95% found skills relevant to their career goals.
- 75% reported significant personal growth.
- 71 students were placed in jobs, and 62 started businesses.
- 95% were satisfied with the programme overall.

Read the report here: [CSI Trust Impact Report](#)

The CSI Trust **Measurement Framework**, which was finalised in 2025, enabled this report by providing a structured system for assessing performance, learning from implementation and demonstrating results with credibility.

Youth economic empowerment is driven by addressing systemic barriers to access and inclusion; providing opportunities and resources for growth; focusing on high-growth sectors such as digital, green and informal economies; and strengthening enabling ecosystems that support youth success.



Programme deep dives

Innovation, impact and inclusion in motion

Universities South Africa: Entrepreneurial transformation

Together with **Universities South Africa**, Absa is redefining what higher education can mean for youth empowerment. Through the **Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE)** programme, universities are being transformed into engines of innovation and enterprise.

The **EDHE–Absa partnership**, launched at **Mangosuthu University of Technology** in June 2025, is the cornerstone of this transformation. It provides financial support, mentorship and innovation challenges that drive youth entrepreneurship at scale.

Programme highlights

- Student entrepreneurship development:** Supported students in starting and scaling businesses.
- Curriculum innovation:** Introduced entrepreneurship modules in teacher training and science, engineering, technology and mathematics programmes.
- Capacity building:** Trained over 150 university staff as entrepreneurship champions.
- Direct reach:** 790 beneficiaries across all 26 public universities.

The **EDHE–Absa Innovation Challenge** has become a launchpad for studentpreneurs. It equips winners with seed funding, business mentorship and access to networks.

"This partnership is transforming the DNA of higher education," said a Universities South Africa representative. **"We are building a generation that sees entrepreneurship as both an opportunity and a responsibility."**

EDHE impact metrics:



ReadyToWork

Unlocking youth potential across Africa

Absa's flagship employability programme, **ReadyToWork**, continues to empower young Africans to transition successfully from learning to earning. By end of quarter 3, the initiative had reached **over 71 000 young people** across the Group.

Key achievements

- **Top-performing modules:** Financial, Entrepreneurial, Workplace, and People Skills (average mark: 86%).
- **Advanced learning:** High completion rates (over 95%) for modules on the gig economy, creative problem solving and computational thinking.
- **Localisation:** Content delivery in partnership with non-governmental organisations such as Young Investors Network, Humana People to People, USAID and Hope Worldwide for improved access in low-connectivity regions.

Social media campaigns amplified the impact. Ghana's 2025 webinar series reached **6.2 million viewers**, while Uganda engaged **29 000 young people** via X Spaces.

"ReadyToWork gives young people more than employability. It gives them belief," shared a Botswana volunteer trainer.

"In spaces ranging from classrooms to communities, ReadyToWork is shaping a generation ready to lead."

Access more information on the [ReadyToWork e-learning platform](#) or [Absa Digital Hub](#)



ReadyToWork continued

Unlocking youth potential across Africa

Absa Fellowship Programme: Building leaders for Africa's future

Launched in 2021, the **Absa Fellowship Programme** continues to be a flagship of inclusive leadership and academic excellence. Its mission: to develop future-fit, values-driven African leaders through holistic education and leadership development.

By the numbers

- Fellows enrolled from **26 public universities** across South Africa.
- 62% female representation**, ensuring gender equity in leadership development.
- 240 students** supported since the programme's inception in 2021.
- 85% academic throughput rate**, reflecting exceptional performance and persistence.
- 53 graduates to date** (30 completed three-year degrees and 23 completed four-year degrees).
- More than 23 fellows pursuing advanced degrees**, while others are successfully employed or self-employed.

The Fellowship's **Winter Bootcamp 2025**, held in July, provided a transformative experience focused on systems thinking, peer-led mentoring and leadership identity.

"The Bootcamp pushed me out of my comfort zone and sharpened my sense of future impact," shared fellow **Likhona Pango** ([LinkedIn](#)). The **2026 Fellowship applications opened in September**, inviting first-year undergraduates from all 26 public universities to join the next cohort. The programme continues to combine **financial support, leadership training and community engagement** to create a pipeline of purpose-led professionals shaping Africa's future.

Link: [Absa Fellowship Programme](#)



Absa x Allan & Gill Gray Philanthropy Entrepreneurship Intercollege National Finals 2025

Youth entrepreneurship is becoming much more than a buzzword. In a country with persistently high unemployment and poverty rates, entrepreneurship could be the solution to both job and wealth creation. In September, The Absa x Allan & Gill Gray Philanthropy Entrepreneurship Intercollege National Finals drew together some of the country's brightest technical and vocational education and training (TVET) college students at the Birchwood hotel in Johannesburg.



The initiative, a collaborative effort between Absa and the Allan & Gill Gray Philanthropies, seeks to champion entrepreneurship among TVET students by encouraging them to adopt an entrepreneurial mindset through a series of on-campus engagements, regional competitions and intensive bootcamps.

Outstanding young innovators from South Africa's TVET colleges were honoured for ventures tackling real community challenges, from sustainable construction and herbal health products to tech and farming solutions. Winners included Luyanda Nkosi, Annalie Thando Matsana, Thabiso Malatji, Lerato Tladi, Siphokuhle Mcotshana, Rashaad Sambaba and Mmalefa Thibela, who each demonstrated the power of entrepreneurship to drive local impact and inclusive growth.

"Youth entrepreneurship is now a leading development priority that blends education, skills and mentorship to fuel Africa's next generation of innovators."

Colleague volunteering and community relief efforts

From small acts to big change

Colleague volunteering remains the heartbeat of Absa's citizenship story – where purpose meets people power. Across Africa, our colleagues continue to embody what it means to be a Force for Good that translates compassion into measurable community impact.

Mandela Month and Youth Day recap: Acts of service and solidarity

Between July and September 2025, Absa colleagues across Africa embodied the spirit of #OneStoryAtATime and demonstrated how collective action drives extraordinary outcomes.

In South Africa

Over 350 colleagues took part in Mandela Month activities, including:

- **Food-packing drives** in partnership with Rise Against Hunger (88 000 meals packed)
- **Homebuilding projects** in Orange Farm with Habitat for Humanity
- **The Mandela Remembrance Walk and Run**, which celebrates resilience and unity.

Social media engagement soared as colleagues shared photos showcasing Absa's red shirts across cities and provinces under the banner "67 Minutes that Last a Lifetime".

Leadership in action

Executives modelled purpose-led leadership by hosting mentoring sessions with Absa fellows, where they shared career advice and insights into ethical leadership.

"Purpose-driven leadership starts from the top and grows through example," noted one participant.

Across Africa

ARO markets added their own unique stories of impact:

- In Uganda, 500 colleagues participated in the 7 Hills Run, raising UGX 400 million to support **girls' education and menstrual health**.
- In Zambia, Kenya and Uganda, thousands of trees were planted through **collaborative climate initiatives**.

- In Tanzania, **mobile prenatal clinics** reached 3 800 women in remote areas.
- In Botswana, Absa contributed BWP 1 million toward **flood disaster relief**.
- In Kenya, Corporate Credit teams supported a **rehabilitation centre** aiding community reintegration.

Altogether, **11 900 colleagues** volunteered in 2025 (6 623 in South Africa and 2 561 across ARO), reaching **225 179 beneficiaries**.

"When colleagues show up for their communities, Absa's purpose comes alive."

Volunteer impact 2025:



Thought leadership and advocacy

Shaping ideas, influencing systems, driving change

Absa continues to shape the conversation on inclusive growth, entrepreneurship and sustainability across Africa through strategic convenings, publications and partnerships.

Corporate Citizenship Dialogue: From reflection to action

Building on the momentum of the inaugural Citizenship Conference (held in February 2025), the dialogue series brought together policymakers, academics and youth leaders to discuss how Africa can move from **talk to tangible transformation**.

Building on the conference momentum, the **Citizenship Dialogue** on 19 February brought together academics, policymakers and ecosystem builders. Discussions centred on moving from talk to tangible transformation.

Key takeaways:

- Policy reform:** Advocating for startup acts across African markets to simplify entrepreneurship ecosystems.
- Ecosystem support:** Scaling mentorship and local business hubs for youth-led innovation.
- Funding access:** Leveraging African Continental Free Trade Area opportunities to expand markets for entrepreneurs.

“We must move from **parallel efforts** to **collective impact**, where collaboration becomes **culture**.”

Absa at the Trialogue Business in Society Conference 2025

In May, at the Trialogue Conference, Absa led a flagship session titled **“From Policy to Practice: Enabling Thriving Youth Entrepreneurship”**, which was **rated the highest-impact discussions** of the event.

Dr Steven Zwane, Managing Executive for Corporate Citizenship, reinforced Absa’s thought leadership stance:

“Business in society is no longer about maximising shareholder value. It’s about creating shared value by empowering communities.”

This message resonated strongly across audiences, positioning Absa as a thought leader in **youth entrepreneurship, inclusion and shared value creation**.



Absa at the Women Creating Wealth Summit 2025

In partnership with the Graça Machel Trust, Absa co-hosted the Women Creating Wealth Entrepreneurship Summit under the theme “**Breaking Barriers, Building Wealth**”.

Speakers included Sanah Gumeche (Managing Executive: Strategy and Customer Value) and Kgalaleto Tlhoaele (Executive: Sectors – Enterprise Development), who highlighted Absa’s efforts to unlock access to capital and markets for women-led businesses.

“This was more than an event; it was a **movement**. When women **prosper**, societies **thrive**.”



Thought leadership and advocacy continued

Shaping ideas, influencing systems, driving change

Absa Spaza Shop Expo: Unlocking township economies

In **May 2025**, Corporate Citizenship hosted the **first Absa Spaza Shop Expo** under the theme “Unlocking Sustainable Growth of Township Economies.”

The event brought together **over 100 spaza shop owners** from six Gauteng regions and served as the culmination of Absa’s **New Venture Creation Level 2** training for 45 entrepreneurs, a key contribution to the **Group Township Economy Steering Committee**.

The day featured a powerful **keynote by Rita Zwane**, author of Conquering Poverty of the Mind, founder of Busy Corner in Tembisa and Forbes Businesswoman of the Year 2025 – herself once a spaza operator.

Highlights included:

- A **panel discussion** with township business owners on the challenges and opportunities of operating in local economies, and how banks can enable growth.
- A **fireside chat** with the Department of Small Business Development (DSBD) and the Small Enterprise Development and Finance Agency (SEFA) on the R500 million Spaza Shop Fund.
- A **Relationship Banking showcase** themed “Absa as the Bank of the Entrepreneur”, which illustrated Absa’s holistic product offering for township businesses.
- Selected businesses have since graduated from the programme and are now being channelled towards further support available to growing businesses within the Absa ecosystem.

“The township economy is not informal. It’s **dynamic, diverse and deserving of investment.**”



Thought leadership and advocacy continued

Shaping ideas, influencing systems, driving change

Absa at the G20 Financial Inclusion and Women Empowerment Conference

The Department of Women, Youth and People with Disabilities hosted over **600 delegates** from government, the private sector and civil society to tackle systemic barriers excluding women from financial services and explore opportunities to unlock wealth in sectors where women are active.

Key highlights:

- Contributions from the **United Nations, African Union, Department of Small Business Development, SEFA, DBSA** and academia on women's financial inclusion.
- Discussions centred on **entrepreneurship, gender equity and inclusive financial ecosystems**.
- G20 Women Empowerment Working Group member **Mpho Nhlabathi** featured in a **panel with Visa** on partnerships and ecosystem leverage for women's financial inclusion.
- Showcased:
 - She Thrives** offering
 - Gender Bond** with African Development Bank
 - Visa She's Next** partnership.

As the **only bank in attendance**, Absa reinforced its position as the "bank of the entrepreneur", one that delivers on its ambition to be an **active Force for Good** through its Corporate Citizenship Strategy: **financial inclusion through entrepreneurship focused on women and the youth**.

“Financial inclusion is not just access but also **empowerment**. Together, we unlock opportunities for **women to thrive**.”



Thought leadership and advocacy continued

Shaping ideas, influencing systems, driving change

The Absa Future Fuelled Youth Festival: Igniting entrepreneurial energy in Ghana

The **Absa Future Fuelled Youth Festival**, held in Ghana, created a vibrant platform **where young entrepreneurs could connect, learn and grow**.

The event reinforced Absa's commitment to empowering young people to start today, succeed tomorrow, and proudly say, "I grew it."

Featuring **youth-led exhibitions, masterclasses on business fundamentals and funding linkages**, the festival celebrated innovation and ambition among Ghana's next generation of changemakers.



Absa Seychelles Men's Forum: Building connection, confidence and leadership

Absa Seychelles launched the **Men's Forum**, an internal initiative designed to support the personal and professional development of male colleagues, who currently represent just **26% of the workforce**.

Centred on **wellness, leadership and connection**, the forum provides a safe space for open dialogue and shared experiences, encouraging authenticity, reflection and growth.

By nurturing inclusive engagement and holistic wellbeing, the initiative reinforces Absa's commitment to cultivating a workplace where every voice is heard, valued and empowered.

“Real strength lies in openness – in men leading with **empathy, purpose and courage**.”



Thought leadership and advocacy continued

Shaping ideas, influencing systems, driving change

New report alert

Youth Entrepreneurship Dialogue: From talk to action

In February 2025, Absa and the Allan Gray Centre for Africa Entrepreneurship convened over **170 delegates** at the **Youth Entrepreneurship Dialogue**.

The event placed youth voices at the centre of discussions on support, funding and policy reform.

A recently released report on the conference insights and takeaways highlighted the need for **youth-centred coaching over traditional mentorship, community-based entrepreneurial hubs and hackathon-style policymaking** to shape inclusive legislation such as the Startup Act.

“Entrepreneurship is not just about business ideas but also about **building ecosystems** that give young people the **skills, networks** and **opportunities** to succeed.”

The event in numbers:



171
delegates



Seven
youth entrepreneurs showcased



R18 840
in sales



60%
of participants committed to entrepreneurial action after the event



New study alert

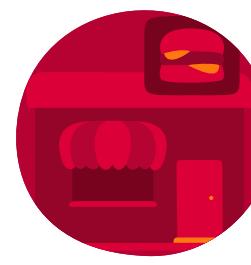
Through our work with Dr Phumlani Nkонтвана of Allan Gray Centre for Africa Entrepreneurship at Stellenbosch University, the Absa x YAEI Youth Entrepreneurship Skills Programme (YESP) was recently evaluated through a pre- and post-competency analysis. Results showed significant gains in entrepreneurial experience, business preparation, opportunity assessment, resourcefulness and the drive to achieve.

These findings demonstrate YESP's effectiveness in building practical business readiness, while highlighting the need for long-term interventions to strengthen deeper traits such as self-efficacy, resilience and financial literacy.

Key insight

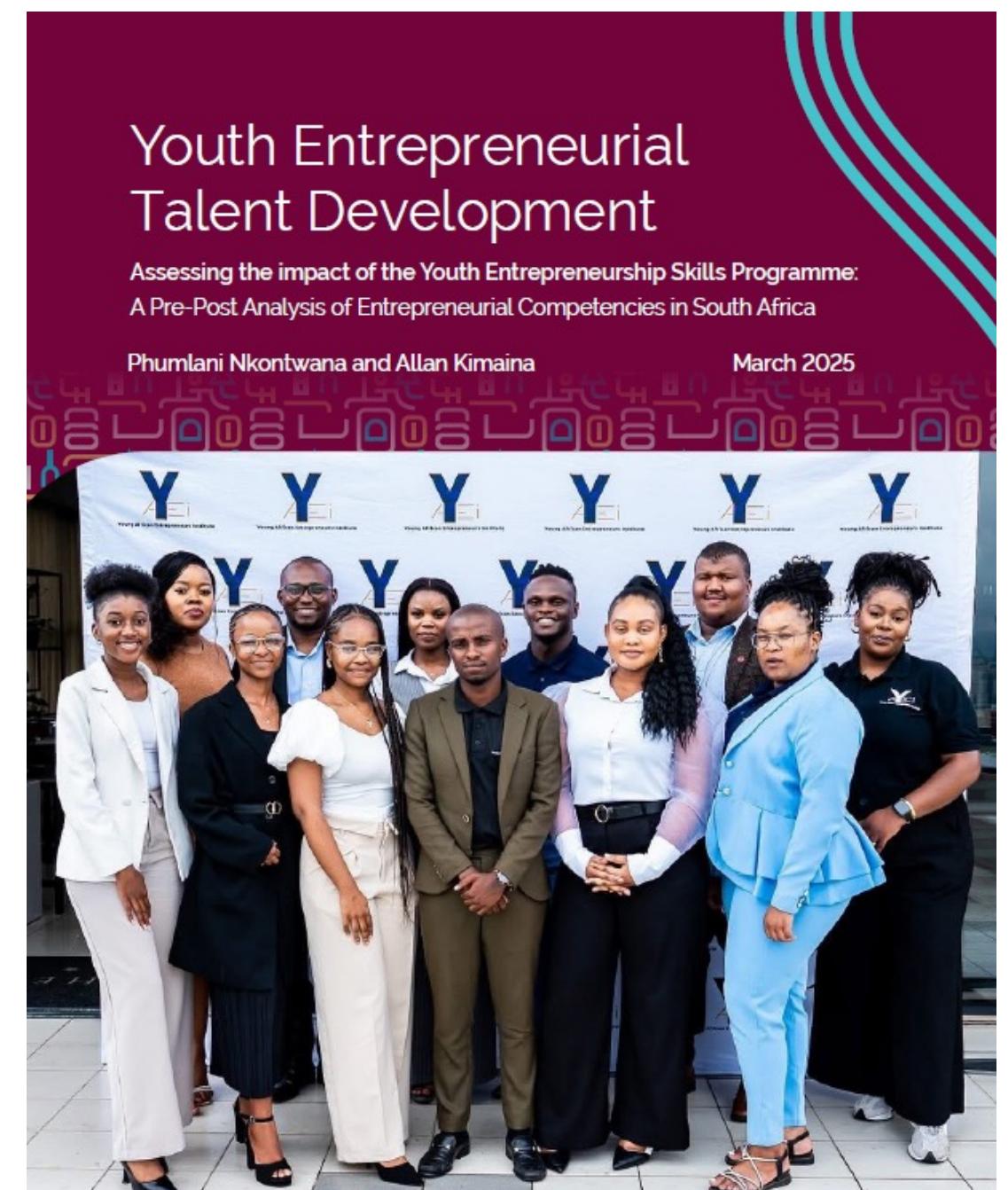


+9%
improvement in entrepreneurial experience



64%
of participants already own a business, and YESP helps them scale more smartly

“Participants gained substantial hands-on entrepreneurial experience, a key driver of skill acquisition



Shared value in action

When purpose meets performance

At Absa, **financial inclusion through entrepreneurship (FITE)** is both a social strategy and a shared value proposition that connects purpose to business performance. Across the Group, our business units are embedding citizenship principles into their client partnerships, colleague volunteering and community programmes.

Corporate and Investment Banking: Turning citizenship into business impact

The **Corporate and Investment Banking (CIB) Citizenship and Everyday Banking teams** are leading the charge by aligning business development with social impact to demonstrate how commercial and community outcomes can reinforce one another.

Partnering with LGSETA: Empowering the youth for global opportunities

In collaboration with the Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority (**LGSETA**), Absa supported **500 South African young people** preparing for a skills exchange programme in China.

Colleagues from the Sandton office assembled 500 hygiene packs to ensure that participants were travel-ready, while the **GS External Sales team opened 426 new accounts**, expanding financial inclusion and supporting long-term relationships.

"This is more than a send-off. It's an investment in future talent, with Absa at their side from day one."

(Read the full article at absa.africa)



BUILT 4 BIZ: Empowering learners through entrepreneurship

Through **BUILT 4 BIZ**, CIB colleagues partnered with **Kwena Molapo Secondary School** to mentor **30 grade 11 learners**, blending entrepreneurship with personal development. Students learned to create business plans, manage finances and pitch ideas, while also building emotional intelligence and resilience.

"It's about building belief before business," shared a CIB facilitator. "Confidence and courage are the real foundations of employability."

The initiative has become a template for how **skills-based volunteering** can be integrated into Absa's school partnerships to enable meaningful youth engagement.



Shared value in action

When purpose meets performance

Personal and Private Banking: From financial literacy to financial access

Personal and Private Banking (PPB) colleagues extended FITE into the field through **financial literacy masterclasses at YAEI Youth Entrepreneurship Tours**, where they helped young entrepreneurs build the knowledge and confidence to manage their finances and open business accounts.

Together, these efforts demonstrate how Absa's business units are advancing inclusion, unlocking opportunity and deepening relationships across ecosystems.



Visa She's Next: Empowering women entrepreneurs

In partnership with **Visa**, Absa proudly co-hosted the **2025 She's Next South Africa** competition, a flagship initiative empowering women-led small businesses with **funding, mentorship and visibility**.

The 2025 winners exemplify resilience and innovation:

- Christine Masaiti (Grandstage Trading)** received a R450 000 grant for her avocado-processing business.
- Zimkhita Duze (Uuka Bricks)** received R270 000 and a R100 000 Impact Award for sustainable brick production.
- Tebogo Molotsi (Stitches Uniforms)** received R150 000 to scale her manufacturing enterprise.

"This will transform my life and the community I serve," said Christine. "Thank you, Visa and Absa, for believing in women entrepreneurs."

The programme is part of Visa's global movement to foster gender equity and inclusive entrepreneurship, and aligns perfectly with **United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality** and Absa's **FITE Strategy**.



*"Through **collaboration** we are planting the **seeds of change**, driving financial **inclusion**, and **uplifting women entrepreneurs**..."*

– Punkie Modise

Functional updates

People, systems and progress

Our Corporate Citizenship team continues to evolve in structure, systems and collaboration, strengthening delivery across markets.

New faces, new energy

We're delighted to welcome new colleagues to the Absa Corporate Citizenship family:



Kelebogile Magoro
Junior Specialist:
Project Management (Employability)



Noxolo Kahlana
Senior Manager: Programme
Management (Employability)



Thabo Qoako
Senior Specialist: Applied Measurements,
Reporting and Advocacy



Dineo Seleke
Head of Communications:
ARO MCR (BW)



Carinne Houareau
Citizenship Manager:
ARO MCR (SC)

Their expertise and enthusiasm reinforce our commitment to professionalism and innovation.

“Each new voice adds to our **collective impact**,” notes Clement Motale. “Together, we’re building an ecosystem of **changemakers**.”

Recognition

We'd like to extend our heartfelt appreciation to colleagues who continue to go above and beyond in driving our mission:

- **Zintle Raziya** has been recognised among Mail & Guardian 200 Young South Africans (2025).
- **Fannie Ndovo** was selected as a One Young World 2025 delegate.
- **Antoninah Moturi** from Kenya was selected as a One Young World 2025 delegate.

Your collective excellence keeps our work credible, measurable and inspiring.



Looking ahead

Finishing the year strong and setting up 2026 for scale

As we enter the final stretch of 2025, we're sharpening our focus on a few key priorities designed to deepen, integrate and sustain impact across the Group:

- **Ramp up programme traction across ARO** and accelerate delivery to ensure consistent quality, visibility and scale of impact.
- **Finalise the 2025 Corporate Citizenship Scorecard** and consolidate Group-wide performance to spotlight progress towards our 2025–2027 Ambition.
- **Conclude 2026 strategic planning** and align strategic focus areas, budgets and delivery partnerships to position 2026 as a year of embedded systems.
- **Compile the Annual Integrated Reporting Suite** as part of the Group's broader annual integrated reporting process.

"2026 will be about embedding impact – moving from proof of concept to proof of performance."



Closing remarks

One story, one purpose, one continent

As 2025 draws to a close, we pause to celebrate how far we've come and to honour the thousands of colleagues, partners and changemakers who've made this journey possible.

Together, we've reached new milestones in inclusion, empowerment and sustainability. We've built trust with communities, elevated young voices and shown that purpose-led business is not a luxury but a necessity.

"Our legacy is not defined by the projects we run, but by the lives we transform. Every learner empowered, every colleague who volunteers, every partnership that uplifts – these are the stories that define Absa's impact."

To every colleague across Absa: **thank you** for living our purpose and for choosing to be an active Force for Good.

Let's keep moving forward, together, one story at a time.



) Thank you (