

Time for instilling self-belief and emancipating young minds

By [Sindy Peters](#)

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Nkosinathi Mahlangu is the portfolio head for youth employment at Momentum Metropolitan Foundation. Working in the development space has presented him with the opportunity to be part of the solution in bridging South Africa's socio-economic development gap.



Nkosinathi Mahlangu, portfolio head for youth employment at Momentum Metropolitan Foundation

This #YouthMonth, we chat to Mahlangu to find out more about his work at the Momentum Metropolitan Foundation, how the organisation is advancing youth empowerment in SA, and how we can address some of our most significant challenges, in particular, the current Covid-19 crisis.

■ ***Tell us a bit about yourself and your background.***

Nkosinathi Mahlangu: I'm a family-orientated father of three. I joined Momentum in 2008 as an IT desktop support technician. Working with people and my interest in communication lead to my media studies and journalism qualification, then subsequently launched my CSI career as a volunteer champion - and I have never looked back since!

■ ***Tell us more about the Momentum Metropolitan Foundation and what it does?***

Mahlangu: The Momentum Metropolitan Foundation is the vehicle through which Momentum Metropolitan Holdings executes its corporate social investment initiatives. The foundation's primary focus is on youth empowerment, specifically through facilitating youth employment via our network of NPO partners. Another important focus is on consumer financial education, essential for helping young South Africans navigate their finances and build wealth - and part of our responsibility as a financial services provider.



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■ ***What makes you most passionate about the work you do at the foundation?***

Mahlangu: I regard myself fortunate to be managing the youth employment portfolio as it enables me to play a role in the transformational development of individuals and communities through our array of programmes. This also provides me with the opportunity to learn from others while showcasing the human side of business.

■ ***What are some of the major strides the Momentum Metropolitan Foundation has made thus far in advancing youth empowerment in SA?***

Mahlangu: The strategic focus of the foundation is more than just a tick box exercise, because we see ourselves as partners instead of funders to our partner organisations. This has led to our co-creating an environment that gives young people the opportunity to pursue their life aspirations through our socio-economic development programmes. Ultimately, our goal is to enable economic activity among young people across the gender spectrum, including those with disabilities.

■ ***What are some of the most significant challenges for South Africa's youth? How do you believe we can overcome them?***

Mahlangu: Challenges faced by SA's youth are unemployment and limited access to opportunities, while not being included in crafting the solution to some of these challenges.

Covid-19 has brought with it a whole host of new obstacles, while exacerbating the current issue of unemployment. Youth will be hardest hit by the pandemic - reasons for this include the fact that young people are already overrepresented in sectors most impacted by the lockdown (hospitality and retail); are more likely to embark in 'non-standard' and less stable forms of employment; and are also at greater risk of having their salaries cut.

To be able to start to address these, we need to work at removing barriers and partnering with organisations that already have the blue print and access to youth networks which can help overcome these challenges.



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■ ***How is the Momentum Metropolitan Foundation innovating in the face of the Covid-19 crisis in SA?***

Mahlangu: This is a unique situation which has compelled many industries to "react proactively". Because young people are hardest hit, we need to expand our avenues of support for them; for example, through an increased focus on supporting and developing entrepreneurs. Our NPOs partners also face a number of new challenges, and will have to find different ways of operating and managing various risks, in order to continue their on-the-ground activities with communities. We are working closely with them to determine what this new environment could look like, and what we'll need to assist with from a resource perspective - whether it be funding, access to our networks or the skills of our staff, to support them.

▣ *How can Africa best take advantage of its youth dividend to uplift the continent?*

Mahlangu: As clichéd as it may sound, the youth are the future and the future is now. The African climate and natural resources could definitely benefit the continent and this is well-known. The youth is the catalyst we need to start trading within our respective regions and the continent at large. We need to look at creating more platforms where like-minded young Africans can share ideas and solutions for current African challenges, while we also make education and continuous learning fashionable again.

▣ *What to you is the significance of Youth Month in 2020?*

Mahlangu: Youth Month should encompass instilling self-belief and emancipating young minds. This means partnering and contracting with youth in creating an ecosystem that unlocks opportunities through real PPP (public-private partnerships).

▣ *Words you live by?*

Mahlangu: You didn't come this far, to only come this far.

ABOUT SINDY PETERS

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