

Fighting unemployment in poverty-stricken areas

ATHENA is a mobile Further Education and Training (FET) College which provides free 'learnerships' to persons with disabilities in poverty-stricken rural areas. Young people with disabilities gain initial work experience while studying towards a nationally recognised qualification.

«ATHENA – the mobile private FET college, taking quality education, training and development to the people, both rural and urban.» (Susan DIPPENAAR)

Name:	ATHENA Mobile FET College
Organisation:	ATHENA – Private FET College
Country/region of origin:	South Africa
Beneficiaries targeted:	Persons with physical and learning disabilities in rural areas
Approach/model/solution:	Mobile college for rural further education and training

FACTS & FIGURES

- 12 months' duration - 1 week class, 3 weeks work
- Participation is free of charge for learners
- Monthly stipend of approx. USD 150
- 80% of learners are employed after graduation

PROBLEMS TARGETED

South African business and government institutions are still not fully compliant with the requirement to have a minimum of 2 percent of total payroll be persons with disabilities. Especially in rural and poverty-stricken areas this leads to an extremely high rate of unemployment among young persons with disabilities.

PROJECT

In order to empower the rural youth with disabilities to overcome unemployment, ATHENA offers learnerships free of charge. The learners and their families do not have to pay any extra cost for travel and accommodation as is the case when they attend a campus far from home. Each learner is placed in a host workplace close to their home and allocated a permanent employee as coach and mentor. Each successful learner graduates with a national qualification and a full year of relevant workplace experience.

ATHENA sources the workplaces, mentors and coaches in close proximity to the family home of the learners. Learning is conducted in English, but assistance can be provided in the mother tongue during the first 3 months. ATHENA facilitates the acquisition of assistive devices where necessary.

CURRENT SITUATION & OUTLOOK

Currently 150 learners are recruited in 3 port towns in South Africa. ATHENA is also exploring opportunities to go across the borders into Africa. In 2013 ATHENA was mentioned three times in parliament by the Deputy Minister of the Department of Women, Children & People With Disabilities as a model of excellence to be supported and expanded.



Graduation of ATHENA students in Richards Bay after one year of workplace experience and classroom training.

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EXPERT VOTING



- Top marks from:
- all voters, NGO voters
- Top marks for:
- access to ICT
 - targeting the blind
 - targeting the Global South

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