

A game plan to ignite entrepreneurship in Africa

Entrepreneurship is a key driving force behind boosting economies in Africa and after the onset of the global Covid-19 pandemic, the world saw a rise in entrepreneurship as a means to cope with these unpredicted global shifts.



Source: [Unsplash](#)

Global Entrepreneurship Week took place from 13 November - 17 November 2023 and coincided with the annual Allan Gray Orbis Foundation's Ignite Africa conference that took place over two days 16 and 17 November 2023.

"It's a Pan-African initiative, intricately aligned with Global Entrepreneurship Week. Ignite Africa is a platform dedicated to advocacy, thought leadership, and cross-sector collaboration, all aimed at advancing entrepreneurship education and development across the African continent," said Dr Nontobeko Mabizela, CEO at the Allan Gray Orbis Foundation during her opening address.

According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey, South Africa is experiencing an unemployment rate of 31,9%. By encouraging young minds to think critically, share their innovative ideas, and engage in forward-thinking, the entrepreneurial mindset will be instilled within many individuals and will create a new wave of entrepreneurship within the country.

Jonathan Ortman, founder of the Global Entrepreneurship Network (GEN) was one of the keynote speakers on Day 2 at this year's Ignite Africa conference in Sandton focused on Igniting Resilient Ecosystems under the theme of #TheSumOfUs.

Ortmans spoke about empowering the next generation of global entrepreneurs by unleashing Africa's potential. In order to democratise entrepreneurship education and to ensure inclusivity, regardless of the socio-economic status of the entrepreneurs, it will require all stakeholders to work together.

To succeed, Ortman presented a gameplan wherein he identified a few key ideas for igniting the entrepreneurship ecosystem in South Africa:

Invest in entrepreneurship education

Ortmans said that we cannot sit around and be idle when it comes to educating future entrepreneurs, we need to make a change. This change begins in our schools, with young minds. The earlier these young minds foster an entrepreneurial mindset, the better.

Entrepreneurial learning must be practical. It needs to go beyond the classroom and should allow entrepreneurs to connect with society's cultures, markets, and professional sectors.

By encouraging young people to think critically and creatively, we are enabling them with skills that they will use for the rest of their lives. They need to be encouraged to not be afraid to fail, and to look at ideas as experiments in order to find out what will work and what won't.

Encourage Inclusivity

Ortmans reiterates that "economies suffer when any individual is excluded". It does not make logical sense to exclude anyone from the conversation. That's also why the Allan Gray Orbis Foundation Africa Ignite Committee chose #TheSumOfUs as the theme for this year's event.

"Transformative ideas are lost when people lack the opportunity to commercialise them," said Ortman. Only by fostering inclusivity and focusing on underrepresented groups can we truly find a way forward.

Engage in healthier entrepreneurial ecosystems

Entrepreneurs are not waiting for permission to start creating. They rely on an environment where they can create freely without restrictions. As a society, we need to encourage organic growth and allow entrepreneurs to continue creating without a preconceived blueprint.

Ortmans reiterates how entrepreneurs need to be empowered with resources for access to markets and investments to grow.

Global connectedness plays an important part in this as it encourages the idea that connecting with other forward-thinkers allows for creative influence. Once you are influenced by your neighbours, you have access to the interface of other ecosystems in a global environment. This creates a better atmosphere, that is more empathetic and encourages failure by means of learning.

By implementing this gameplan, the entrepreneurial ecosystem will foster an inclusive environment that stimulate growth for generations to come. It is clear that South Africa is abuzz with entrepreneurial talent and by coming together to empower the South African youth, the entrepreneurial ecosystem is unlocking the real power of #TheSumOfUs.

From an Allan Gray Orbis Foundation perspective, we look forward to analysing the Global Entrepreneurship Week Report

in 2024 and showcasing some of the successes fostered by this year's Ignite Africa event. #GEW23

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