

# Accelerate pod #2 2

Thu, 1/27 1:31PM 55:58

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

jobs, omar, people, job seekers, challenges, creating, employment, lucas, platform, question, skills, accelerator, self employment, undp, firms, partner, public sector, context, terms, intervention

## SPEAKERS

Elleke Boehmer

---

**E** Elleke Boehmer 00:09

Hello, my name is Elleke Boehmer. And I'm happy to welcome you to this podcast on employment as accelerator from the accelerate how, based at the Universities of Oxford, and Cape Town. This recording was made on the 19th of October 2021. This is the second podcast in our second accelerate hub series on subjects related to intervention and acceleration in African contexts. Our project is funded by the Ukri gcrf. I'm the co lead of work package three in the accelerate hub. And I work together with Chris Desmond, and Hilary Mousorewa. I'm also a professor of world literature and English at the University of Oxford. And I'm interested in narrative as intervention. A quick word on the accelerate hub before we launch in and how it relates to our topic today, which is employment. The accelerate hubs goal is to improve outcomes for 20 million adolescents across the African continent. It sets out to achieve this by identifying interventions that have the potential to improve outcomes related to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. I'm really delighted to be joined today by three experts on employment in Africa who have thought a lot about the question from different vantage points on the continent. They are ea incurr, Cusi, Mensa Kybella, my journey and Lucas Hensel. Together, we're going to explore how you might create employment opportunities, adolescents across the continent will focus specifically on young people, and this all important question of creating and sustaining jobs. I'll now introduce the three speakers very briefly in reverse alphabetical order. And after that, I'll also ask each one to say a quick word about themselves and their interests before we launch into the main conversation. Inka Omar and Lucas, thank you so much for joining us in this conversation today. So Ian KUSI Mensa is a PhD student in Sociology at the University of Cambridge, and her research focuses on youth employment in West Africa. She holds degrees from the universities of Harvard and Cambridge. And currently, she's studying how the social networks of self employed young people in Ghana and Nigeria shape their transition into self employment and into their working lives. He Inca hails from Ibadan, Nigeria. Mr. Jack Ma is the Li is a team lead of the UNDP The Gambia accelerate lab, his education at the University of Sussex, UK and Hofstra University USA. He's also managed a boutique management consultancy and founded an educational startup called Making our visions and aspirations reality acronym move are. Lucas Hensel is a postdoctoral researcher at the Gangwar School of Management Peking University. He is also a visiting researcher at the Centre for the studies of African economies at the University of Oxford. He works on how the job search process shapes employment outcomes for youth in South Africa and Ethiopia, and is

currently involved in exploring this question from both job seekers and employment perspectives. So hi, everyone, thank you so much for joining me. I wonder if you could each just say hi in the same order, in which I, I introduced you.

 04:15

Hello, everyone. Good morning. And I'm very happy to be on this podcast this morning. I've been always interested in issues of youth employment, and so it's nice to be part of this conversation.

 04:28

Thanks so much. Inka. Omar.

 04:32

Good morning, everyone. This is Mr. Jang from the Gambia with the UNDP accelerator lab where we've explored some issues of youth unemployment, among other things. And I very much look forward to this conversation with my co panellists and with you, of course, telco. Thank you.

 04:49

Hey, yeah, thank you for the invitation to this podcast. Um, I'm a researcher and I've worked for the last four or five years now on topics related to use animation. Lomond in South Africa and more recently in Ethiopia, and I'm really passionate about finding ways that help young people find jobs. And once they found them, to make them stay in these jobs and to live to their fullest potential.

 Elleke Boehmer 05:18

Right, Sam, thank you so much, Lucas. And thank you so much everyone, for for joining this conversation today. So to kind of get stuck in and to and to really start exploring this question of, of employment, you know, how it taps into young people's potential, how we create employment opportunities, what I'd like to do is to come to each one of you in turn, and to ask you to say something about your work, your research, your experience, with employment and job creation, you clearly are all deeply involved in thinking about these issues. So if you could just briefly at this point, say a bit more about your work in this area. Ian can starting with you.

 06:11

So my work with these employment comes more from the angle of my research. And my research for the past three years has focused on self employed young people in Ghana and Nigeria. entrepreneurship is part of the policy of the country that focus on their youth employment policy, in Ghana, Nigeria, and other African countries. But I think there are a lot of

misconceptions and misperceptions about intrapreneurship, and self employment. And there's a lot of focus on just creating jobs through self employment without enough focus on what's the quality of work that is being created to this angle of intrapreneurship. And so that's what really brought me to this topic of looking at the experiences of self employed young people, both qualitatively to interviews, and then also doing carrying out the survey in both Ghana and Nigeria, to find out about their quality, the quality of their work, and also to find out about the context in which they're embedded in with the kind of some of the kind of support mechanisms that they have in place, their social support mechanisms, and so that youth employment interventions are designed in light of this context. And in light of creating not just creating jobs, but creating good quality jobs where young people can find a sense of fulfilment are able to create meaningful livelihoods that can support themselves.

E

Elleke Boehmer 07:39

So if, if I understand correctly, you're partly involved in, in self presentation trainings that you look at how the young people kind of come to the point of presenting themselves for work.



07:57

So I'm more focused on self employment and intrapreneurship. To to clarify that, so I'm interested in young people who run their own businesses, young people who are intrapreneurs. So that's my own focus. I don't focus a lot on job seekers, in my own research, even though I think that's a very important aspect of new employment policy connecting young people with jobs that are out there and preparing them for that. Good.

E

Elleke Boehmer 08:29

Fantastic, thanks so much in and how about yourself, Omar?



08:36

Thank you. So with my work, it's concentrated with the UNDP accelerator Lab, which was structured in 2019, in 60, countries around the world of which 30 were in Africa. So when we started the labs, what each of us were looking at at the individual labs was to set up a frontier challenge that we could tackle collectively. And when I say collectively three positions were recruited. It's kind of experimentation, ahead of solutions, mapping and ahead of exploration. So in addition to being the team that also double as the head of experimentation, and when we did identify this frontier challenge as a result of chi understand migration as a result of an inflated unemployment group in the Gambia and cluster and as a result of also just trying to ensure that whatever we started the lab with, had the most reach, we decided to run an experiment on whether or not we can create greater uptake for job matching services by introducing digital technologies into the equation. So this was very interesting for us because UNDP is a development organisation first and foremost. So when you have a body like an accelerator that trying to operate in mimic practices that are in the private sector in the startup and entrepreneurial ecosystem, as my co panellists, they just mentioned It creates pain points naturally in how people work. So what we were tasked to do was essentially to help our

colleagues in the different clusters within UNDP, but also our government partners, because UNDP mainly works with the national governments in the countries where it operates. To try to ensure like I said that there was uptake for these job matching services. But the reach of the services was at the most remote parts of the countries and the way that B went about doing that was using mobile technologies. And in particular, SMS short codes. Of course, it had to be, in addition with a promotional material and advertising. And we did that using print, digital television media as well. And as a result, we ended up focusing on the demand side of this sector, of course, and we're able to have some pretty interesting results, working with one of the two private companies that did have an operate a job matching service. And at the end of that experiment, we also switched into the supply side, which I can talk about later. But in essence, we show the demand for this service in all parts of the country and in most age categories as well. Over.

E

Elleke Boehmer 11:19

Thanks, thanks so much. Gosh, as you were picking up, there's some very interesting overlap, which we can explore with, with with what he is talking about from the vantage point of, of Ghana and Nigeria. Lucas, how about your your work in this area?



11:42

My work is also quite related to the broad topics that have been brought up so far. One big area that I'm working on. So it's the matching process between firms and work seekers, how would they find each other in the labour market basically, and we are looking like, I've worked with several teams and several locations and the things. But one of the main topics that kind of goes throughout my research, and that we've found to play a very important role is the role of information and expose the information about job opportunities. But importantly, also information about the match itself, how well work seek is suited for certain positions and for work seekers to know kind of how well these positions are suited to them. So it's both sides of the labour market, if you want that both firms need additional information about work seekers, and work seekers needs to kind of well, it helps them if they have a better idea of whether like they are good fit for the vacancy as well, because then they can target their scarce resources, and that they have more efficiently add vacancies and that they actually stand a chance of getting more generally, I think one of the key takeaways on descriptive levels is job search is often extremely expensive, and not so much working in the field of self employment, but rather like wage employment be casual or formal. But we found that job searches incredibly extensive. And any kind of intervention that facilitates that process has the potential to increase employment rates and hopefully also productivity within firms. So they're I think the evidence is less clear yet. And that's something that we are currently looking at.

E

Elleke Boehmer 13:42

Thanks, thanks. Thanks so much. For for those initial thoughts. Could we explore the question of the some of the challenges trying to put them together that that you've all really picked up talking about self presentations of entrepreneurship, talking about match and talking about, you know, the job search being being expensive? What in your experience of advising reaching out to creating social media channels to reach out to young people? What are the particular

issues that you've encountered with that reach out? And, and, and how have you gone about addressing those challenges? I mean, Lucas, you've just been speaking and you were just actually talking about some of the challenges of expense. So I wonder if I could turn to you first with this question of challenge and how you've addressed?



14:56

Yes, sure. So I'm one project that we are currently working on at the moment explores the role of work seekers believes about their own skills. So what we find in our data is that work seekers don't actually have a lot of good information at what they are good at. That's partially due to the education systems and the context that we work on, where they don't receive a lot of useful feedback, apparently. And they, as mostly speak about us, they haven't received a lot of feedback on the labour market either, and if so, mostly negative feedback. So what we specifically find is that work seekers often don't really know whether they're better at like jobs that require communication skills, for example, or jobs that require more numeracy skills, all kind of at the relatively low entry level, but still, this sense of differentiation between those kinds of jobs. So one of the interventions that we test is lit, testing workers having them take some relatively simple and numeracy and communications and, and literacy tests, and then providing them with information about the performance on these tests. And we find that just providing these work seekers with information, makes them target the job applications better, at least, that's what our data suggests, and then ultimately lead to them earning more after two to three months, two to three months after receiving that information. So that's a relatively low cost and easy to implement intervention that my improve work seekers prospects in the labour market.



Elleke Boehmer 16:54

Fantastic. Thank you. So. So a questionnaire is is is is one good way in which to address some of these challenges. And in your work, Omar to turn to you?



17:12

Yes, I think when we started the experiment, we definitely anticipated the challenges. And one of the challenges that we knew, even though we were focusing on the demand side for the services was the number of jobs that were going to be available on a monthly basis. I mean, this was the main concern about challenges and how we were going to try to have to address that before we even established ourselves. The second thing was there was just lack of disaggregated data, we did not know who was applying from where and the age categories and things along those lines. Finally, we also knew that there was a concentration of the jobs that were posted coming from either the private sector or the development organisations. But oddly enough, nothing was coming from the public sector. And they're the largest employer in the country. There were a few others. But the main one I would like to concentrate on was just the low literacy rate of the population when we talk about digital literacy. So if we're talking about individuals subscribing, using SMS short codes, and there's generally a 56 57%, overall literacy rate, and the digital literacy rate is even lower, that creates concerns for uptake of the service, right. And finally, me, I think, just the confidence, and the users could have in this platform, because can be such a small market, I mean, it's a population of 2 million people. And there's

only a limited number of jobs that individuals can compete for. So as these were some of the major challenges that we were facing. The other issue, I think my co panellists mentioned there about the expense factor and the cost factor, we also face it as UNDP. If we're going into experimentation mode, we knew that we were going to have to treat it as a pilot, we knew that we were going to have to sponsor the programme for a certain period of time. And this is exactly what we did for our five month period, we had to incur the costs of all the SMS charges that the end users were incurring. And the challenge, of course, with any experimentation is whether or not the service would sustain itself thereafter. And we did have challenges when when we when we got to that stage as well. But I think when UNDP does these kinds of experiments, with the private sector always has to be radio, or even the public sector for possible handover. And I think that that's really the essence of the accelerator lab. For those who don't notice it. There is a handover process where we come in to do short experimentations on on several issues, be able to explore topics and then hand them over whether it be to one of our clusters or one of our partners found where the challenge is at least the main one for us. We're on low literacy, low digital literacy. And in particular, the low number of jobs that were available on a month to month basis.

E

Elleke Boehmer 20:07

So in that case, and this is something we can we can explore again, in that case, was self entrepreneurship, one of one of the ways in which your accelerator lab considered going?



20:24

No, because of the fact that we have the International Trade Centre in the Gambia ITC working through a project called the Youth Empowerment Project. And they entered the landscape in 2016, for a four year project to intervene with that a cluster of society entrepreneurs, those trying to start their own businesses. So we did not want to duplicate the efforts, and we were focusing more on already available jobs. So the short answer is no, the ITC project was doing that. And we just tried to focus again on existing jobs. But at the same time, we did at a later stage have a supply side to the experiment where we were trying to focus on increasing the number of jobs there, the challenges were not too different. The main challenge there was that we could not find a way to break this barrier, even when we sponsored the packages for different associations. And I can go into details about who those are. But just quickly, one of those packages we offer to the government, the public, the public sector, and we still could not break that barrier of having public sector jobs coming onto the platform so that we can increase the number of jobs on a month to month basis.

E

Elleke Boehmer 21:40

Thanks. So my gosh, there's so many interesting leads there. I'd like to turn to Ian, Kurt. With this question of challenges. Again, I'm sure there'll be some overlap and interplay between some of what your research has found.



21:59

Yeah yeah So in terms of my research on youth entrepreneurs or self employed young

Yeah, yeah. So in terms of my research on youth, entrepreneurs, or self-employed young people in Ghana and Nigeria, I mean, in talking to them, and in the survey, what they have expressed as their own challenges in terms of having to start their own businesses or run their own businesses is issues of one access to capital, access to the resources that they need to set up their business. Also, an issue is skill, so access to being able to improve your skills or develop their skills. They also have lots of self-employed young people who have an unskilled self-employment, which is quite different from skills of employment. And so for example, those who drop out of school, those are not able to complete their education, they are not able to go to vocational training, they often find them with unskilled, unskilled self-employment, which doesn't really lead to high income gains over a long period of time, as opposed to those that actually had education or vocational skills in different areas, maybe automate as auto mechanics, electronics or other areas. And then there's also the issue of isolation or lack of connections, mentors and other social networks that can connect them with the resources that we have. And something that I found in my researches, for example, those that have maybe family members in the same line of business that could be helpful in terms of connections to capital and other resources that they need in order to start their businesses. And then also issues of infrastructure. Issues of like, for example, especially in Nigeria, issues of access to things like electricity, water to run their businesses, that's also a huge issue for self-employed young people.

E

Elleke Boehmer 23:56

Thanks, thanks so much in so So, what I'm kind of pulling out of what you've all three been saying? Is that the linkup of the the young person the job seeker with a synthesis of their own skills, and then with the wider job market, and if you like the infrastructural context is really really crucial. I think all of you your different ways. You touched on communication and improving access to the job market through communication. What what particular factors issues have you encountered with facilitating and improving self presentation through communication? I mean, I my you've touched on on social media. Lucas, you've, you've touched on The young people not being that aware of of their skills, what they good at and a questionnaire helping I assume that's also through some form of social media. He Inca likewise, there were issues of communication you were touching on. I wonder if you could talk about, really, this question of whether greater access to social media and digital literacy is helpful for job seekers in the in the context that you studied. If I can turn to as, as you were just speaking about these things, even if I can turn to you again,



25:45

thank you. So, in my own work on self-employed young people, I mean, definitely social media and digital literacy is incredibly important. I mean, for some of the people I spoke to, that was very important when they were able to access their potential clientele, and still being able to post quote, maybe if you're in crafts, like fashion design, and being able to post your work on social media, or in other trades, if you put processing or in catering and being able to post your work on social media, it's really important to explain to I mean, even especially with the COVID pandemic that happened, and that severely affected sort of employed young people. And so for those who are digitally literate and able to transition to use in social media and other modes, they had a serious advantage over those who are digitally illiterate, and the web has kind of only boxed into physical contact with customers.

E

Elleke Boehmer 26:45

Thanks seeing and and how about, how about, I'm just gonna vary the order a bit for a moment. How about you, Lucas? On the question of communication.



26:58

So one, I think there are two aspects to it. One, I fully agree with Omar, that kind of access to digital media is very important or seems to be very important. In fact, our partner in South Africa at the Harambee youth unemployed youth employment accelerator, is currently building and has now built an online matching platform of some time, where they pay for all of the job seekers data, so they can access the job search platform, even if they don't have any money on their phones, which is crucial given that the general cost of job search coming back to this topic is very high. This is like not based on direct and research that we've done, but just a general observation. Another form of communication that we found very useful for job seekers is these skills that I told you about that work seeker simply know all that much about themselves. Firms don't know so much about them either. So when they see a word, like a job seeker, they don't actually know what kind of skills the job seeker has, has, most often, not always, but quite often the like, school reports, and so on, don't really provide a good view, because from Senate difficult to judge the quality of the school that people are coming from my level of instruction. So another intervention that we did to test this is to actually certify the work sequence their skills. And we did this mainly on paper, exactly, because we had issues of ticket digital literacy or digital access. But it was, as a lot of work tickets didn't really have the means to regularly access internet. So we actually printed them a bunch of certified like reports that had an official logo on it and certified their skills, and encouraged them to use it with the applications. And that they increase the employment rates by around five percentage points after after two to three months as well. So that's in addition to kind of telling the work seekers themselves about their skills. Helping them credibly communicate this skills to employers actually also helps them find jobs. So that source of communication and is very important. And the accessibility of that is very important as well, we offered work tickets to send them the certificates by email so that they could use it in their online applications. Very few took us up on that because they don't have a computer at home. They have to go to internet cafes to kind of use this, like use email. They hardly check their emails. They're on Submit almost all the applications offline. So it's kind of While in theory, it would be Wait for them to be online. In practice, we actually had to do this intervention pretty much offline for it to work in the context of Johannesburg, South Africa.

E

Elleke Boehmer 30:11

So interesting, Omar, so you also mentioned paper. So is it was this also something in terms of communications and improving communications, for access to the job market that that that you discovered?



30:28

Yes, indeed, I mean, we use three, three platforms, we use print media, digital media, and of course, social media. So with the print media, we focus mainly on posters and billboards. And



these were placed at very strategic locations like transit points, transit centres, Ferry terminals, move centres and the like. For our radio and TV campaigns, what we did there was we created a jingle working with unconventional partners, because this is something that the accelerator that also tries to promote. So we worked with a folklore group to create a jingle that we aired on the radio during primetime and rush hour periods. This led to some level of uptake for the service. And we decided to add a music video and aired it on television during primetime news. And this also helps, these are the kinds of short experiments that I'm talking about where we can see about whether the service is being used or not. For social media, we just promoted these two meet immediate files that I mentioned. And they were also successful in helping us capture a demographic that was difficult to captivate. And that's the lower end of the use demographic right now we're talking about recent high school graduates to early college course. But when we were looking at now, the supply side, we had to add a different angle, which was it was a bit of luck as well. And I think that that's something that's there with experimentation, sometimes. The Gambia is first taxi billboard company had just started operating just when we were switching to the supply side. So what we did there was we using the same SMS shortcode just promoted it this time, in addition to the media's that have already mentioned, using the taxi billboard service, and that worked out very well as also, although not as successful as we would like, as I mentioned some of the challenges earlier, but it was still a way that many people had not seen for advertising purposes. And we were able to show the utility of it. Finally, I just wanted to mention with regard to the challenges in the job seekers themselves communicating their lack of skills or their ability to do a certain task for or just skill sets in general. What we did, there was, again, a bit of luck played a role here as well, our implementing partner was also providing CV writing workshops, and was also providing interviewing, workshops and sessions. So when COVID hit and we knew that it wasn't going to be enough just to advertise the service, we also ventured into providing interviewing and CV writing skills for recent graduates at our National University. And that helped play a major role in having these young jobseekers be able to communicate their skill sets on paper, but also just be able to present themselves to prospective employers. So this was quite helpful. And again, of all the three platforms, I would say definitely the print media was very helpful being able to put the billboards up and being able to put the posters on places like ferry terminals, where people had not really identified as being a source of information for people that that FOSS was was pretty innovative and something that we're proud of. But overall, I do believe that we had a bit of luck in the right services being available at the right time one and two, also having the right implementing partner who was able to kind of cover some of the gaps that we saw along the way.

E

Elleke Boehmer 34:00

Fantastic. I love how you were touching on the role of luck in some of this. Sometimes it is just a kind of a lucky synergy that that happens to work as you were saying about the taxi billboards? And how about yourself in terms of communications in in the contexts where you've been looking?



34:21

Yeah, I don't think I've really encountered any specific interventions targeted at as self employed young people in terms of their use of digital media and communications. But I mean, I think definitely there is room in that regard for them to be especially targeted because of the way the world is moving and the rise of E commerce, e commerce and a lot of communication

online. And so if they're working in that space, I mean, if they are trying to get the services and goods across the people, it's really important that they are trained in skills and digital literacy how to get there stuff online how to get there with online. I mean, some of them I work in in different kinds of crafts, jewellery, and things like that how they can reach more customers and potential clientele online. I think that's really an important space in which interventions for youth entrepreneurs tango.

E

Elleke Boehmer 35:19

Thanks so much income. I'm now going to, to ask the quite a kind of challenging question for three of you. And we'll see where it goes. We've been listening to each other speaking about your different projects accelerator labs, in, in the different countries where you work? Do you have particular questions for each other? I mean, it's, it seems to me that you know, there, there was something about the taxi billboards that that Omar was talking about that might be relevant to the Johannesburg context that you work on, for example, Lucas, or, yeah, so so I'm just I'm just going to throw it open for a moment and give you a moment to, to address each other and ask questions of each other if you have questions.



36:31

Yeah, I did have a question for Omar. And I think you touched on it already. But given that our partner in South Africa's can be also in the process of developing a job search platform and is subsidising it quite well, it's subsidising the data for the work seekers. And five sign the standard not currently charging anything to the firm site, either. I'm wondering about the kind of financial viability of these platforms and the experience that you have made there. It's kind of hand over that you mentioned, whether you think that these platforms actually do have a sustainable business model, or whether you think that even in the long term, they will have to be run by either NGOs, governments, or as in our case, a social enterprise. My experience and feeling suggests that it's very hard to actually have a sustainable business model, especially if the purpose of these platforms is to focus on the kind of lower and labour market that is entry level. Work seekers that don't necessarily have a university degree or so. Where like there's little money to be made from the platform perspective.

E

Elleke Boehmer 37:58

Great, thanks. Thank you just harvesting sort of quest crossways questions for a moment. Omar and and inquire before before Omar addresses Lucas's question Do either of you have points you'd like to make about what the other panellists have said? Really just kind of trying to suggest some synergies here whether we can learn from each other in



38:30

I think my question both for Lucas and Omar was, I'm just interested more in terms of the context of the job seekers and so on average, what were their education levels? And what kind of jobs and industries were they? Were they going to specifically for Omar, he did talk about

like, shortages in terms of the demand side, so the demand for these job seekers, and so what industries were they able to get jobs in and in terms of room for growth and expanding the demand side for jobs where he sees the Gambian going in that regard?

E

Elleke Boehmer 39:10

Mr. I think those are those are both issues or questions directed at at yourself. So the balls in your court.



39:22

Thank you for specials and thank you. Okay. I think for for me, what we are considering when it comes to sustainability, is that? Well, firstly, it's a question that the labs all have to ask ourselves. We can do these short term experiments, whether you call them quick wins or what have you. But it's a sexy way of doing our work where the guarantee of handover is not always there. And I think that that's where we're always trying to reinvent ourselves to ensure that we have that sustainability to our work. So just quickly before We interviewed with this particular partner, they had about a 500 user base network, right 500 user base network, they were having an active demand for these job matching services. Well, so what we were doing was not to say whether or not they work or don't work, what we were testing was whether or not we can increase the uptake using various other platforms, right. So when we were able to do, by the end of the five month period, we were able to increase that by 1,000%, we had over 5000 subscribers on that platform based on these different media's that I'm talking about. Today, we have over 8000. So the success was there. But what we've seen is that by taking up the cost that any end user could incur, we were able to increase the demand. But it doesn't really change too much. As far as the, you know, the labour force goes because they were being charged at the last year for SMS that I see is a local currency. So one that I see per SMS, which is cents US in terms of US dollars, it's a matter of cents, literally five cents or so. So I don't believe that we will face that challenge, because the service is so affordable and accessible, we just wanted to do was make sure that people knew about it. So I think that that was the main issue that there as far as sustainability, and when we try to present our findings to the Ministry of Trade, oddly enough, and this is why sometimes, innovation or public sector innovation needs to go hand in hand with what we're trying to do within the development organisation. What we realised is a few months later, the government also created a new job matching service, building on our results, rather than investing in maybe the IP we were working with, that's the implementing partner, they ended up creating an entirely new platform altogether. So I think, you know, the listener can decide whether or not that was a success or whether or not that's a duplication. But I think that that's healthy competition is always healthy. With regard to the kinds of jobs that were being posted on a day to day basis, these were mainly white collar jobs. And that's where the challenge laid for us, because we could not try to get these low skilled jobs onto the platform. And when we found out that this was a consistent and recurring issue, we tried to partner our implementing partner with another startup that was working on very low skilled jobs. And this partnership is still a budding one. So we are yet to be able to communicate any results there. But the jobs that we were receiving, again, were mainly from the development organisations and the private sector, and we face challenges with charge from the public sector. So you know, in kind of a nutshell, that's kind of the issues we're facing with sustainability, but also just on the kinds of jobs. And if I may here, maybe ask questions to my panellists. I think for a Inka what I was really interested in this on the role of

peer to peer networks in the mentoring aspect of what you were talking about. I think that that's something that, you know, would be very interesting for me, rather than those that have success stories, how's the role of peer to peer mentoring with regard to the work that you're talking about? And for Lucas, it was just a quick question on the certification aspect that you were talking about. For the job seekers, I just wanted to inquire about whether the public sector or whether it's the Ministry of Youth or trade or employment, had any validation that they offered to this process. Thank you.



43:33

And so about the certification. So in this case, our cooperation partner, the heartbeat, they had pretty good name recognition, and they were not originally involved in the set. And they like kind of vouch for the certification process. We also included logos of the World Bank, and Oxford University is kind of the research partners. However, now we are currently in talks about scaling it up, for example, with the City of Cape Town, and there has been quite some interest from like public sector entities that would certainly then put their like logo on things to certify the skills. So it's definitely important that these signals come from credible sources that I very much agree with. I briefly speak to the context before lead Inka come to her answer. So in our context, and the platform that our partner has developed, it's actually quite large. So we have they have a user base of more than 2 million active job seekers, which is actually a substantial fraction of the unemployed youths in South Africa. They've achieved this through like long in a long process of kind of building their brand and regulate signing up and keeping in touch with work secrets through like mobile phones, mostly And on the other side, their size has allowed them to build relationships with big and employers of like non white collar employees of entry colour entry level employees, such as fast food chain, supermarkets, those kind of type of memories, and they regularly hire that car at restaurants that has caches, burger gorillas, those kind of jobs, you find plenty on the platform. And that's kind of what they grew up with. This is, of course, somewhat specific to the context of South Africa, where you have a relatively developed a formal sector, and you actually have these large scale formal employers that employ entry level workers and multiple locations across the country. So it might be difficult to replicate in smaller, less formalised economies. But that's kind of something that has worked relatively well, though. Even now, they have to offer like for firms to use their platform, they have to like, support them quite a lot. And before a large fraction of clients like leave, they have to even enter the vacancies on the firm's behalf on their own platform. It's not like these firms, even the large ones, they don't do that by themselves, but rather they asked me to support them and postades vacancies on their behalf. And that's what they do to ensure that there's sufficient kind of well, yeah, labour demand, there is supply of jobs on the platform for this work seekers.



Elleke Boehmer 46:39

Thank you, Lucas. And, and and he incur on peer networks from from Omar.



46:48

Yes. So that's something in my research, I actually found interesting because I did ask them about their business related network business related applications. And it was kind of complicated in the sense that, first of all, those that tended to be part of these, like business

related applications and networks came from more like low income backgrounds, low educational backgrounds, versus those that were had finished tertiary education and decided to take the self employment route, they tended to be more solo and not really enmeshed in networks, which is, I mean, definitely room for where intervention can come in, in terms of connecting them more. But then also, for those in low income backgrounds, in terms of their application, there are a lot of mixed feelings about this association, kind of some people seeing them as kind of constructive as a way for extortion in terms of views from the members. And for quite a number of the population, they didn't really find them helpful. It was almost kind of assumed that they had to join and wasn't really a source of benefit for them. And so in terms of creating PSTN networks, and what that will mean for young people, I mean, I definitely think it could be a resource, but then it needs to be done in such a way that it doesn't become like a hampering factor and doesn't become just another burden for them that they have to join but isn't really bringing benefit.

E

Elleke Boehmer 48:20

Thanks so much Inka. And and thanks. So that kind of crossways section section of the discussion. There are clearly so many links and and learnings in in common that we could explore in in much more depth if we had time. But with an eye on the time, we are coming to the end now of the podcasts. So what I'd like to do is to suggest that we close with, with another around just to kind of a short round of kind of final recommendations. So I'm going to turn to, to each each of you, perhaps in the order in which we began with income and Omar and then Lucas, I'm just going to ask, you know, if if in an ideal world if you had seen a sufficient resources in the different contexts that you working in, what would you in particular like to do in terms of job creation, advertising jobs, reaching out to young people skilled and unskilled? Hooking people up with potential employers and employment? Could each of you just come up with a particular recommendation in closing? Turning to you a in the first



49:57

Okay, I think for me my main emphasis My main recommendation for all important stakeholders is on skills of skilling us, whether we are like employees or self employed, because I mean, that's what will give them power was when they have the skills needed in the labour market to be able to meet the needs. So I think it's really focusing on First up in the education system, and focused on delivering quality education and even beyond that for young people already out of school in the labour market, finding ways to help them gain skills or to develop and improve on the skills that you already have.

E

Elleke Boehmer 50:34

Thanks so much improvement of skills. How about in your context, Mr.



50:42

A, the onus isn't on the public sector alone, but I think that they create one an enabling environment that would allow the private sector and industry firms to be able to create jobs. Right. And I think especially again, falling back on the private sector, part of having that

right. And I think secondly, again, falling back on the private sector, part of having that enabling environment is ensuring that we have employment centres that are equipped to deal with the demand from the job seekers. So it needs to go in tandem, but I believe that it starts with the public sector, creating one enabling environment and to being able to also have employment centres that are well equipped well staff to be able to ensure that people entering the job market for the first time or in the in the job market, looking to rescale and upskill have the resources to be able to do that. And of course, there will always be a friend in the development organisation such as UNDP, and accelerator lab to do this that.

E

Elleke Boehmer 51:40

Thanks so much, Mr. So again, upskilling, and making sure that the employment centres are there and are accessible to job seekers. And yourself, Lucas, your record?



51:57

It's a difficult question, because I think there's no easy solution to the problem. To some extent, they're just not enough jobs. And the kinds of interventions, at least that I've spoken about today, kind of make it easier for work seekers to access these jobs and my that the margin improved employment, but they're not a solution for the problem as a whole. And I don't think there are easy solutions for the problem as a whole, the problem of job creation, and that's very much true for South Africa, but also true in the field here. And I hate to like close this podcast on a somewhat pessimistic note. But I really think this is and the problem he has quite structural. And it's not just about resources for grandmother, about institutional environments, about living conditions, education, beyond just skills, but also in civic education. And I like steering society in the direction in a positive direction as a community. Easy, easily said, as an outside. And I'm not an expert on South African politics, but I'm just as Can I think the problem is much bigger than what we have talked about here today, where we work on very important small issues, but a small epic for the people involved. But they're, I think, relatively small in the grand scheme of things. And when like, we need to find solutions for the like, big things as well. And but that's often beyond the scope of like faith searches, but rather the realm of politics, then we can have, like an advisory board, but there's much more at stake.

E

Elleke Boehmer 53:46

Thank you. Thank you so much, Lucas, it's always good to have a reminder about the real world out there. But I, I really value the emphasis on on upskilling. And on facilitating links in the labour market, between job seekers and between the demand and the demand that is out there. I'd like to thank you, all of you. All three of you so very much for this really, really fascinating conversation. There are some important take homes I think that we've just been touching on. For those who've been listening, and very positive ways I think of moving forward with employment in African context, infrastructure, and social media seem to be two vital aspects. So thank you so very much. Ian kokufu Mensa Omar jag Nick and Lucas Hensel, for joining me today. And thanks very much from the accelerate hub.