

ANNUAL REPORT

MARCH 2022 - FEBRUARY 2023



ACTION VOLUNTEERS AFRICA



OUR VISION

Contributing to a society where every unemployed young person is empowered to build a sustainable future.



OUR MISSION

AVA embraces volunteering as a tool to unlock the potential of unemployed youth (18-25 years) by training and placing them in full-time volunteering positions in a variety of contexts. Through these sustained volunteering opportunities, enriched by a unique personal development programme, the volunteers gain experience and are empowered to become economically independent and socially responsible citizens.

OUR VALUES

Belonging

We promote diversity and inclusion, building safe spaces where young people can grow, learn, and belong.

Collaboration

We believe in the magic of collective effort, working closely as a team and with our external partners.

Creativity

We celebrate fresh, innovative ideas to address challenges, aiming for greater effectiveness and efficiency in all we do.

Development

Continuous improvement is non-negotiable, and sustaining growth is equally important as we work to reach more youth.

Integrity

We hold ourselves accountable for our mistakes, using them as a learning opportunity to ensure our actions and words align.

Passion

Our commitment to seeing youth develop their potential and fulfill their purpose is fueled by our unwavering passion and determination.

Resilience

We don't get stuck on challenges; instead, we seek solutions and move forward, understanding that quality work produces quality results.

Transparency

We're open about our work and challenges, remaining true to who we are and what we stand for.

ACTION VOLUNTEERS AFRICA

OUR MODEL

UNEMPLOYED



TRAINING

Youth undergo comprehensive training and receive ongoing support during work placement



SELF-DEVELOPMENT

Youth are exposed to self-development sessions designed to build a positive mindset and navigate the obstacles preventing them from achieving their full potential



WORK EXPERIENCE

All AVA programmes have an on-the-job focus coupled with a stipend or basic salary enabling youth to experience what it means to work.



PROGRESSION PLANNING & CAREER COACHING

Youth have access to career expo's, one-on-one coaching, and support in planning their individual career goals

EMPLOYED

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STAFF

Janine Hansen, Tiffany Schouw, Babalwa Bobo, Siphamandla Papani, Shakiera Taliep



Board of Directors

Moira Jones (Chairperson), Mandla Sifumba, Pule Keswa, Thembi Maxwane, Gabeba Gaidien

Chairperson's Report



Moira Jones

Over the past 10 years Action Volunteers Africa (AVA) has achieved smart and effective ways of reaching and inspiring youth to achieve personal growth for employability. This achievement of AVA and their youth is phenomenal in the context of South Africa's diminishing fiscus.

The broadest aim of AVA is to invest our interventions in youth for their employability! In 2022/3 AVA has achieved this in our programmes in the Western Cape in public schools, as well as with unemployed youth. A long held dream of expansion to the Eastern Cape has been achieved through AVA's Mobile Career Café, where senior school leavers and unemployed youth are prepared in a series of interactive employment readiness programmes. Almost 500 youth participated in the Mobile Career Café this past financial year. The mobile nature of this programme has enabled AVA to work in semi urban and rural areas, thereby increasing access of youth who may never had this opportunity. AVA's Mobile Career Café offers sponsor companies the means to assist youth employability in the communities in which the company is located.

It is through the tireless work of Executive Director, Janine Hansen, her right-hand Tiffany Schouw, and their enthusiastic young team, that AVA has achieved a great year. Thank you to donors and sponsors for your investment in the youth of our country! Thank you to fellow Board members for your support of the team, both and practical and theoretical. We thank a long-serving board member who resigned December 2022. Mandla Sifumba we already miss you!

Thank you to our 2022/3 youth participants – achieve your goals because you can!

Executive Director's Report



Janine Hansen

Celebrating a Decade of AVA Impact

In November 2022, AVA reached a significant milestone, celebrating a decade of service to South Africa's youth. This achievement is even more remarkable considering most businesses don't survive their first decade and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on others in our sector.

Despite this, our journey has sometimes been challenging; we're only now starting to emerge from two particularly tough years. Nevertheless, this annual report serves as a testament to the many reasons we have for celebration: AVA continues to make an impact in preparing youth for the future. As we commemorate this milestone, we reflect on how far we've come and reaffirm our purpose and future effectiveness.

Why does AVA exist?

While we can't prepare the future for our youth, we can prepare our youth for the future.

To Empower

Through AVA's professional development programmes, we **empower young adults for a sustainable future** where they can achieve economic independence and become socially responsible. However, we understand true empowerment involves more than just a paycheck; it's about helping youth discover their passion and purpose, enabling them to shape their own destiny.

AVA provides extensive guidance and mentoring throughout programmes to facilitate this process, ensuring they receive the support they need to thrive.

To Educate

Our second ambitious objective is **to educate youth about employment**. We recognise millions of young people in South Africa need access to essential career guidance and work-readiness services. Career guidance is a necessity, not a luxury. It's a matter of justice to address youth unemployment in under-served areas such as townships, informal settlements, and rural areas.

As part of this objective, we seek to build and belong to a network of collaborating partners. For example, the Mobile Career Café links with formal and informal organisations wherever it goes, creating an opportunity for shared resources and stakeholder cooperation.

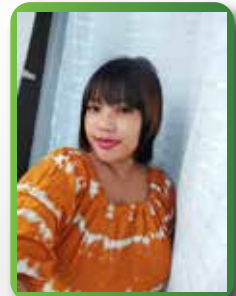
Kaylynn Abrahams:

"Before joining the AVA family, 'my emotions get the best of me' was a common theme in my life. I struggled with emotional intelligence, both in controlling my own emotions and understanding others. The mental muscle-building sessions helped me self-reflect, speak more kindly to myself and others, and use euphemisms. While it's still a work in progress, self-awareness, self-management, sociability, and empathy are key. I can now confidently say I'm in control of my thoughts, words, and emotions".



Sherne Steenkamp:

"The past year has been an amazing experience. It's significantly contributed to my personal growth and career development. I've discovered a passion for working with kids, along with resilience, ambition, and a heart for teaching. AVA and Life Matters have helped me overcome fear, build skills, and learn about my potential. Making a difference in kids' lives through reading, writing, and maths is fulfilling; shaping my future. I'm grateful for the opportunity, feeling that the world is full of possibilities".



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How We Keep the Dream Alive

Preserving AVA's integrity, purpose, and operational drive over the long term is paramount to our mission's success. Achieving this means nurturing holistic sustainability within the organisation.

- **Financial sustainability:** Securing financial resources is a priority, as it ensures we can continue making a difference in the lives of youth by sustaining the organisation's work.

In the past financial year, AVA had a deficit of R423,429. While there is always room for improvement, indications suggest an upward economic trajectory. The generous support of new donors has provided some relief. We also opened a thrift shop in Wynberg in November 2022, creating a steady stream of unrestricted funding.

Further cost-saving measures include moving back to Wynberg to a smaller office space, which has proven more functional and economically viable. Additionally, while the Director of Programmes position was vacant, external trainers were used to fill the gap as needed, contributing to significant savings on staff costs.

- **Organisational sustainability:** Beyond financial sustainability, ensuring AVA remains a well-functioning, accountable, creative, ethical, and evolving organisation that delivers on its core mandate is essential. Our dedicated staff and directors share a deep commitment to AVA's vision and are passionate about the organisation's mission — leadership is robust, governance practices are sound, and our team is willing to go the extra mile.

The average tenure of AVA staff exceeds five years, while our board of directors has been involved with AVA for just under the same period. Further, our workforce is engaged in almost every aspect of the organisation, demonstrating a sense of ownership and commitment to creativity. We encourage open discussions, questioning, thoughtful planning, and ongoing evaluation on all levels.

In 2022, we defined our collective values as a team to support this. Each member chose a value at staff meetings, where we would delve further into it, ensuring we uphold these values as an organisation.

Belonging: We promote diversity and inclusion, building safe spaces where young people can grow, learn, and belong.

Collaboration: We believe in the magic of collective effort, working closely as a team and with our external partners.

Creativity: We celebrate fresh, innovative ideas to address challenges, aiming for greater effectiveness and efficiency in all we do.

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Resilience: We don't get stuck on challenges; instead, we seek solutions and move forward, understanding that quality work produces quality results.

Transparency: We're open about our work and challenges, remaining true to who we are and what we stand for.

- **Programmatic sustainability:** In the modern world, work is ever-evolving. AVA keeps abreast of developments, helping youth gain and retain employment.

According to data released by Statistics South Africa in Q4 2022, youth unemployment remains alarmingly high at around 43%. However, the real impact is felt by each young individual whose potential is stifled by an inequitable school system and the struggle to find work.

At AVA, we're more committed than ever to making a difference in the lives of South African youth. Empowering youth with employable skills and access to the labour market is vital. But, alone, we can only go so far. Therefore, collaboration is critical in the quest for sustainability, amplifying our efforts despite limited resources.

We engage in extensive partnerships with other organisations, businesses, groups, and individuals; no programme or intervention is implemented in isolation. For example, last year, we partnered with The Trust Connection, adding our BMW (Building Mental Wellness) programme to equip young people with valuable skills to improve their resilience and mental well-being. Further, AVA partners with numerous other organisations that contribute to youth training: art facilitators,

life coaches, legal experts, entrepreneurs, inspiring individuals, and subject matter experts like diversity specialists, among others.

The Mobile Career Café's (MCC) success also hinges on collaboration between AVA and local organisations. Our partnership with the Cape Winelands Biosphere Reserve and events hosted by other local community partner organisations in this space strengthen positive impact.

Moreover, AVA often extends an invitation to other organisations when we host events such as staff training or career expos at no extra cost, demonstrating our commitment to collaboration and knowledge-sharing.

Challenges We Face

The overwhelming demand for AVA's services is far greater than our capacity. While our country requires more long-term, sustainable employment opportunities for its youth, a more crucial need is nurturing the agency of young people, enhancing their employability in the rapidly shifting job landscape. However, securing financial support for this training and development can take time and significant effort. AVA has the necessary tools, yet we need further help, underscoring the importance of sustained collaboration and resource mobilisation to empower young adults and bolster their chances for a better future.

Additionally, in an organisation like ours, we're often constrained by limited support, such as IT, communications, and marketing, impacting our ability to meet demand.

Onwards and Upwards

Our prior reports reflected on storm seasons that tested our character, skill, and attitude. Enduring these challenges left us with fewer financial resources. But these experiences also instilled remarkable resilience and strength in us.

Looking back, we could have surrendered and failed at our mission, but that has never been an option for AVA. Our team is driven to innovate and improve, knowing we must do so for reasons greater than ourselves. Addressing youth unemployment is no simple task, requiring multi-level interventions — but we must succeed.

I take immense pride in working alongside an incredible team, an excellent board of directors, partner organisations, and the youth we serve. Each of you continues to inspire and challenge AVA to go above and beyond. Additionally, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our past and present staff members whose contributions have been instrumental in AVA's development. Our mission remains clear: to empower youth to discover their passion and purpose while taking their rightful place in the world of work as productive, positive, and prosperous citizens. We look forward to the next ten years with optimism and determination.

"I was always shy and holding back. There was no confidence. Attending the workshops from AVA gave me more confidence." This is how Desnay Fischer described herself before completing AVA's Work-4-Progress programme. Desnay was placed at a school with the Life Matters Foundation, where she provided extra support to learners who needed it. Before she enrolled herself in AVA, she was an introverted person. The reason she applied to AVA was that she wanted to broaden her horizons and learn more about different things.

Desnay is now working as an admin assistant at Old Mutual, handling matters like life and funeral cover, investments, and savings. She educates the community on financial literacy and wealth creation. AVA played a significant role in her transformation from introvert to her current confident self. She values continuous learning and considers AVA life-changing. "If it wasn't for AVA, I would still be that introverted person". The 24-year-old admin assistant is ready to make the world her oyster.

Reflection by Desnay Fisher



Programmes Report



Tiffany Schouw

This year – 2022 – was a year of growth, development and amazing opportunity. Our aim was to take the Mobile Career Café (MCC) to new heights and expand our reach to help more youth from underserved communities with work-readiness skills and basic career development. Taking the MCC all the way to the Eastern Cape for a weeklong trip in January 2023, was a highlight. We also hosted our first Career Expo after 3 years, which was a huge success.

YEAR BEYOND

In 2022, AVA implemented the Year Beyond Programme in 14 primary schools, 10 in Khayelitsha and 4 in Mitchells Plain; reaching 1800 Grade 3 and 4 learners.

We hosted a holiday programme in June and collaborated with Cape Winelands Biosphere Reserve (CWBR) to create a weeklong programme, filled with fun, educational activities for the learners. We conducted 2 trainings in preparation for the holiday programme where the youth were trained in gardening, upcycling, 'tree of me' and a game called survivor island.

Most of the Yeboneers attended the YearBeyond Conference held at the University of the Western Cape. The 3-day residential programme was packed with personal and professional development sessions. It was a great opportunity for youth to learn, build their skills and networks.

Progression of youth post the programme:

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------|
| - Progressed to work/study | : 62.1% |
| - Not progressed | : 15.5% |
| - Non-responsive | : 22.3% |

Reflection from a youth

Being in the YearBeyond programme with AVA has developed me in so many ways , mostly in a mental way and I have more self-confidence. I believe that I'll succeed in whatever because the programme made me realise that there's no limits to what you can do. You can always reach higher than your potential.

Mateo Siyou



ACTION VOLUNTEERS AFRICA

Work-4-Progress

AVA recruits and places youth in various contexts such as non-profits and small to medium enterprises to gain work experience, whilst providing bespoke personal and professional development workshops.

- HBUFC (Hout Bay United Football Community)

Fourteen youth, supported by the Youth Employment Service, completed their 12 month programme in September 2022 as part of the HBUFC/AVA Collaboration.

AVA also collaborated with Year Beyond-NGO Support Initiative to provide stipends for our Work4Progress cohort and placed 25 youth on the programme. The programme was 6 months long (July 2022 – December 2022) and interns worked 64 hours per month in various organisations. AVA provided personal and professional development sessions to the youth.

- LIFE MATTERS

AVA recruited, orientated and trained 17 young people to join the AVA/Life Matters Programme for 2022. The youth facilitated literacy and numeracy sessions to Grade 2 and 3's in primary schools. The AVA/Life Matters interns received personal and professional development twice per month, and also attended block training sessions in the holidays. External trainers and experts are roped in to provide informative, inspiring and interesting workshops that all contribute to the work-readiness and career development of the youth. AVA also invested significant resources in personal coaching of the youth to facilitate their progression beyond the programme. It is no wonder that high progression rates were achieved with the group:

- Progressed to employment/studies: 83%

- Seeking employment: 17%

MOBILE CAREER CAFÉ

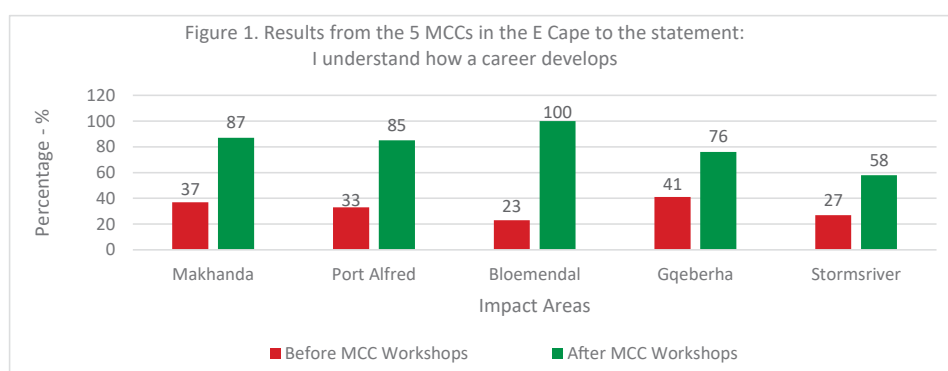
The Mobile Career Café (MCC) reached 427 youth in 13 underserved areas in South Africa. We hosted 8 MCC's in the Western Cape and 5 in the Eastern Cape this year. Taking the MCC services to the Eastern Cape was a great achievement for AVA and we look forward to strengthening our footprint in more provinces in South Africa.

At every MCC, a baseline questionnaire is completed by each participant, with various statements to measure the shifts in knowledge, attitudes and learning, based on the outcomes the various workshops aim to achieve. Here are two examples of the impact the MCC makes on the increased knowledge of youth. Figure 1 reflects the combined results from MCC participants who chose the true and very true options to the statement "I understand how to develop a career" before and after attending the workshops facilitated by AVA.

A participant from Makhanda wrote the following reflection after attending the MCC: "What I gained from the MCC is how to write a proper CV using a new format. The career planning was very informative. I got to learn about career management. I have also gained confidence to job hunt as I now know what is expected of me".

AVA CAREER EXPO

In October, AVA held a career expo that specifically focussed on opportunities that were relevant, realistic and practical. AVA extended an invite to AVA Alumni and other similar organisations who sent youth to attend the day. The CEO of Click's, Bertina Engelbrecht, did the opening and gave a very inspiring talk with many tips for the youth.



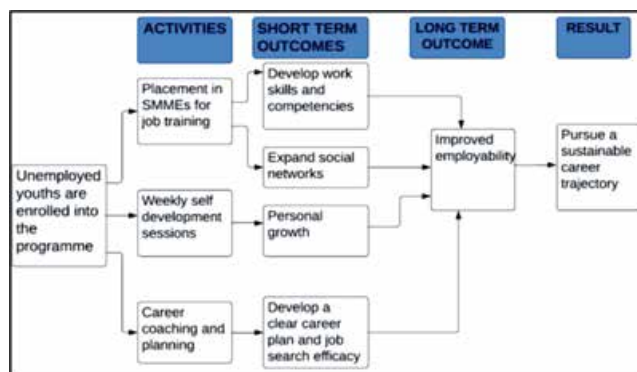
RESEARCH PROVES WORK-4-PROGRESS IMPROVES YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY

Measuring the impact of AVA's programmes is an important component of our work. Pamela Pophiwa, a Master of Philosophy in Programme Evaluation at University of Cape Town recently completed her research on, whether the Work-4-Progress (W4P) programme implemented by AVA, has successfully achieved its goal of upskilling youths and improving employability. This is a summary of the key findings of the research that reflects the impact of the Work-4-Progress Programme.

What is Work-4-Progress

AVA recruits, trains and places unemployed youth (18-28 years) in various contexts (schools, non profits, small to medium enterprises) to gain work experience over a period of 6-12 months. AVA staff mentor, support and guide youth through the placement training.

Simplified Theory of Change



Reflections by youth

"I was so in my shell. Even my self-esteem, I was not confident enough in anything. I have grown out of that shell now. I have opened myself to interact with people and to speak out. If I don't like something, I say it. I have learned to express myself much better now."

"The team leaders were welcoming and understanding. They were also young like us. We were able to speak to them and not to be shy. They were friendly, playful and energetic. I liked the environment."

"After AVA, I applied for a job and they gave me a call because I had mentioned on my CV that I was assisting with computer training of volunteers at AVA. So, they hired me".

Key outcomes

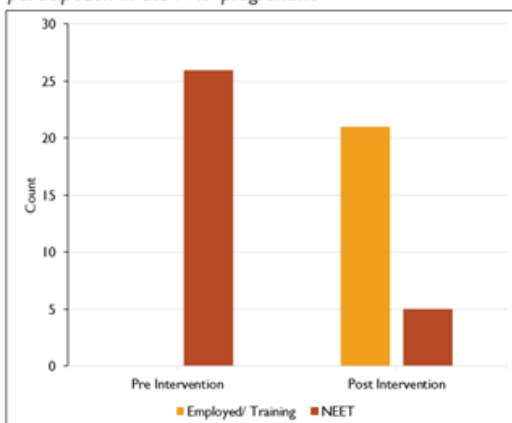
Did the Work-4-Progress programme adequately equip the participants with work-related skills and competencies at the job training?

Did the Work-4-Progress programme participants use the skills and competencies they gained to find decent work?

Reported skills

- Basic ICT
- Proactiveness
- Administration
- Data Capturing
- Job-specific skills
- Managing finances
- Communication
- Self-confidence
- Public speaking
- Problem-solving
- Time management
- Networking

Employment status of the survey respondents pre- and post-participation in the W4P programme



POSITIVE OUTCOMES OF THE WORK-4-PROGRESS PROGRAMME

The summary below presents some of the benefits linked to the Work-4-Progress programme emerging from the stories of the youths.

1. Stipend provides financial relief and independence amid poverty

The informants highlighted the importance of stipends in alleviating financial burdens. Their stories suggest that the impact of a stipend is often more than just financial aid, but contributes to poverty alleviation and can be seen as a strategy to earn a livelihood.

3. Programme participation can help distressed youth gain emotional stability

Youth unemployment is known to cause serious psychological problems including increased anxiety, depression and stress-related health disorders. The interviewed youth appreciated both the individualised support and group-based support they received from AVA, which helped in achieving greater emotional stability.

5. Work-4-Progress programme experience is instrumental in developing realistic career aspirations and a clear plan

Many of the stories showed a lack of a concrete career plan to pursue aspired jobs. The respondents further expressed how exposure to work helped in ascertaining their career interests. Many views upgrading their education as a gateway to where they want to be in life, demonstrating a sense of urgency in upskilling themselves.

7. Work-4-Progress programme experience is relevant in obtaining employment

The youth mentioned that the skills they gained from their job placement match the skills required by employers for those who are entering the labour market.

2. Work-4-Progress Programme promotes social skills to cope with life challenges

All the interviewed youth described changes in their personal life that they attributed to the W4P programme. One of the key aspects that emerged from the interviewees was that the programme helped them overcome psychosocial challenges. The youth further described how engaging in the W4P programme helped them gain self-confidence, learn social skills and change negative behaviours. The youth portrayed AVA staff, specifically the team leaders as being friendly, understanding and approachable, which helped them overcome some of their personality struggles.

4. Experience obtained through work exposure helps in breaking the unemployment cycle

All respondents echoed that the W4P programme helped in learning relevant skills and enhancing their career readiness.

6. Exposure to work helps in the development of new social networks

Most disadvantaged South African youth do not have social networks to connect them to work opportunities. The W4P programme offers work opportunities that entail social interaction with different types of people. The narratives of youths emphasised the important role that social networks play in securing employment.

8. The knowledge gained through programme participation fosters entrepreneurship skills

Some of the youths expressed how they were inspired by work experience during the job placement to venture into entrepreneurship. Fostering entrepreneurship is widely perceived to be critical in expanding employment and earning opportunities and reducing poverty, particularly in the context of South Africa where there are low employment outcomes.

Summary

Overall the W4P programme benefitted youth in many of the ways it intended to

- Gain job readiness skills including job-specific skills and soft skills
- Greatly improved social skills which allow them to interact with the outside world
- Skills and knowledge gained during the programme were useful in finding and maintaining decent employment
- Many are focusing on enrolling in university for a degree



thank you

TO OUR
SUPPORTERS
TOGETHER, WE CREATE
A BRIGHTER FUTURE
FOR SOUTH AFRICA'S YOUTH.



OLDMUTUAL



ACTION VOLUNTEERS AFRICA



YOUNG & UNEMPLOYED?

GET WORK READY!

**JOIN AVA'S MOBILE CAREER CAFE
AND LEARN ABOUT:**

**Finding opportunities
CV writing and interview skills
Knowing what job will suit you best
Increasing your chances to be employed
And much more**



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