



2020-2021

# ANNUAL REPORT



# CONTENTS

**CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT**

**03**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

**04**

**PROGRAMME DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

**06**

**TESTIMONIALS**

**08**

The logo features the letters 'AVA' in a large, bold, green font. Above the letters, there are three stylized human figures in dark red, with their arms raised and connected by lines, set against a background of radiating lines in red and yellow.

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## CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

MOIRA JONES

In her report last year, the outgoing Chairperson, Vuyiswa Doo introduced the news of the Covid pandemic and what AVA was doing to manage the situation vis a vis the staff and beneficiaries, through our Covid protocol.

We, as well as the rest of the world, were completely in the dark as to just how Covid, the lockdown and the corresponding economic downturn would impact all our lives and therefore the non-profit sector too. We now know that the socio-economic and psychosocial effect has been devastating on all sectors including the youth sector. According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey of the first quarter of 2021, youth unemployment was 32.6% (SAnews.gov.za). This means that a third of youth eligible for work was unemployed earlier this year. It is against this backdrop that AVA reports on the 2020/21 financial year and what this organisation has done to mitigate serious implications of rising youth unemployment.

Three programmes were implemented this year, working with 114 unemployed youth to reach 1700 beneficiaries. Over the past eight years, AVA has stepped into this gap of working with unemployed youth in a meaningful way to deliver youth who are job ready! At a time of economic slowdown, Janine Hansen and her team led by Charné Taylor, have delivered in accordance with the National Youth Policy, with good results across three programmes. In the words of Chief Director responsible for youth development in the Department of Women Children Youth and Persons with Disabilities, Dr Bernice Hlagala said:

"[The] public and private sector is not responding effectively to young people's needs. The policy (NYP) seeks to try and ensure that service providers accelerate implementation of interventions, so that young people can benefit and become contributing members of society. Many youths take far too long to transition to adulthood due to unemployment, and this is a concern." In an interview with SAnews, Hlagala says the policy has an Integrated Youth Development Strategy, developed by the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA). "The strategy is informed by five key pillars of the policy, which are quality education skills and second chance; economic transformation, entrepreneurship and job creation; mental health and promotion of physical health, and also looks at issues of pandemics; social cohesion and nation building; and effective and responsive youth development machinery."

Certainly, during these challenging times our youth need opportunities around job readiness training, psychosocial support in preparation for navigating the job market as well as skills for their own resilience and good mental health. AVA works with sector partners in delivering programmes that are focussed on the young person as a whole and not only the job readiness component. In the 2021/22 financial year, AVA will continue on its mission of empowering youth with skills for job readiness.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank our donors, fellow Board members, staff of AVA, volunteers, and beneficiaries – together all these components begin to chip at youth unemployment, one person at a time. ✨



# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

**JANINE HANSEN**

## FINDING A WAY THROUGH IT: RE-IMAGINING AND REINVENTING OUR FUTURES

During a recent training session, I asked a group of young people to define resilience. One young man replied, "finding a way through it to carry on." His definition was striking, and these words return to me as I reflect on AVA's response to 2020 - a year of uncertainty and turbulence. Beyond carrying on, we found ways to reinvent our services to be relevant and impactful. Through innovation, we ensured a continuance in the provision of support to our youth. With ever-high percentages of unemployed young people in South Africa, our services proved to be more critical than ever.

### Human Resources Re-imagined

AVA entered the national lockdown in 2020 with a lean structure of six employees. We were able to sustain salaries for staff and stipends for youth throughout the pandemic. Data and airtime were provided to ensure AVA staff could work online with youth and enhance their own professional development. Thanks to our open channels of

communication between staff members, the AVA Board and others, we were able to adjust and react as a team. Together, we moved through the challenges that the pandemic brought.

This year also highlighted the changing and ongoing needs of the organisation. As a post-pandemic world emerges and demands for AVA's services increase, we require more capacity and the upskilling of staff. We can do more to tell our success stories (marketing and communications), and we need to measure our impact more frequently and creatively. AVA has always invested in their Human Resources and this will be even more important going forward.

### Strategic Developments

The pandemic encouraged us to approach our core activities more innovatively. We have enriched our programme content with greater depth and relevance. Through our experiences of working with youth online, we understand





that providing remote training is critical - but we also know that young people miss the personal interaction and connection with each other. A hybrid model is ideal going forward, and digital literacy will become part of our training in future.

Through our partnerships, we have realised the symbiotic benefits of placing youth in NPOs. Youth placed at NPOs gain experience whilst NPOs benefit from their assistance and support. The pandemic highlighted the need to work together, smartly. Collaborations with other NPOs could further deepen, including the merging of programmes and even some operational functions. Indeed, we are keen to see the establishment of a forum or consortium for organisations working in the youth employment sector, which would allow greater pooling of resources and sharing knowledge and wisdom from experience.

To overcome this disruptive period of our history, we need to proactively unite as a sector and encourage innovation, strategic partnerships and efficiency, together.

### **Financial sustainability**

The Covid-19 pandemic impacted negatively on AVA's funding. In the past financial year, we ran into a deficit of R465,146. Although we did not lose donors, the income from them

decreased. Simultaneously, the demand for our services has more than doubled over the past year.

To save costs, we have downsized to a smaller, shared office space. We have developed a new way to price our services and, once fully developed, hybrid and online trainings could also become an income generation stream for AVA. A crowd-funding campaign will also be launched to secure additional funding.

### **Finding a way forward**

The Covid-19 pandemic has shown us that our plans might change - but our goals remain the same. Educating and empowering young people for the world of work remains at our core, and our strategies to achieve this have been better-adjusted by the learnings of 2020. I am immensely grateful to our Board of Directors, the AVA staff, our funders and supporters that enable the organisation to fulfill its mandate of educating and empowering youth for the world of work. We can't do it without them.

Moving forward, there's more youth to reach and smarter ways to get the job done. It's a tough stretch ahead - but, by finding a way through it, we are up to the challenge! ✨



# PROGRAMME DIRECTOR'S REPORT

**CHARNÉ TAYLOR**

*"Sometimes the things that we cannot change  
end up changing us." – Unknown*

The 2020 year started with big plans and big programmes. As always, AVA started the year with YearBeyond recruitment drive, and a camp to launch the 2020 Year Beyond programme. The Director of Programmes returned from maternity leave in the beginning of March, and then we were knocked by the first wave of the Covid-19 Lock down.

With this reality, 2020 very quickly became a year of adapting, reflecting and changing. The impact of Covid-19 meant that we could not implement many of our programmes in the same manner we had in the past. Training and volunteer support had to adapt to use online formats such as Zoom and WhatsApp and we had to cater to the new needs of our youth. This has been a year of significant development for AVA and the impact of Covid-19 has highlighted our strengths and weaknesses, as an organisation. Ultimately, Covid-19 brought us new beginning and opportunity to grow and develop in exciting and innovative ways.

In 2020, AVA implemented three programmes - Year Beyond, Work4Progress and Life Matters – working with 114 unemployed youth over the course of the year. Shine Literacy decided to put a hold on the Khanyisa programme in 2020.

## YEAR BEYOND

This was the sixth year that AVA was involved in the implementation of the Year Beyond Programme. The programme has a dual development focus: educational enrichment for learners, which is run during and after school hours; and leadership and employability readiness for volunteers. In this way, the model is characterised by a pay-it-forward approach. We invest in the

youth, and they invest in learners.

In 2019, the Year Beyond programme expanded as the After School Programmes Office (ASPO) took over the programme management and implementation. The programme was restructured. This year under the guidance of the ASPO, Year Beyond expanded even further and is growing from strength to strength. As one of the implementing partners in Year Beyond, AVA mentored 85 youth volunteers in 17 primary schools, reaching 1700 learners in the afterschool space. Of the 85 volunteers recruited and trained in the programme,

18% are employed

20% are studying

7% are in learnerships

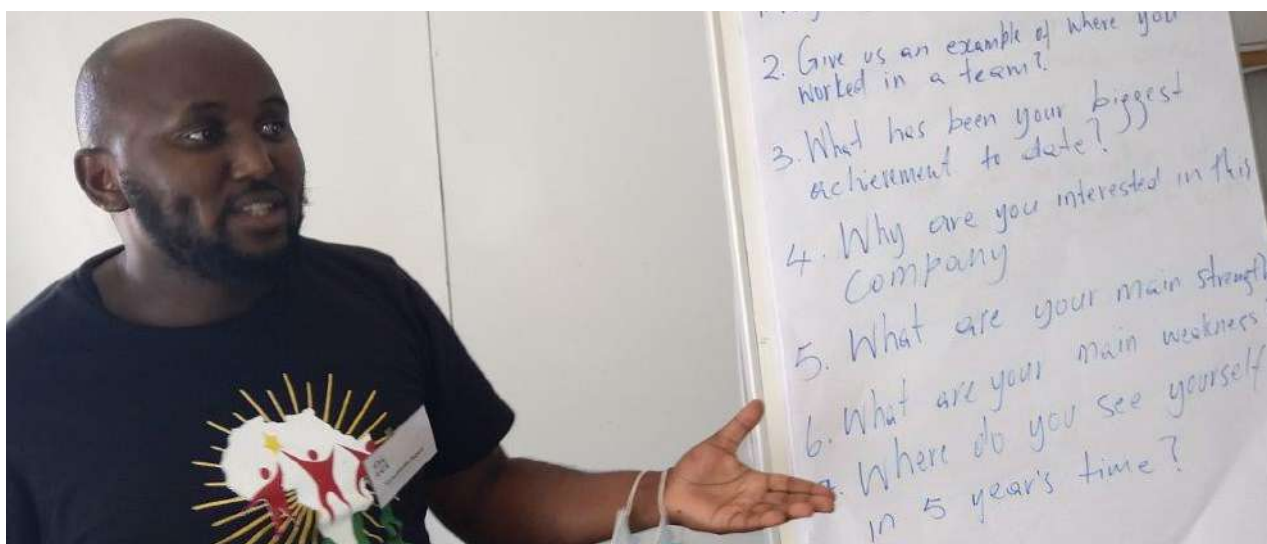
16% unemployed

39% could not be reached

## WORK4PROGRESS (W4P)

Piloted in 2017, Work4progress is the first AVA programme where we have had the privilege to take our expertise into the business world. Here AVA recruits, orientates and trains unemployed youth and place

them in uniquely designed work opportunities in various Small to Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs). Young people have an opportunity to gain first-hand experience of the work place and expectations and it allows AVA the opportunity to engage the corporate sector in the ongoing growth and development of youth. Work4progress is the only programme in AVA that currently allows youth of all academic levels to apply and does not require a matric certificate. For this reason AVA is reaching a neglected target



group and provide youth an opportunity where often many participants would not have had any other options at their disposal.

This year was an awkward year on many accounts. AVA recruited and orientated a group of 18 youth in March 2020, a mere 3 days before the first Covid-19 national lockdown. This meant that all initial training and work was all online, and youth could only start their work experience in businesses in the beginning of September 2020. Although this was not an ideal situation on many levels, AVA was surprised that we were able to secure enough placements with various small to medium business partners for all 18 youth. This group will continue into the next financial year.

### LIFE MATTERS FOUNDATION

This was the third year that a group of young people were placed with the Life Matters Foundation (LMF), an educational enrichment programme that serves 6 schools in the Capricorn, Steenberg, Westlake and Retreat communities. This programme was geared at offering an opportunity to unemployed youth from these communities while simultaneously improving numeracy and literacy levels in grade 2 and 3 learners in the Life Matters Schools. Once again AVA provided recruitment, orientation, mentorship, and ongoing self-development training to 11 youth who were placed with the Life Matters foundation.

Of the 11 volunteers recruited and trained in the programme, only one did not complete the

programme and 10 volunteers graduated at the end of 2020. Below are the progression figures of the group that completed the programme at the end of December 2020:

**27.5% are employed**

**27.5% are studying**

**9% are in working part time**

**36% are unemployed**

Based on the successes achieved with this programme and the impact the youth have on increased literacy rates amongst the learners, the LMF increased the number of youth from 11 to 17 at the start of 2021.

### CONCLUSION

It should be noted that the Coronavirus pandemic had a tremendous negative impact on all our programmes as many volunteers who found employment across our programmes have lost their work due to the impact of the virus and the national lockdown. This was particularly felt in the Work4Progress programme as a significant number of business partners are in the tourism or hospitality industry; and many had to close their doors. In addition, due to limited time to engage with the youth through in person training and mentoring, the success rate of this programme was significantly lower than previous years. It is therefore important to have blended model of online and in-person training, going forward. ✨



# TESTIMONIAL



## TSHEPISO KOLELE

"I could write a book on how AVA helped me take a step into my future, a bright future. I would not be where I am if it was not for AVA and my mentor, Babalwa Bobo. The most important impact that it had was learning about myself while I was helping children do better in their reading and mathematics skills.

AVA contributed to my personal growth and my career development; and equipped me with skills that I am currently using. The most important impact that it had was learning about myself, while I was helping children do better in their reading and mathematics skills.

My experience at AVA was eye opening and I have a different perspective. I got the opportunity to learn about mental health and how to cope in different situations. Volunteering at AVA led me into studying for my degree in education, foundation phase and working for one of the best schools in Cape Town".



# TESTIMONIAL



## DAVID MERKEUR

"My journey with AVA has been an incredible one, full of growth, challenges, and learning experiences. I'm incredibly proud of how far I've come. Through my time with AVA, I've learned so much about myself and my abilities, and I've been able to use that knowledge to navigate day to day life and on my new journey at The Foschini Group. AVA activated more abilities in me that I never thought I'd have. One of those abilities was resilience, being able to recover from difficulties. I'm always able to pick myself up from a set back.

AVA taught me 'you can be hard at work, but also hardly working'. Be completely honest with yourself and who you are, and you'll achieve great things through this amazing programme. To top it up, they are dynamic leaders that always support you. My volunteering experience was a great journey with amazing leaders that helped me adapt to diversity. Where I am today, is all because of the impact AVA made in my life".



# TESTIMONIAL



## GENIKA KOOPMAN

“AVA gave me the push that I needed and I gained so much confidence. They made me hungry to learn and grow. AVA made me realise what my skills and talents are. I became aware of how to set and achieve my goals.

My volunteering with AVA was exceptional. Being a volunteer taught me that I should do things to the best of my ability because I am impacting the lives of children on the journey. The experience was enriching and special.

AVA gave me clarity on my career choice. They steered me in the right direction and made sure that I was fully prepared and equipped for the next step. AVA ensured that when an opportunity comes knocking on my door, I would be prepared for it. They taught me that I should never limit myself, and know that I am capable”.

# THANK YOU TO ALL OUR SUPPORTERS AND PARTNERS



Stand in the GAP for our NPOs  
<https://mergon.co.za/gapfund/>



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**AVA Board of Directors:** Vuyiswa Doo (Chairperson-outgoing), Moira Jones (Chairperson-new), Mandla Sifumba, Pule Keswa, Thembi Maxwane, Gabeba Gaidien

**AVA Staff:** Janine Hansen, Charnré Taylor, Babalwa Bobo, Tiffany Schouw, Siphamandla Papani, Katherine Eve, Sethu Ngqiva, Asemahle Dyaphu, Cameron Kleinsmith, Aqeefah Matroos.



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**UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH VOLUNTEERING.**