

AfriGIS celebrates another year of commitment to skills development

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South Africa's unemployment rate, at more than 30%, has major negative impacts on society and the economy. At the same time, skills shortages are a key threat to the future growth of local businesses, particularly in the IT sector.



Christa Welthagen, HR manager at AfriGIS

That's why geospatial information science company [AfriGIS](#) made a commitment more than a decade ago to invest in skills training programmes through learnerships, support for youth skills development and its own internship programmes.

"Helping young people to develop IT skills has been part of our company philosophy from the start," says Christa Welthagen, HR manager at AfriGIS. "Learnerships play a pivotal role in skills upliftment in SA and improving access to employment and we believe it is our duty to contribute to these initiatives. We launched our first Learnership Programme in 2012 in partnership with [MICT SETA](#) and [CTU Training Solutions](#). The partnership has delivered successful programmes for more than a decade and we recently welcomed ten new youths for the launch of the new 2023 Learnership Programme in IT Systems Development – an NQF 5 qualification in software development."

The learners will spend six months at CTU doing theoretical training and writing internationally recognised technical exams. After that, they will join AfriGIS for six months of hands-on workplace experience.

In addition, the company is taking part in its third [YES](#) programme, a 12-month quality work experience initiative that gives unemployed youth the opportunity to gain on-the-job training. YES is a business-led collaboration that seeks out ways, through innovation and technology best practice, to give youth a dignified first chance at employment.

Participants are provided with a CV, reference letter and interview preparedness at the conclusion of the programme, giving them a much greater chance of securing job interviews. AfriGIS currently has seven youths enrolled in the programme, which is run by its implementation partner, the [Cape Innovation & Technology Initiative](#) (CapaCiTi). As an added benefit, AfriGIS has enhanced its B-BBEE status by meeting youth job creation targets through YES.

"One of the biggest challenges for young people, even those with qualifications, is that companies will not hire them if they do not have work experience," says Welthagen. "But they cannot get work experience if no-one employs them. Through YES, they get to enter the world of work for a year, which makes them far more employable. They also have dedicated mentors to guide them through the experience. It is life-changing for these young people and the communities they come from."

Several AfriGIS employees began their journey with the company as interns, including Welthagen herself, and today they occupy senior positions in the company.

"We are proud of playing our part in providing jobs and creating a talent pipeline and we encourage other companies in the IT sector to help young people get ready to succeed in the workplace of the future," Welthagen says. "It is an effective strategy that has the advantage of giving our business the joy of seeing people succeed and thrive."

About AfriGIS

AfriGIS is the leading Geospatial Information Science company in southern Africa that specialises in location-sensitive data and solutions. It provides customers across the board with a suite of web-based tools and APIs to connect to, enhance, and enrich their own data with location intelligence, insights, and trusted data. The organisation was founded in 1997 and celebrates 25 years in business this year. It is a level 1-certified broad-based black economic empowerment (B-BBEE) business, with more than 100 employees, in Pretoria, Durban and Cape Town in South Africa, Dublin in Ireland, and Dhaka in Bangladesh.

Media enquiries:

Lydette Fouche, AfriGIS

Contact details: +27 (0) 87-310-6400, lydette@afrigis.co.za

Irene Masia, AfriGIS

Contact details: +27 (0) 87-310-6400, irene@afrigis.co.za

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