

Absa in work training for 4 000 young people

STAFF WRITER

ONE of South Africa's Big Four banks, Absa, has collaborated with Lulaway to train 4 000 young people on the bank's ReadytoWork programme.

The programme will see 2 000 young people placed in jobs.

It provides access to world-class learning content focused on work, people, money and entrepreneurial skills and is currently running in Zambia, the Seychelles, Botswana, Kenya, Mauritius and Zimbabwe.

Barclays Africa's head of citizenship, Sazini Mojapelo, said the initiative sought to address the challenge of youth unemployment in developing economies and equip young people with skills to help them make the transition from the education system to the formal economy.

"A key priority of our shared growth strategy is to help young people gain access to the skills and opportunities they need to fulfil their potential. We have identified education and skills development as a space in which a sustainable contribution can be made through initiatives such as ReadytoWork,"

said Mojapelo.

South Africa's youth unemployment rate is 54% and there are fears of an increase because of the impact on the socio-economic development of the country.

While job creation is key, improving work-readiness skills is a critical factor in driving sustainable and secure livelihoods.

Lulaway chief executive Jake Willis said research in the past seven years showed that about one in three young people would drop out within the first three months of employment.

This high churn rate meant that job creation efforts did not have a lasting impact.

"Workplace readiness is defined as skills which contribute to the

employability of a person apart from technical skills and education. These include codes of conduct, how to present yourself to be marketable for employment, communication skills, financial literacy and workplace etiquette," he said.

The agency works with thousands of job seekers daily.

"When we started, we thought that once we helped people find jobs, they would succeed and stay employed, but that did not happen. A person would start a job and abscond or resign for no apparent reason after a few days or weeks.

"We thought that, because jobs were so scarce, people would do anything to get a job and keep it. We were initially frustrated until we realised that we did not fully understand the complex dynamics our job seekers faced," said Willis.

Crime, poverty and poor health care were dilemmas that confronted youth every day, he said.

The enterprise has a job centre network in every province and places on average 1 000 people a month.

Lulaway's positioning in the job creation cycle, which includes the sourcing, selection, screening and

placement of candidates, affords the agency access to people who are seeking gainful employment in the workplace.

Willis said collaborations, such as with Absa, were the reason for Lulaway's existence.

"Our experience shows us that solving unemployment requires broad thinking and joining forces with all stakeholders – non-profit, business and government.

"The project with Absa is an example of what is possible for South Africa when everybody is willing to play their part."