

# SUPPORTING THE TVET SECTOR TO ADDRESS YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

The recently released statistics by Statistics South Africa on youth unemployment indicates that the majority of unemployed lacks necessary skills, and that there is a mismatch between skills required to grow the economy and the training offered at higher education institutions.

In 2013, the IDC adopted a strategy to support Technical, Vocation Education Training (TVET) colleges in a response to the National Skills Accord signed by the social partners at Nedlac. The objective was to mobilise the private sector, organised labour, communities and government in a strong partnership to expand skills in the country as a platform for employment creation. The Accord identified eight areas of focus and requested stakeholders to choose where they were able to make firm commitments. The IDC selected Commitment 8 which focuses on improving the role and performance of FET colleges (TVETs were previously referred to Further Education and Training colleges).

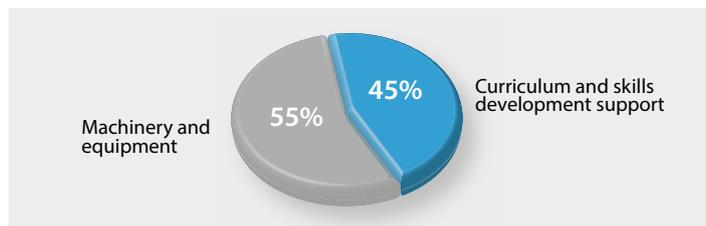
The TVET sector concentrates on vocational and technical skills training, an area declared by government as a national priority in the post-school education and training system due to the high demand for artisans and skilled workers. These institutions are pivotal in addressing high levels of youth unemployment. There are currently 50 public TVET colleges which have more than 264 campuses across the country that fall under the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). According to the department, the TVET sector enrolls approximately 1.1 million students, with the majority (almost one million) in the public sector.

There are huge disparities in the levels of development of these training schools. Colleges in affluent areas are more functional and better resourced, while those in rural districts and townships lack vital resources and equipment critical for vocational and skills training. The other weakness identified is the provision of curriculum that are not responsive to industry and development needs of the country. As a result, many graduates struggle to obtain employment.

The IDC has thus identified this gap and our support focuses on the following two areas:

- Provision of machinery and equipment
- Assisting colleges to design appropriate curriculum in partnership with relevant employers.

Since the launch of the programme, the IDC has invested R11.3 million, supporting 11 colleges. This went to the provision of machinery and equipment for engineering-related workshops and curriculum support and skills training. The expenditure was as per the diagram below.



The IDC has also bolstered curriculum support to enhance skills training in key sectors such as the green and ocean economies. Recently, the corporation collaborated with the South African Institute of Foundrymen (SAIF) to assist the Foundry Training Centre at the Ekurhuleni East College, Kwa-Thema campus in Gauteng, a joint initiative between SAIF (with a membership of over 70 companies), the college and government.

Much still needs to be done in order for the sector to achieve intended outcomes of addressing youth unemployment and providing skills required to grow the economy. Collaboration and partnerships between colleges and corporates are crucial for the success of the programme. One of the challenges is finding employers willing to provide opportunities for students to do experiential learning. Not many companies are willing to take on students due to the mismatch between their training and industry requirements. The IDC will be strengthening its support by seeking and establishing partnerships with industry associations and key clients to provide the necessary internships and develop relevant curriculum.

