

SIFA - Skills Initiative for Africa  
A programme of AUC and AUDA-NEPAD

# Supporting private sector engagement in demand-led technical and vocational education and skills development

An overview of the SIFA Private Sector  
Engagement Approach



## What is the aim of this information product?

The Skills Initiative for Africa (SIFA) is an initiative of the African Union Commission (AUC) and the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) with support from the German Government and the European Union.

This communication aims to share the work of the SIFA Private Sector Engagement (PSE) team with all those who have a stake in effective TVET training and skills development across the African continent. This includes decision makers in government, development partners, commercial enterprises, public and private training providers, and more.

The SIFA Private Sector Engagement initiative began in 2018. This overview gives a brief

description of SIFA's overall governance and mission, then focuses on our Private Sector Engagement activities. The work is guided by SIFA's Private Sector Engagement Framework. The Framework was developed on the basis of insights into how different players in this sector operate, and the kinds of opportunities there are for collaboration in TVET and the broader skills development ecosystem. The elements of the model and the engagement processes are described below.

This is a developmental project and lessons learned will continue to help refine and expand the Framework: here we offer a 'snapshot' as at February 2021.



# What is SIFA?

The mission of the Skills Initiative for Africa (SIFA) is to help strengthen technical and vocational education and training (TVET) systems across Africa, and to work collaboratively in the broader skills development context with relevant players. Our aim is to promote the occupational prospects of young Africans, to the benefit of individuals and the development of country economies as a whole.

SIFA falls under the umbrella of the African Union Commission (AUC) and the African Union Development agency (AUDA-NEPAD), together with the KfW Development Bank and GIZ financed through the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

(BMZ). These organisations support the pledge of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25) to deliver better education standards, increase higher levels of quality employment and scale up entrepreneurship and innovation. SIFA works in terms of Pillar 8 of this framework, the Continental TVET Strategy and the Decade Plan of Action.

SIFA works with AU member states across a number of overlapping topic areas in five African regions. Areas of interest include TVET systems (strategy, legislation, delivery and structures); 'equitable access; promotion of employment; and cooperation and collaboration with the private sector involved in skills development and TVET.

## Where is SIFA's Private Sector Engagement work currently unfolding?

SIFA's work in Private Sector Engagement (PSE) is carried out across the five regions of the African continent: Northern Africa, Western Africa, Central Africa, Eastern Africa and Southern Africa.

Regional Coordinators are the means through which support is provided in these regions. Regional Coordinators (RCs) have a presence in each region, within a formal structure such as a business or employer association in a specific country.

**WORK OUTPUTS  
CONTRIBUTE TO AUDA-  
NEPAD'S EVIDENCE-BASED  
ADVISORY SUPPORT AND  
RESOURCE MOBILISATION  
ACTIVITIES ACROSS THE  
CONTINENT.**



- Central Africa: **Cameroon**
- Southern Africa: **South Africa**
- Eastern Africa: **Kenya**
- Northern Africa: **Tunisia**
- Western Africa: **Nigeria**

Figure 1. SIFA PSC country presence as at February 2021

## What is the overarching goal of SIFA's Private Sector Engagement work?

The Regional Coordinators work to common goals within the model set out in this information product, to benefit their base countries, the regions they serve, and ultimately all 55 African Union member states. Critically, the work has an outward focus in that any knowledge outcomes such as lessons learned and good practice examples are drawn out for continental consumption in support of AUDA-NEPAD's mission and for the benefit of AU member states. While TVET and skills development contexts and needs differ from

country to country and across the regions, there are areas of common interest and common dynamics. Knowledge gained from effective practice in one country can generate ideas and innovations which can be replicated across different countries, and become useful for the development of TVET systems at a continental level. These knowledge products can be found on the online platform **African Skills Portal for Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship (ASPYEE)** which serves as a knowledge repository for this information.

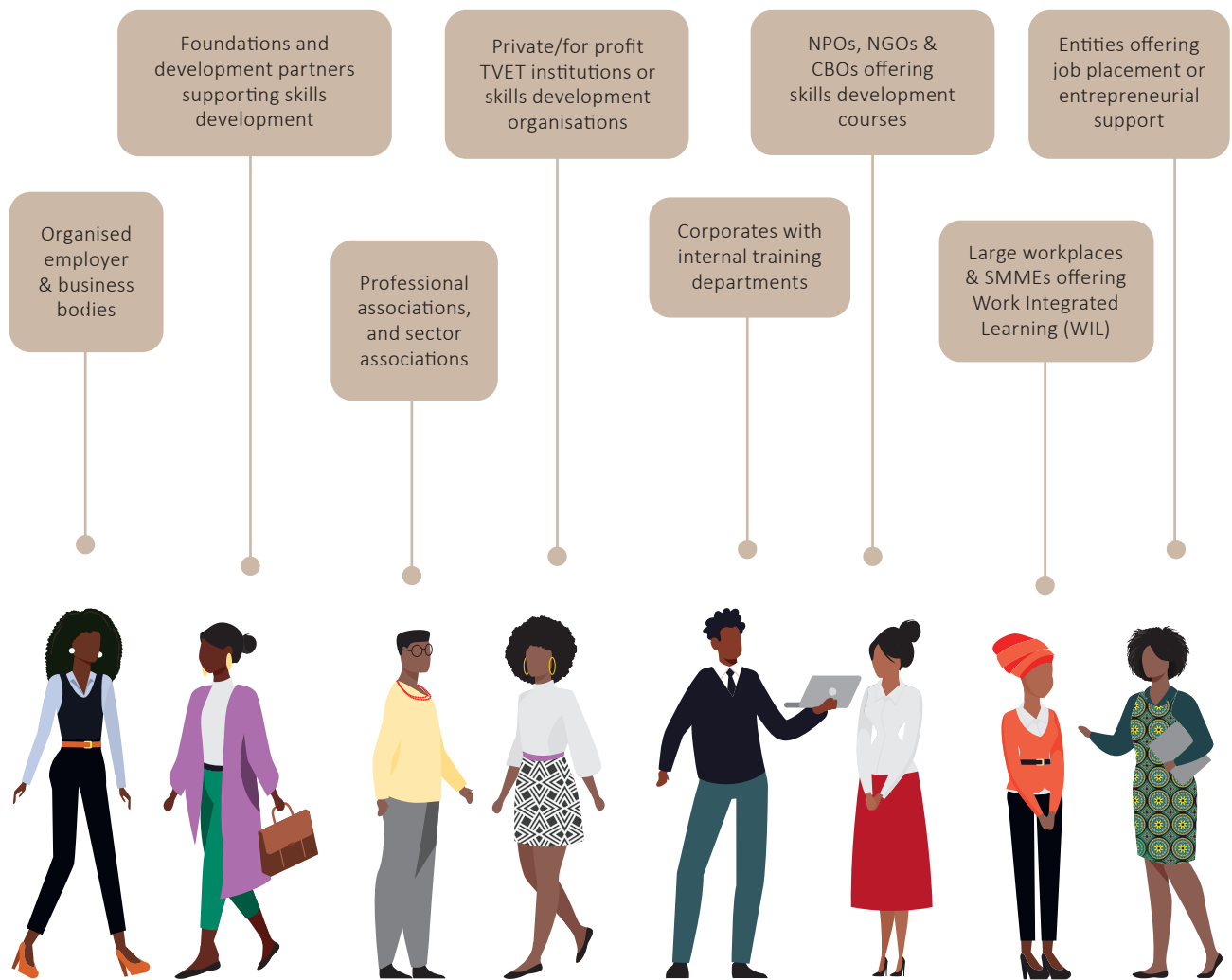
For more information click on the link to **Private Sector Engagement** on <https://nepad.org/skillsportalfor youth>.

## Who are the private sector players in the context of skills development?

Private sector players cover a diverse range of organizational types, from commercial interests to not-for-profits and other development agencies. In addition, private sector interests in TVET and skills development for different occupational sectors and sub-sectors operate in very different ways.

A general overview of the types of players involved is given opposite. Continental and regional bodies that bring together shared interests are listed in more detailed reports, and country-specific profiles are provided in other SIFA information products.

## Private sector players



Some of these players would operate at a number of different levels:



Examples of continental and regional bodies, and private sector structures at country levels, are given in the Country Profiles and other reports.

# What action areas for private sector engagement in skills development and work-integrated learning opportunities does SIFA support?

The mismatch between supply and demand in terms of the gaps between the skills delivered by education and training sectors and the skills required by the world of work has long been recognized as detrimental to prosperity and development. The private sector can play a key role in integrating labour market requirements in training provision, strengthening delivery systems and ensuring that untapped resources amongst women and unemployed youth can be used for mutual benefit.

Members of Business Africa came together in 2018 in a Private Sector Roundtable in the context of “Africa Talks Jobs”, and their deliberations helped inform SIFA’s approach. “Africa Talks Jobs” is a continental multi-stakeholder (government, private sector,

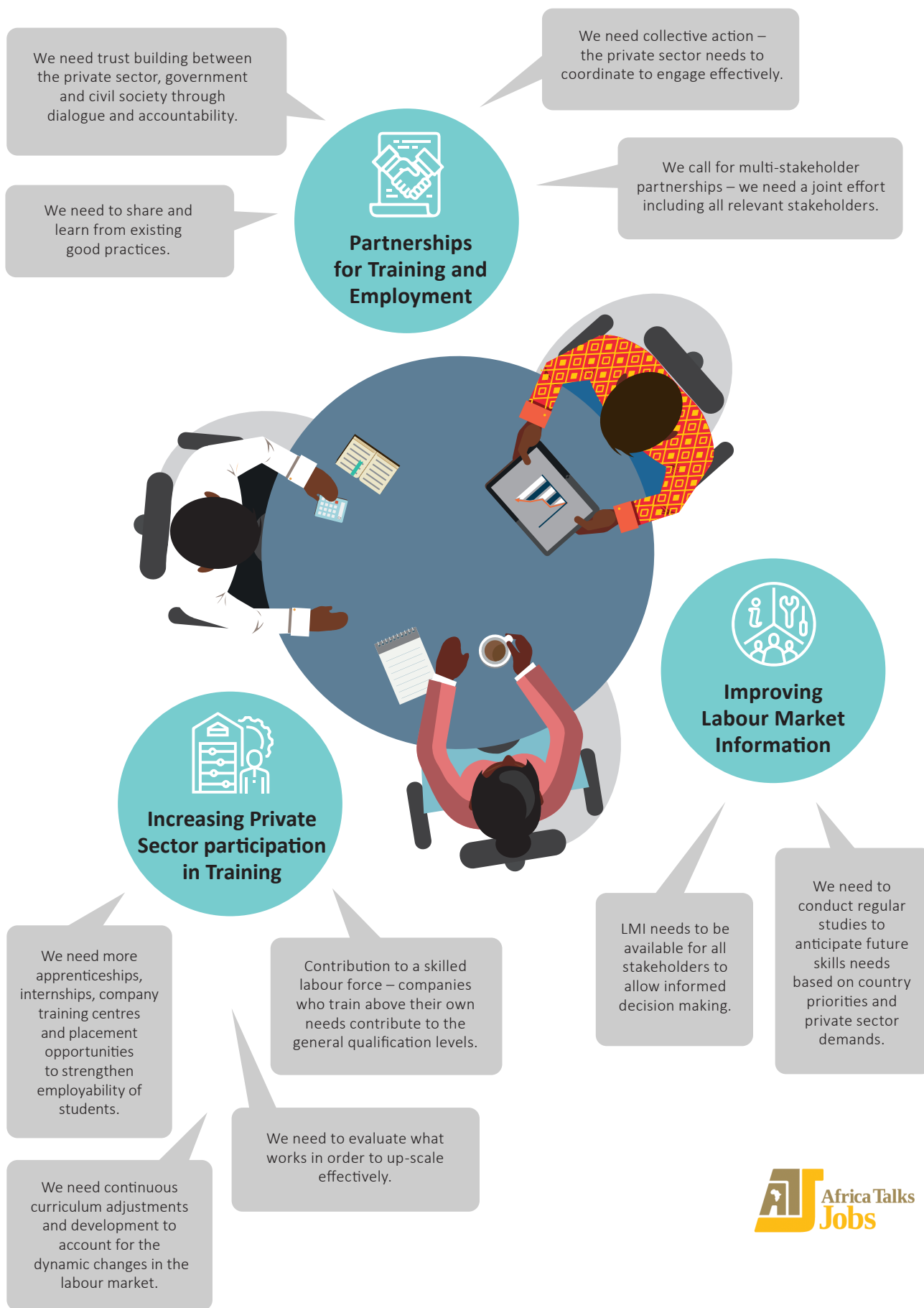
TVET players) platform on education and skills development for employment and entrepreneurship organised by the AUC, AUDA-NEPAD and Business Africa with the support of German Development Cooperation (implemented by GIZ). “Africa Talks Jobs” is set to become “Africa Creates Jobs” as it moves to more proactive information exchanges and collaborations.

On the basis of these and other inputs, SIFA began shaping its approach to setting up regional resources and action plans. Below are some of the areas in which SIFA recognizes that the private sector can contribute, and for which SIFA can offer value-add, facilitation and technical support to private sector roles in the TVET and skills development landscape.

## Areas for private sector engagement

 <p><b>POLICY</b> Input into TVET systems policies &amp; labour market policies</p>	 <p><b>LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION</b> Monitoring and sharing of skills needs &amp; innovations</p>
 <p><b>FINANCIAL SUPPORT</b> For education &amp; training initiatives &amp; resources</p>	 <p><b>WORK EXPERIENCE</b> Recruitment, placement, apprenticeships, internships &amp; WIL</p>
 <p><b>CAPACITY BUILDING</b> For TVET &amp; occupational trainers through work experience</p>	 <p><b>CURRICULUM</b> Input into technical curricula updates &amp; skills for new economic sectors or production systems</p>
 <p><b>PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS</b> With all interested stakeholders</p>	

# Voices of the Private Sector Roundtable



# How does SIFA promote private sector engagement to activate these benefits?

Through the SIFA programme, AUC and AUDA-NEPAD aim to strengthen the TVET and skills development ecosystems in the five African Union regional clusters. Finding a common language amongst players and sharing lessons learned on how multi-stakeholder collaboration can improve skills training uptake and the quality of delivery will ultimately result in productive employment that meets industry needs: this is in the service of the social and economic development of the region as a whole.

SIFA's Private Sector Engagement Framework is a work-in-progress based on principles of cooperation, collaboration and the sharing of information and practices. It is made up of a number of elements.

There is a focus on three levels:

#### MACRO:

Public policy engagement (government departments, business, labour and civil society structures)

#### MESO:

Stakeholder engagement (industry and trade associations, professional bodies, informal sector and youth associations, NPOs)

#### MICRO:

Local sector and workforce planning (local associations, individual businesses, community organisations, NPOs)

## SIFA'S PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

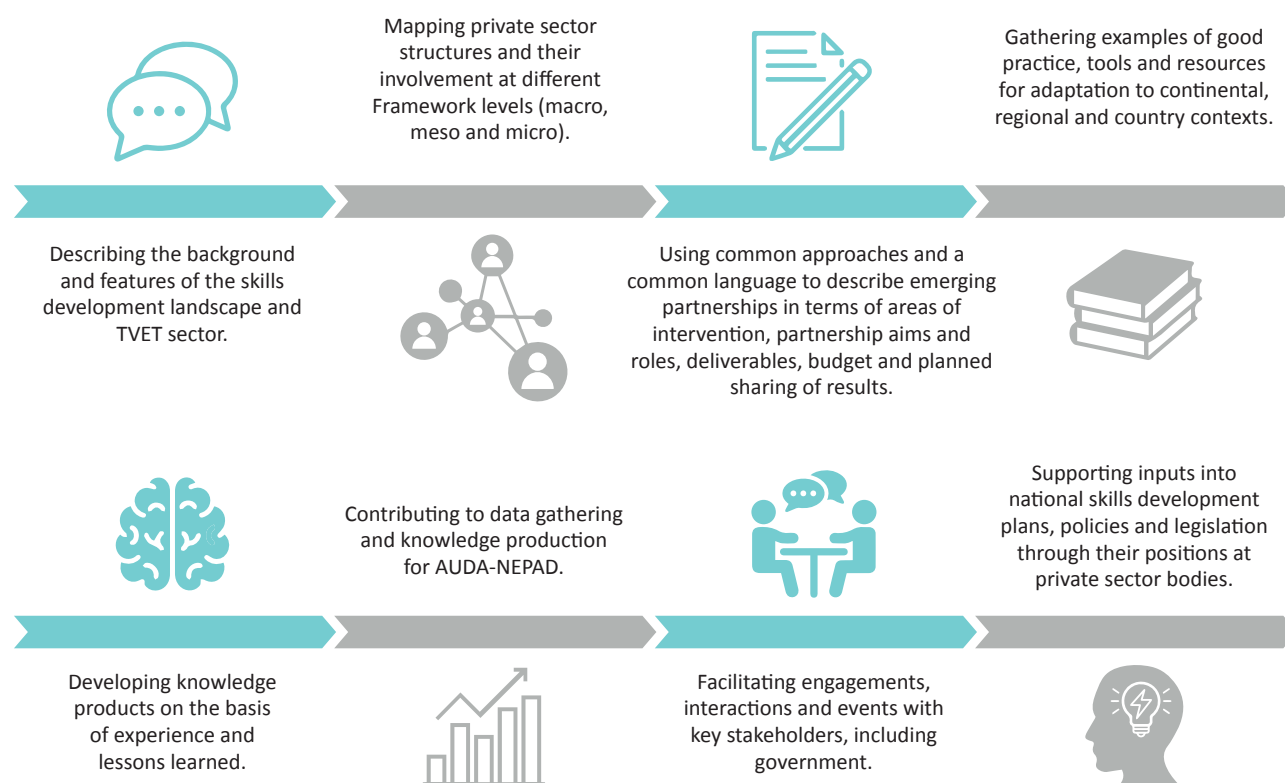
Workstream	Activity Examples	Resource Examples
<b>Regional Coordination</b> <hr/> <b>MACRO</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appoint regional coordinators with common Terms of Reference and Action Plans</li> <li>Identify regional conduits through which coordinators work</li> <li>Develop a common language and set of resources for PSE across regions and countries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PS category mapping templates</li> <li>Partnership templates</li> <li>Action Plan templates</li> <li>Guidelines for providing technical assistance</li> <li>Facilitation guidelines (e.g. for enabling partnerships of supporting events)</li> </ul>
<b>Facilitation &amp; Technical Assistance</b> <hr/> <b>MACRO</b> <b>MESO</b> <b>MICRO</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Influence policy for employment-oriented skills development through evidence-based good practices</li> <li>Harness technical advice from TVET experts to develop strategies and technical guidelines</li> <li>Foster the continental voice of the private sector in AU Ministerial and other high level forums</li> <li>Coordinate different skills initiatives on national, regional and continental level</li> <li>Facilitate partnerships between the private sector and the education sector (mainly the TVET sector)</li> <li>Work with the ILO to develop a skills development supply &amp; demand modelling tool</li> <li>Work with the AUC to establish an African Continental Qualification Framework</li> <li>Scale up good practice approaches</li> <li>Facilitate continental knowledge exchange and dissemination through dialogue platforms and other events</li> <li>Convene and facilitate communities of practice (CoPs)</li> </ul>	



## SIFA'S PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK cont.

Workstream	Activity Examples	Product Examples
<b>Knowledge Management through ASPYEE Portal</b>  <b>MACRO</b> <b>MESO</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gather knowledge &amp; research with private sector partners and agencies such as ILO</li> <li>Develop knowledge products</li> <li>Distil, share and disseminate information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional and national stakeholder mapping</li> <li>Country profiles of PS engagement &amp; partnerships</li> <li>Country profiles of TVET &amp; skills development legislation &amp; structures</li> <li>Macroeconomic studies</li> <li>Sub-sector deep dives</li> <li>Event reports</li> <li>Good practice examples and case studies</li> <li>Guidelines and resources</li> </ul>

At country levels Regional Coordinators are at different stages of intervention, depending on how long they have been in their posts. Action plans and technical support include the following:



The biggest challenge for us, the private sector, is the challenge of partnerships and collaboration with the government and other initiatives. We are all working in silos, we need national coordination, stakeholder forums and a stronger link to the government for policies and funding needed.

The skills initiative provides this platform for us to form partnerships and collaboration on a local level, but also on regional and continental level.

*Folusho Samuel, Former Director Projects  
NECA Nigeria.*



## The impact of COVID-19 on SIFA PSC work

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted all economic sectors across the regions. The private sector's capacity to create jobs and on-the-job training or work-integrated learning opportunities has been severely affected. Access for youth to education and training providers and regular and efficient programme delivery has also been delayed or undermined. These factors make private and public sector collaboration more important than ever.

There is a pressing need to find innovative ways to bolster skills development in this changed and changing context.

# SIFA Private Sector Engagement Knowledge Management

The SIFA Private Sector Engagement Framework and model is linked to a knowledge management strategy for capturing, documenting, distilling and sharing a range of useful information with AU member states in the region. Knowledge products include good practice examples or case studies of lessons

learned, event reports, relevant private sector data, and a range of tools and guidelines to support collaborative action in the regions. Explore the ASPYEE portal and the Private Sector Engagement page for examples of knowledge products.

Visit <https://nepad.org/skillsportalforyouth>.

## Glossary of Abbreviations and Acronyms

<b>ACJ</b>	Africa Creates Jobs
<b>ASPYEE</b>	African Skills Portal for Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship (ASPYEE)
<b>ATJ</b>	Africa Talks Jobs
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>AUC</b>	African Union Commission
<b>AUDA-NEPAD</b>	African Union Development Agency – New Partnership for Africa’s Development
<b>BA</b>	Business Africa
<b>BMZ</b>	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>CBOs</b>	Community Based Organisations
<b>CESA</b>	Continental Education Strategy for Africa
<b>GIZ</b>	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
<b>KfW</b>	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-governmental Organisations
<b>NPOs</b>	Non-profit Organisations or Not for Profit Organisations
<b>PSE</b>	Private Sector Engagement
<b>SIFA</b>	Skills Initiative for Africa
<b>SMME</b>	Small, medium or micro enterprise
<b>TVET</b>	Technical and Vocational Training
<b>WIL</b>	Work Integrated Learning

# Invitation to action

## Work with us!

TVET and Skills Development stakeholders interested in working with SIFA in relation to private sector cooperation are invited to contact:

**Sabine Klaus**, Deputy Programme Manager  
at **+27 79 094 4767** (GIZ AU Project based in South Africa)  
or **sabine.klaus@giz.de**.



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Visit the **ASPVEE** portal for more information on private sector initiatives.

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This project is co-funded by the European Union  
and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

