



INTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE SPARK IMPACT PILOT

Reflection on the co-creation and
implementation of Sunshine Cinema's
Media Entrepreneur Training Programme
2021 - 2023



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INTRODUCTION

In February 2024, Sunshine Cinema celebrated **three years of the Spark Impact Programme**, a media entrepreneur training programme and our largest South African project to date.

We launched the 10-month programme in 2021 to try to close the digital gap and address the alarming youth unemployment rate. Our flagship programme provides rigorous training to highly motivated and socially aware young people, equipping them with a Sunbox (mobile solar-cinema kit) and the practical skills necessary to earn an income, spark conversations and initiate social change. They are known as Spark Impact facilitators/ambassadors, or more colloquially, as Sparks.

We have carefully nurtured three Spark cohorts, achieved lasting social impact, and realised many of our goals. Now it is crucial that we reflect on our learning journey by undertaking an internal case study evaluation. We wish to evaluate our implementation strategy, the challenges overcome, the successes achieved and the overall outcomes to date. Nomnotho Gumede, our impact lead, conducted a six-month case study using the Outcomes Harvesting (OH) approach to identify, describe, verify and analyse the changes brought about by the Spark Impact Programme.

We define an **"outcome"** as a shift in narratives and actions documented through highlighting how Spark Impact ambassadors/community members/civil society partners have utilised the information from the programme, free impact film screenings or the Spark Impact network to contribute to the generation of economic opportunities and fostering of stronger inclusive communities.

This case study showcases the **profound influence** of this youth-based intervention on participants' lives and its positive effect on our outreach work with partner civil society organisations (CSOs) aligned to our vision. The lessons learned have been used to enhance our growth plans for the next five years.¹

WHO IS SUNSHINE CINEMA?

Sunshine Cinema is **Africa's first solar-powered cinema network**. We empower youth to be confident active citizens, fostering economic opportunities and building stronger inclusive communities by using films to spark conversation. Our innovative model for social change revolves around promoting African Cinema, driving demand for local stories, and facilitating debates in marginalised communities to address pressing social justice issues.

Vision: To build a strong network that empowers youth to become entrepreneurs generating their own economic opportunities, while fostering stronger inclusive communities through impactful storytelling.

Mission: To promote African Cinema by driving demand for local stories, creating space for marginalised communities to engage in debates that address social issues affecting them.

1: This internal case study will serve as a key piece in complementing the external evaluations commissioned by key funders, and we have used the outcomes to determine a baseline for possible impact studies.

WHY THE SPARK IMPACT PROGRAMME?

“From the age of 18 onwards there is a real gap in support for young people, mostly because systems assume they would move quite smoothly through the schooling system into post-school and into the labour market. What we see, through survey data and qualitative work across the country, is that that isn't the case at all. Most young people zig zag in and out and keep churning through education and employment training without ever actually moving forward... the recommendation of the Child Gauge was to look at a more comprehensive way of supporting young people.”

- Associate Professor Ariane De Lannoy, Chief Researcher at Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU)²

The Spark Impact Programme³ is an innovative employment model designed to address South Africa's youth unemployment crisis. Young people between the ages of 15 to 24 years who are Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) in South Africa over the last decade, have consistently surpassed the rate of 30%; this represents a staggering number of over 3 million young people, and reached a peak of 34.3% in 2022.⁴

Our contribution to collective social justice and equity work is based on the observation that South Africa is at a risk of having a lost generation that is not undergoing education/training, nor economically active, nor involved in the country's growth.

Youth in rural and peri-urban areas face additional challenges, including limited access to education, training, and job opportunities, resulting in economic deprivation and reliance on informal sector jobs that do not provide a minimum living wage.⁵ Additionally, such jobs do not provide them with technological skills required for basic entry-level positions in the digital age. Sunshine Cinema exists to level the field by equipping youth from peri-urban and rural communities with market-ready skills to overcome digital exclusion, lack of accessible media infrastructure, and exorbitant data costs that perpetuate cycles of poverty and social injustice.



2: DGMT 2022. [Basic Package of Support for Young South Africans](#)

3: Programme Goals, [what's on offer, who should apply, requirements and time commitments.](#)

4: SALDRU (2023) [Profile of young NEETs aged 15-24 years in South Africa: an annual update.](#)

5: LABOUR AND SOCIAL JUSTICE: [Africa's Employment Challenges, the ever-widening gap, 2021 pg 11](#)

THE GIG WORK REVOLUTION

Since 2018 digital and gig economies have surged across Africa.⁵

WHAT IS THE DIGITAL ECONOMY?

Digital economy refers to the use of information technology to create or adapt, market or consume goods and services; components include digital banking, e-commerce, virtual education, smartphone apps and collaboration platforms.⁶

WHAT IS THE GIG ECONOMY?

The gig economy refers to a labour market that is characterised by the prevalence of independent, temporary work that is conducted on a short-term or a task-by-task basis, and payment is received upon the completion of these tasks. This differs from traditional employment which typically has by nine-to-five working hours and a monthly salary, or contractual employment.⁷

The gig economy is largely dependent on the digital economy because online technology creates opportunities for contract labour to participate in the global marketplace. Examples of gig work include: manual tasks such as transportation, small 'human intelligence tasks' such as tagging photos, transcribing a podcast or photography at an event. Individuals can hold multiple contracts simultaneously as service providers, transforming the future of work with flexibility to earn income from multiple clients.⁸

The COVID-19 pandemic led to increased digitalisation trends. However, widening digital divides threaten to leave developing countries even further behind. In the past three years we have utilised the power of relevant themed African films, documentaries and media content to spark hope and broaden the horizons of young citizens and the older generations in under-served areas, bridging not only the digital divide, but also the intergenerational gap. During the pandemic our training had to go virtual and this in part led to our gig work model which operates mainly in the digital space.

The Spark Impact Programme leverages the gig economy by providing opportunities for freelancing and project-based work, enabling youth in the Spark network to earn income while gaining valuable practical skills and experience using their sponsored digital marketing starter kits (Dell Laptop, external hard drive, Canon camera, YoCo Machine and JBL Headphones).

"Sunshine Cinema really forced me to grow and take my business seriously. For example, I started with Canva but through the Upskillist Course, I've taught myself Photoshop and InDesign. My next goal is getting myself a digital drawing pad to create more authentic designs and illustrations."

– Matshepo Khumalo, 2022 Spark, Qgeberha, Eastern Cape

In December 2023, we rolled out our second annual check-in survey with 2021 and 2022 alumni to monitor their activeness in the Spark Impact network and observe how they continue to utilise their digital starter packs to participate in the gig economy after graduation. The following graphics show how 23 of the respondents fared (see page 6).



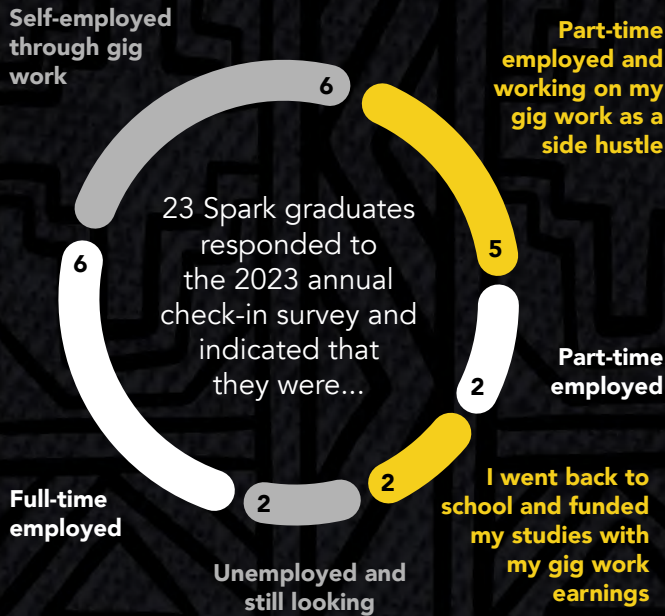
5 & 7: Towards a digital workforce: The building blocks of Kenya's gig economy.

6: Santander. 2022. The digital economy: what it is and why it's the future of business

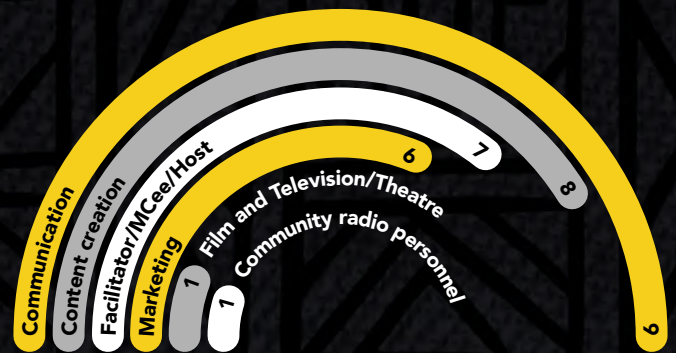
8: Towards an understanding of workers' experiences in the global gig economy, April 2018.

9: Widening Digital Gap between Developed, Developing States Threatening to Exclude World's Poorest from Next Industrial Revolution

Figure 1: Monitoring the Alumni (2021 & 2022 Graduates)



Spark Impact alumni are using their **starter kits** and **skills** gained from the **Spark Impact programme** to earn income in the following sectors:



The programme offers a 10-month-accelerator pathway to a career in digital marketing, content creation and impact facilitation. It utilises the power of relevantly themed African films¹¹ screened on solar mobile cinemas to prompt impact-driven storytelling dialogue and develop new narratives aimed at disrupting social ills. Spark Impact ambassadors gain soft skills, digital literacy, communication, and problem-solving skills, all of which are necessary for success in the future of the working world.

The emphasis on digital tools and media allows Sparks to build their portfolios and participate in the global market. The impact of the programme extends beyond individuals, further engaging youth audiences in facilitated screenings through dialogues on issues that affect their daily lives, fostering collective empowerment, and driving social change. The free community screenings have become a springboard to employability and pursuing further learning opportunities. There is peer learning among Spark Impact facilitators with other youth, and the potential to increase the number of gigs they participate in.

Sunshine Cinema works across all nine provinces¹² in South Africa, and every year we receive 100s of appli-

cations from across the country, and we strategically favour the youth in peri-urban and rural locations.¹³ The youth in the Sunshine Cinema network provide a critical opportunity and a safe space to **#SPARKconversations** which bring about social change. On a broader level, the programme makes cinema more accessible to a wider market. It stimulates local economies by increasing demand for African content and facilitating new jobs that provide digital media services to marginalised communities.

Spark Impact upskills young people to become Spark Impact facilitators/ambassadors, enabling them to participate in the gig and digital economies using their sponsored starter kits; leveraging their interests and the practical skills learned to create opportunities for entrepreneurship and self-employment.

11: Sunshine_Cinema_Film_Catalogue

12: Sunshine_Cinema_Operations_Map

13: Programme_Goals,_what's_on_offer,_who_should_apply,_requirements_and_time_commitments

REFILWE CHILOANE

ADDRESSING COMMUNITY ISSUES AND FORGING PARTNERSHIPS

Refilwe Chiloane, is a **2021 Spark Impact Ambassador** graduate from Empangeni, KwaZulu-Natal. She holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Political Science, International Relations and Sociology. Refilwe gained experience in facilitation and mentorship from working at Wits University for the First Year Experience Development Unit; this prompted her to apply for the Spark Impact Programme.

In 2023, she was offered gig work by the National Film and Video Foundation/Presidential Employment Stimulus Fund (NFVF/PESP) programme via Sunshine Cinema. Her needs analysis of a community in Soweto revealed their wish to focus on climate change and start food gardens. Refilwe thinks the Sunbox is an ideal tool to address food insecurity. She says:

"I rerouted to the relevant films and used some of the content to start conversations around mental health, while inviting partners as per the needs of the community."

Her activism was noticed by leading organisations such as Planet one UbuntuHub (Greenpeace) South Africa, who invited her to partner with them. This motivated her to join Climate Justice Now.

Refilwe and Xabiso Ndinisa, her buddy assistant who helped make the 12-part screening journey a success, were approached by the Wits Reproductive Health and HIV Institute (Wits RHI) and invited to participate in their Community Advisory Board meetings from September 2023 to September 2025.

Through her **Sunshine Cinema network** Refilwe has:

- gained a certification from the Allan Gray Entrepreneurial Programme,
- worked with Unicef and Action Aid, and
- reached 1 233 community members through 34 screenings.

She says **"The Sunbox has been a tool I did not know I needed to unlock doors for my current success. I hope to continue being a Spark Impact ambassador and use African Films and stories to address social ills faced by black Africans in townships."**

Refilwe enrolled into a data analytics programme with ALX Africa Foundation, and is currently part-time Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning (MERL) assistant at Sunshine Cinema. She wants to further her skills and knowledge in evidence-based research and use these skills to address social issues with solutions that will better the lives of underprivileged communities.



SIBUSISO MNISI

DIGITAL PIONEER SPARKING CHANGE

Sibusiso Mnisi, a prominent digital entrepreneur from the 2022 cohort, has recently completed his Higher Certificate in Accounting Science at UNISA. Concurrently, he has been actively engaged in digital content creation via his YouTube Channel and has pursued facilitation opportunities with CSOs such as ACTIVATE Change Drivers.

He serves as a full-time programme assistant at Simunye Home Based Care, where he is involved in implementing the Adolescent Young People programme by the AIDS Foundation. During the Focus Group Discussion (FGD), Sibusiso mentioned the skills gained are helpful in grounding how one carries themselves in the field, especially working with community members.

"I've learnt how to use storytelling to convey a message from the UCT course. Now I am able to think about a complicated film and pitch it down to a level that anyone can understand."

He then took us on a journey of the first time he screened a film. Since then, Sibusiso has reached 754 community members through 22 screenings.

Sibusiso says the *"key issues faced by his community, and discussed in most screenings were: unemployment, lack of information, GBV, co-parenting and human rights."*

Sibusiso has been instrumental in helping the internal team think about tracking tools through formal and informal feedback. For Sibusiso and other Sparks in the FGD, the internal Community of Practice learning forum (Quarterly Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEL) check-ins and informal feedbacks) were highlighted as value-adding -

"We should have more of these, as you have just mentioned the solutions come from us."

He has learned that it takes a team to execute an impactful screening well. When he started the programme, he was doing most of the work alone.

"For the UNICEF and NFVF/PESP gig work, pairing was essential and I learnt the importance of having a core team."

The screening assistants are able to assist with setting up the venue, taking pictures, recording the Sparked Conversation and making other notes, registering completion, and overall, that eases the admin attached to the screening event.

He is making progress towards ensuring there are stakeholders who can support the audience members triggered by the issues in the film. After each screening, the stakeholders' organisations allow people to express themselves. This is where Sibusiso suggests Sunshine Cinema embeds additional tracking systems to prove our screenings are an effective tool, referencing community members to helpful CSOs. He shared this information in the 2023 Bootcamp when he took the new cohort through how to think about a community-mapping exercise when they plan for their monthly screenings.

Currently, Sibusiso is a finalist in the Mr. Mpumalanga pageant competition, organised by the ABM Foundation, which focuses on nurturing, grooming, and empowering young boys. In his campaign, he collaborates with local stakeholders, including Impilo Youth Empowerment, to donate hygiene items and school uniforms to young boys in the community.



THEORY OF CHANGE¹⁴

Sunshine Cinema's **Theory of Change (ToC)** hosts all the sub-programmes in the organisation's portfolio, including the Spark Impact Programme. The ToC overview acknowledges that our vision and impact will be achieved when stakeholders (i.e Sparks) work together with CSO partners to enhance the Community-Based Approach. The case study harvested outcomes based on the ToC developed in 2019 which was used during the Spark Impact Programme to provide evidence to support our assumptions.

The changes implemented to date to enhance the programme are visible in the updated version of the 2023¹⁵ ToC. The Sunshine Cinema ToC developed in 2019 was helpful in structuring the implementation strategy for the Spark Impact Programme. However, looking at it in 2023, there were three pathways that needed to be improved based on how the programme shifted and the contractual objectives of the main funder. In the 2023 ToC we clarify how:

- the Spark Impact Programme in 2021 adopted an entrepreneurial development approach;
- marketing of the programme directly influences recruitment and external sign-ups; and
- the integrated approach to gig work is a youth employment strategy codependent on collaborative partnerships.

14: Thinking Theory of Change for M&E in Social Change context

15: Annexure 1: 2023 Updated Theory of Change

16: From the 2021 - 2022 cohort, we had two Sparks dropping out before graduation, leading to a 95% graduation rate. In addition, from both cohorts, there are three Sparks who became inactive in the network after graduation.

17: **Digital tools:** The quality and model of the digital cameras, YoCo Machines and JBL headphones improves annually based on sponsorships.

The key linkages of the ToC developed in 2019 held true to assumption in certain areas, and the achievements are outlined below:

OUTPUTS

Since 2021, the programme has successfully recruited 63 Spark Impact ambassadors¹⁶, young South Africans who participate in a 10-month accelerator work-readiness skills development programme.

They have:

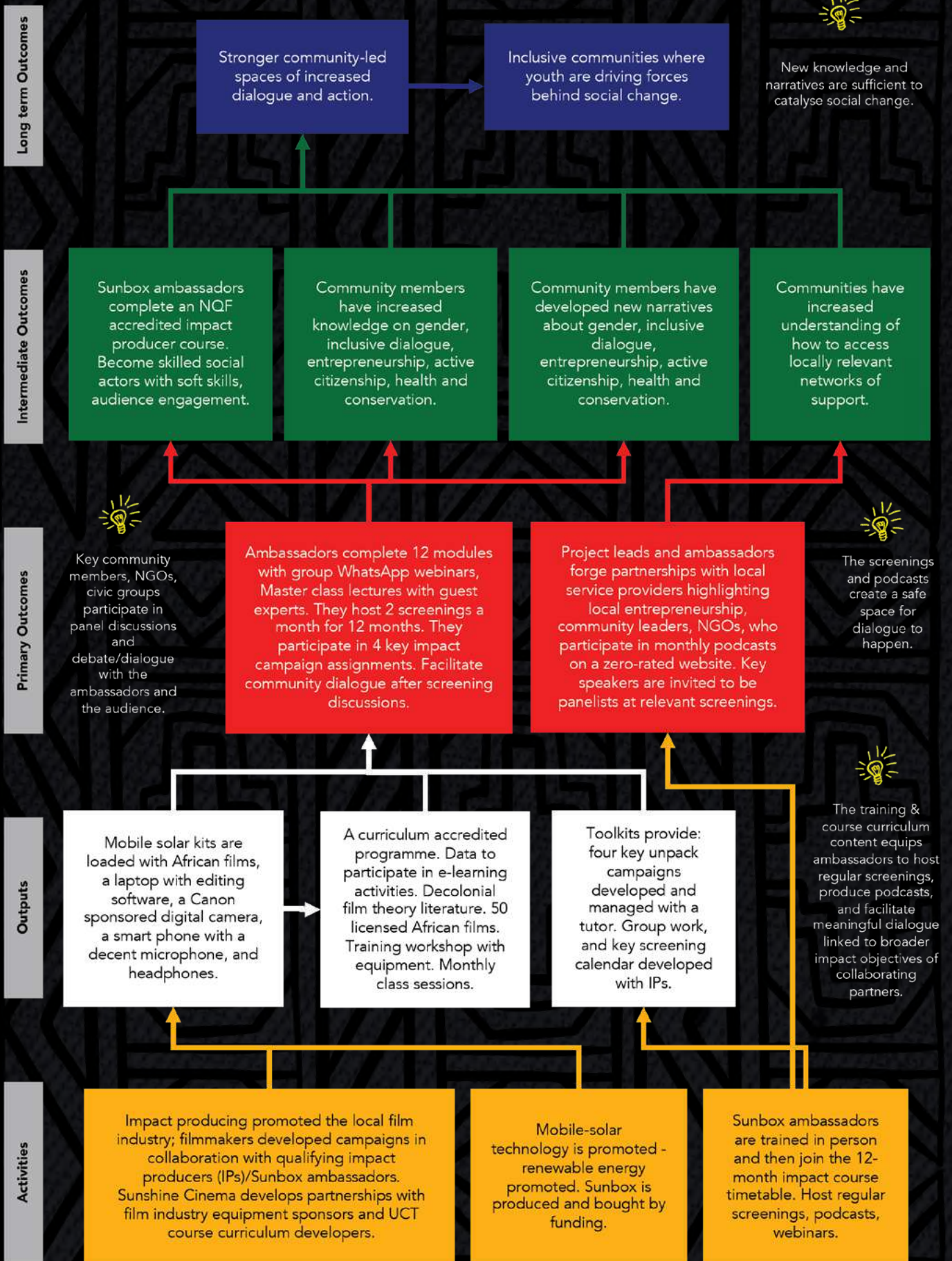
- received starter kits¹⁷ enabling them to earn an income, with preliminary training provided at a weeklong boot camp each March;
- unlocked gig work opportunities each April, with their earning efforts matched by a monthly stipend;
- embarked on virtual digital marketing entrepreneurship masterclasses and training, accompanied by a six-month certified impact facilitator course offered by the University of Cape Town Film and Media Studies Department (2021 - 2023);
- used digital marketing starter packs and the solar-powered mobile cinemas (Sunboxes) loaded with African films to host free community screenings; and
- become certified skilled impact facilitators (with over 1000 hours of training, mentorship and support).

To substantiate this success of the Spark Impact pilot, our case study aimed to harvest for:

- o Positive or negative outcomes.
- o Intended or unintended outcomes in relation to Sunshine Cinema's vision and mission.



Figure 2: Sunshine Cinema 2019 Theory of Change



OUTCOMES

The three key outcomes that emanated from outputs in the last three years of the pilot implementation as reflected by the case study findings and testimonials from programme participants.

Currently, there are **58 Spark Impact facilitators who have graduated**. From three internal alumni surveys and follow-up calls since January 2023, **46** of these young people **are still actively earning between R1 500 - R10 000** on average per month through freelancing, demonstrating a **79% retention rate**.¹⁸



Confirmed income generation:

A total of **R1 650 394** generated through gig work from April 2021 to January 2024. An average **earning power of R27 507** for each of the graduated Spark Impact facilitators over ten months.¹⁹



Spark Impact facilitators have implemented **487 free public solar-powered cinema screenings**, hosting a **total audience of 15 603 #SparkingConversations** with an average of 32 people per screening From August 2021 – January 2024.



18: Results of the network analysis conducted in January – February 2023, and May 2023 through outreach programmes availability and the first biannual survey responses.

19: The initial Spark Impact concept assumed that each Spark Impact ambassador would earn R1 500 over 10 months during training. This target was exceeded, Sparks earned R2 751 average income per month for 5-10 hours of part-time work.

SOCIAL CHANGE AND JUSTICE:

Vuk 'uZenzele²⁰

Young people from marginalised communities face a myriad of challenges in South Africa; apartheid's legacy means many are denied access to quality schooling and tertiary education, leading to economic exclusion and intergenerational cycles of poverty and unemployment.

The COVID-19 pandemic worsened the youth unemployment crisis in South Africa, leading to business closures, job losses, and an economic downturn. Lock-down measures and restrictions particularly affected the informal sector where many young people seek employment. Additionally, the political environment and social media content in South Africa and globally are subject to varied and unpredictable dynamics, which often influences the minds of the youth²¹, engendering feelings of isolation, despair, and disempowerment.

#SPARKconversations

In 2020, in collaboration with principal funder ESquared Investments, Sunshine Cinema partnered with the University of Cape Town's Centre for Film and Media Studies to co-create a six-month online course²² focusing on using film as a tool for impact. At the height of COVID-19, the organisation was able to secure a three-year investment deal to launch the Spark Impact model.²³ A cinema project aiming to **#SparkConversations** grew into an innovative employment training model in a time when thousands of cinemas were closing down around the world, emphasising the importance of storytelling by bringing communities together to engage with social challenges and find collective solutions in order to move forward.



#SparkConversation as a concept is central to Sunshine Cinema's personal branding, a unique approach that places the power of change in the hands of youth, local CSOs, and community-led advocacy initiatives to close the information gap. Spark Impact facilitators host screenings and contribute to increasing knowledge on issues such as: democracy, media, gender-based violence, youth unemployment, mental health, climate change and conservation. After graduation, Sparks are encouraged to continue to act as ambassadors, highlighting issues of accountability, democracy, misinformation, and disinformation in the digital age. They also receive specialist training through outreach programmes and client-based impact facilitation gigs.

This is crucial as increased active citizenship fosters inclusive narratives and behavioural change, a central pillar²⁴ in our Theory of Change. Our work aligns with Social Change and Justice. Evaluations of civil society programmes have since highlighted Social Change does not fit into traditional monitoring methods, organisations cannot always have preset indicators.²⁵ Sunshine Cinema's intervention was co-created and tested with values of collaboration in mind from 2017 to 2020 in South Africa, Botswana, Zambia and Malawi. We believe this approach is creating sustainable impact.

20: Get up and do it yourself, no one is coming to save anyone. The best possible scenario is a helping hand.

21: Youth Power: Growing South Africa together in a time of Covid-19, June 2020.

22: UCT Module Outline

23: Banking Association of South Africa: COVID-19 Impact Report Infographic

24: The philosophy of a hand up, not a hand out.

25: Thinking Theory of Change for M&E in Social Change context

THE Cinema

INTERNAL CASE STUDY

CONCEPTION AND APPROACH²⁶

From January to February 2023, we initiated an internal case study framework to assess the short-term impact of Sunshine Cinema's Spark Impact Programme.

With the collaboration of two board members with extensive research backgrounds (Professor Susan Levine and Faith Pienaar), we developed a research methodology and approach in March 2023. The key stakeholders were involved through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and the case study survey in May 2023. The data as of March 2023 include two bi-annual check-ins with the 2021 and 2022 alumni, and final monitoring data from the 2023 cohort that graduated on the 31st of January 2024.²⁷ This case study **provides insights and answers to pertinent questions** around:

- Notable successes.
- Challenges faced and key factors to note as we move forward.
- Lessons from the past four years.
- The value of investing in social change for funders, sponsors and partners.
- The value of collaborative partnerships and actions between CSOs.

We **collected data** and engaged with 25 participants²⁸ through:

- KIIs with 10 high-level stakeholders (funders, board, partners),
- KIIs with six Sparks from the 2021 – 2022 cohorts,
- five survey responses from the 2021 – 2022 cohorts, and
- a FGD with four Sparks from the 2021 – 2022 cohort.

To gather insights on **programme reach**, we asked participants how they heard about Sunshine Cinema. Responses showed four main channels:

- social media (60%),

- word-of-mouth (20%),
- community events (16%), and
- partnerships (4%).

The **social media communication strategy** was co-developed by Dr. Emma O'Shaugnessy, a former advertising agency executive, with support from Nontokozo Sibanyoni, a former Spark graduate and now Sunshine Cinema media coordinator. The underlying assumption is that an expanded social media presence for Sunshine Cinema leads to effective recruitment and retention of suitable Spark Impact facilitators and an increased external enrollment for the University of Cape Town (UCT) Impact Facilitator Course (IFC). We have observed an increasing interest in the UCT course within the extended Global Impact Producers Assembly (GIPA) network and the rise in sign-ups every year. The Hootsuite analysis validated this, with continuous growth from quarter to quarter since 2021, and a particularly rapid surge from 2022 onward (see Table 1).

The underlying assumption, that an expanded social media presence is crucial for effectively recruiting suitable Spark Impact facilitators and increasing external enrollment for IFC was proved during the funding period. From the 2021 communication key lessons, the growing strength of our social media footprint suggests improved communication with our online audience and aligns with our organisational growth. This knowledge helps us ensure we are reaching the intended participants and adapting our communication strategies accordingly.

SPARK IMPACT SUCCESSES

When we asked the case study participants what the notable successes were, the below opening remarks from our main funder landed as a positive motivation for the work done to date. While the case study results pertain to Spark Impact, implemented in partnership with UCT in South Africa and not our broader work in the SADC region, it is vital to reflect on where it all started (see following page):

26: This internal case study will complement the external evaluations commissioned by funders. It aided in documenting learnings for fundraising purposes in 2023 as we concluded the pilot phase.

27: The organisation self funded this internal case study with limited financial capacity for in person site visits, and audience interviews.

28: To maintain anonymity, identifiers such as gender confirmations were not included in the guiding tools or survey questions.

“Sunshine Cinema was successful before the Spark Impact pilot: The founders managed to do quite a bit of work and expand their work across Southern Africa.²⁹ Funding received in the last three years can be highlighted as the main notable growth, also screening in disadvantaged communities, involving other partners and reaching a bigger audience.”

- Cheryl Jacobs, ESquared³⁰

TABLE 1: HOOTSUITE MEDIA ANALYSIS TO CONFIRM SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

Timeframe	Total Posts	Total Post Engagements (Comments, Likes and Sharing)	Total Impressions (Posts landing on different users' feeds)	SA followers & fans	Total social media following across accounts
2021 (JAN - DEC)	935	7 383	21 022	N/A	13 800
2022 (JAN - DEC)	740	1.1 million	12.1 million	4 500	15 000
2023 (JAN - DEC)	2 030	3.9 million	4.1 million	7 000	18 000

Spark Impact Model Works



Our model enables young people to learn skills and embark on entrepreneurial training; improving their access to varied gig work opportunities. The time invested in building the model was necessary to ensure that Sunshine Cinema was self-sustainable in the long run.

We Adapt to Grow



Cheryl Jacobs, head of social entrepreneurship at ESquared Social Investments, said another key success has been the team’s willingness to change and adapt. She said that team growth occurred as a result of the leadership perspective of the co-founders. They were able to attract the right kind of talent to come alongside and work towards the desired objective.

They also allowed “the model to be poked, prodded and started over to co-create it for a more holistic offering that has a number of beneficial partnerships and impact touch points.”

Recruitment is Effective



The Recruitment Strategy for the Spark Impact facilitators has been effective. As mentioned, previously, we have a **92% retention rate**, and for ESquared as the main funder of the pilot phase, this is value for money. Jacobs from ESquared noted:

“The recruitment of young people is such a responsible and intentional thorough process. It yields success visible through the retention rates compared to other entrepreneurial pilots.”

UCT Course Adds Weight



The introduction of the structured UCT course and the certification awarded to Spark Impact facilitators who graduated was another major win.

According to **Mofenyi Kgamane**, one of the longest serving Sparks “The UCT course certification gave the ambassadorship weight. In comparison to the 2018 ambassadorship.” Mofenyi notes the 2018 interaction with the programme as touch-and-go, “We did not have much equipment. Our Sunbox did not have the things they have now, and we did not have the solar panel. For us it was just the basic items, the projector, speakers.” This was confirmed by a 2022 Spark, **Nthabiseng Magosha**: “We can think about a film that is very complicated, but in a way that anyone can really understand. We can relate because of the Spark Impact Programme and UCT course.”

Learning Endures

One of our outreach partners interviewed, a UNICEF representative noted that the programme comes with extra elements of learning for everyone involved:

“It’s peer driven, with young people at the core and they act as influencers to their own opinion and as mentors to their peers. Sunshine Cinema is already ensuring that young people are left with something, it’s not just a once-off offering, they are left with skills they learn in the UCT Course that they need to continue the work.”



29: Film Impact Tours

30: The Spark Impact Programme is largely funded by ESquared alongside support from Investec Legacy Wealth Fund, Nedbank, K Period and Perspective Fund.

Screenings Break the Silence

During the FGD, there were various shared perspectives among Sparks of what happens when they screen impact films in their communities. Some of these insights included the communities viewing the screenings as a chance to amplify their voices and as a safe space to address issues that are affecting them.

“Film screenings opened a safe space in my community, people are now more open about the issues they face. Especially GBV, the screenings broke the silence around social issues perpetuated by social norms. The impact is communities rethinking issues that have been normalised. For instance, issues of co-parenting, where young women might feel entitled to denying men access to see their children due to the inability to contribute financially. It may be deemed culturally fit for certain villages and families, but impact films screened have been key to highlighting how emotionally damaging it is, especially with unemployment in South Africa being high.”

- Focus Group Discussion

HOW DO WE DO IT?

The **recruitment strategy** is based on a referral system across partner or vision-aligned organisations before opening the call to a wider audience across our online platforms.

The process to select Spark Impact facilitators and the high retention rate can be attributed to our rigorous and thorough selection process. This ensures that we only recruit candidates who are passionate about social change, media and activism. All team members are involved in the process of reviewing the applicants who complied with all the steps of the application process. Candidates undergo a telephonic interview with the programmes director and youth coordinator. The final selection committee includes key members of the organisation and board, carefully reviewing and selecting the 20 Sparks who will participate in the Spark Impact Programme. The expertise of the board, programmes director and youth coordinator, who engage with Sparks throughout their 10-month journey is instrumental in making the final selection. This attention to detail ensures that we have a highly engaged and motivated cohort, leading to a high retention rate.



INCOME GENERATION



In 2019 and 2020, Sunshine Cinema ran a pilot Sunbox ambassadorship programme funded by the Prince Claus Next Generation Fund, The Bertha Foundation and Movies that Matter. To address the sustainability issue, the gig work component was introduced to prioritise entrepreneurial training, provide essential tools for access, and implement a matched criterion process for a stipend, based on each Spark's efforts to earn income over the 10 months. The team went back to the drawing board and co-created the Spark Impact Programme with ESquared's social investment committee, a learning curve that resulted in the first cohort starting their journey in April 2021.

There is a sliding scale in terms of stipends: A Spark generates their own gig work income to unlock a certain amount of a stipend. There are three levels to the scale every month during the Spark Impact Programme. This flexibility motivates each Spark in the training cohort to try different earning opportunities to access the maximum stipend:

1. **R100 – R500 gig work earning**
➔ unlocks a **R500** Stipend
2. **R501 – R1 000 gig work earning**
➔ unlocks a **R1 000** Stipend
3. **R1,000+ gig work earning**
➔ unlocks a **R1 500** Stipend

From the first cohort, Sparks have continuously exceeded the annual target of independent income generation (R200 000 per cohort), and each cohort gets better than the last one. We call these lessons and strengthening of the training support offered to the next cohort the "pay-it-forward" model. The success of each cohort has resulted in improved Starter Kits sponsorships from Canon Camera, Yoco and JBL. Table 2 (see following page) presents the earning power of each cohort using their starter kits to access freelance work in the digital market. The sliding scale for stipends is crucial as it empowers young people and eliminates dependency on the idea of the South African social welfare state.³¹ Case study participants, especially Sparks, acknowledged that grasping the entrepreneurship aspect takes time, but it sets the Spark Impact Programme apart and makes it intriguing.

One of the key intended outcomes is to give the Sparks skills to use to earn income outside of the programme. It was satisfying to hear Refilwe Nongcebo Chiloane, 2021 and Nthabiseng Magosha, 2022 agree in different phrasing yet noting that "The biggest benefit of being in the Spark Impact Programme is **gaining practical skills and income generation**: The subconscious skills you learn through screenings, i.e. project management, public speaking." These are in addition to online master classes and the sustainable key skills they acquire through practical impact film screenings. Refilwe is now working with Sunshine Cinema as a part-time Monitoring Evaluation Research and Learning (MERL) assistant, while Nthabiseng is regularly hired as an MC for Sunshine Cinema events in Cape Town where she works as a radio presenter.

The other key social issues the programme contributes to addressing in South Africa include:

- o Democratising access to the gig economy:

"By providing both the hardware, software (camera and laptop and whatever else is needed [data]) for young people to access gig work, you offer them a choice to explore between sitting at the building and having a boss, or choosing to be their own boss and finding opportunities to earn income."

- Cheryl Jacobs, ESquared

- o Connecting the unconnected, enabling marginalised young people to participate in social agency and change:

"The greatest win is seeing the increase in confidence of the Spark Impact ambassadors: Their aura changes, the increased confidence and mental health. How the programme gives them the sense of owning their own lives, with the little bit of help from people who believe in them, they go on to achieve things beyond their wildest dreams."

- Hlubi Mboya-Arnold, Sunshine Cinema board chair

31: A welfare state commits to providing basic economic security for its citizens by protecting them from market risks associated with old age, unemployment, accidents, and sickness: South Africa suffers from a deep malaise characterised by high levels of unemployment, poverty and inequality. Our economic problems are structural and deep-seated and require extensive and thorough surgery. No quick fixes (grant systems) will do.

TABLE 2:

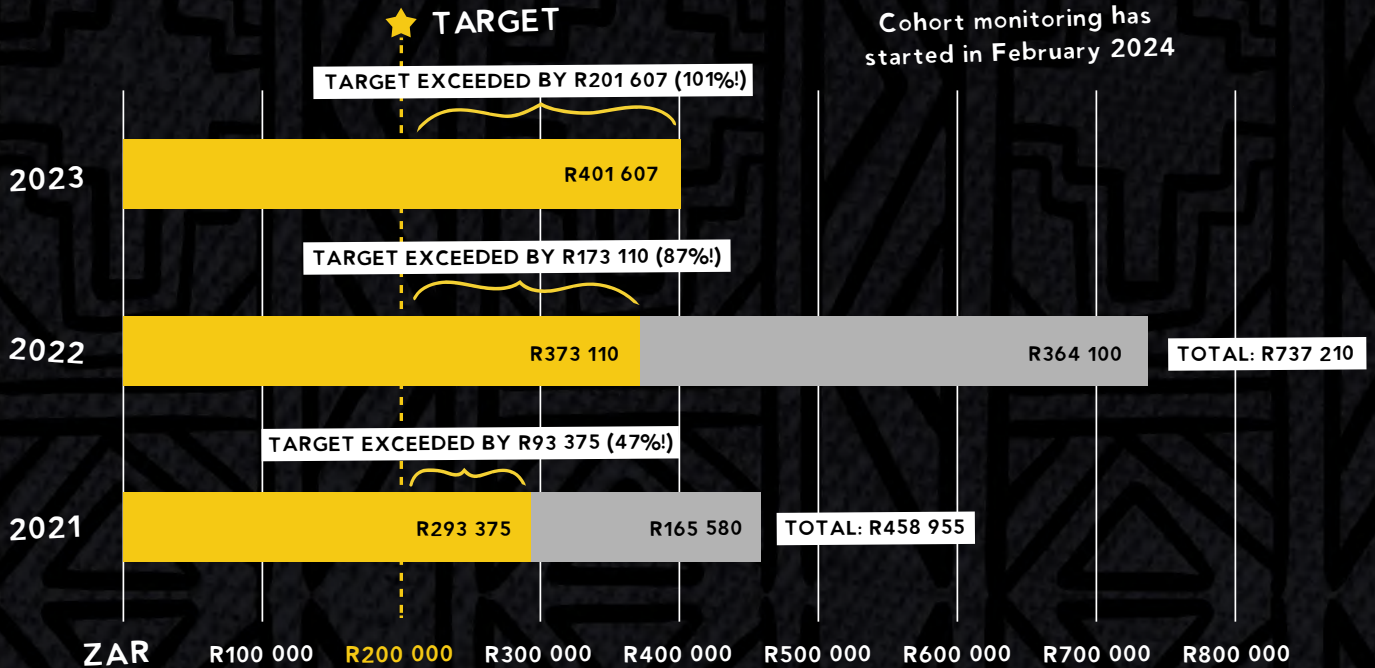
GIG WORK EARNINGS ACROSS THREE SPARK IMPACT COHORTS

INDICATOR: Spark Impact ambassadors raise R10 000 from the gig economy over 10 months.

Actual Earnings

SC Gig Work Earnings after graduation

Cohort monitoring has started in February 2024



SPARKS IMPACT CHANGE

The **integrated approach** to outreach programmes:

Sunshine Cinema has 54 Sunboxes - zero-carbon solar powered mobile cinemas that connect communities to information, entertainment, and civic engagement across South Africa. The demand for trained impact facilitators was a positive unintended outcome. Through outreach programmes we can retain graduate sparks in the network long after they successfully complete the 10-month journey and graduate. This improves their facilitation skills and broadens their networks through CSOs. They continue advancing our vision, while working with our partners to facilitate engagements with intended participants to achieve partners' outreach objectives.

What contributes to the success of the Spark Impact Programme is how Sunshine Cinema as an organisation shows up for all key stakeholders. Our collaborations with young people, communities and other social change organisations and institutions supports the aspiration and desire for a more equal, equitable and inclusive future.



NONDUMISO MADLALA

SPEAKING OUT AGAINST GBV WITH POWERFUL FILMS

Nondumiso Madlala hails from iNanda in KwaZulu-Natal. Nondumiso has been part of three outreach campaigns from October 2022 to July 2023, and each campaign targeted local issues of gender-based violence (GBV) that needed an active young woman who can Spark Conversations courageously. Her background in impact film producing, and enthusiastic participation made her suitable for *Lobala, A Bride's True Price?*, UNICEF and the NFVF/PESP screenings.

iNanda is adjacent to Ntuzuma, KwaMashu and Phoenix, set back by the unfortunate events of the 2021 July social unrest. When we asked Nondumiso what these screenings meant to her community, she mentioned that *"during the conversation, people felt good voicing out on their concerns...I found that interesting that they're able to talk and they're able to voice out and it wasn't a matter of me telling them what to say."*

The community found a space to have conversations that matter and take actions to address one key social issue of GBV.³² She says after one screening old men declared they were going to start a safety forum to protect women by accompanying them to and from bus/taxi stops, especially in winter.

"My community saw screenings as a new medium of conveying messages. It became easier to break the silence during the screenings, it was a safe space to share what people are going through and how crime was affecting them."

Our work with UNICEF presented challenges that Nondumiso and eight other Sparks tabled in feedback sessions. As a result, the partnership with UNICEF helped us enhance our Impact Facilitation Guide as we purchased the Heartline (Fathers Matter) six-part impact films that are shorter and multilingual. These are useful for #SparkConversations around mental health when our time is limited e.g. in schools, health facilities, imbizo.³³

Nondumiso is currently working on a short feature film called *Maluju* in partnership with Thako Media, a project funded by NFVF/PESP, and has been serving as a screenplay writer for *Uzalo* since March 2023.

"Sunshine Cinema has really changed, not only my career, but my thinking capabilities as a filmmaker. I've learned so much from doing impact screenings, about people, my community and even about myself... I have also grown when it comes to the distribution/marketing part of it. It has the advantage of being a solar-powered cinema network. The ability to reach rural areas and marginalised parts of the world to screen without electricity."

- Nondumiso Madlala

unicef 
HEARTLINES

THE CENTRE FOR VALUES PROMOTION

³²: South Africa's leading murder and rape cases are recorded by iNanda Police Station, this is where the GBV meeting was held.

³³: Imbizo is a forum for enhancing dialogue and interaction between traditional councils and the community. Imbizo also highlights people's concerns and grievances.

SUCCESSFUL

IMPACT CAMPAIGNS

Active Citizenship Campaign:

From November 2023, Sunshine Cinema's gig work-based screenings are aimed at increasing voter registration and improving civic education for the upcoming 2024 elections. This initiative is co-funded by the Oppenheimer Memorial Trust, Investec private wealth trust, and RAITH Foundation. This campaign promotes inclusive communities and active citizenry by enhancing the participation of youth voters in rural and peri-urban areas. This campaign is rolled out in five provinces: KwaZulu-Natal, Free State, Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga and Northern Cape. To date 46 screenings have been conducted focused on mobilising eligible voters to register before the 23rd of February, while the remaining screenings are focused on improving youth voter turnout on the 29th of May 2024.

Spark Impact Extended Programme with the National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF)/Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme (PESP) Fund:

The initiative with 134 screenings reached a total of 5 035 audience members. It focused on impact facilitation, monitoring the value of Sunshine Cinema's screening events in shaping the informal economy in various marginalised communities. This gig work opportunity for graduates funded by NFVF/PESP revealed the importance of tracking and monitoring the community benefits of hosting impact film screenings. It's not only our Spark Impact facilitators who benefit and earn from Sunshine Cinema outreach programmes, but community members as well. For example, food and drink vendors can also earn income at the screenings.

UNICEF - Engaging youth through film screenings:

In partnership with UNICEF, we held 33 screenings reaching 1 571 audience members. The aim was to support the social and behaviour change unit in prioritising communities through youth-led film screenings and dialogues to promote knowledge on social and structural determinants of health for COVID-19 prevention and vaccination from November 2022 – March 2023.

"Going into communities with Spark Impact facilitators to screen films to young people that relate to them falls under edutainment. It's not boring flyers, with just information coming at them, they can actually identify with what they are seeing up there. The success lies in the fact that you can inform young people but also engage them in discussion. You get to hear them in the discussions that follow."

- UNICEF representative



MAJOR LESSONS LEARNED

All lessons learnt from 2021 and 2022 were used to train cohort 2023 Sparks and this yielded positive results. **Here are five of the major lessons:**

1. Gig Work is Crucial: To ensure the sustainability of the programme, we realised that youth not only had to be taught entrepreneurial skills, but they actually had to practise them. Our gig work model was introduced in 2021 and it is from this point that our programme really took off. Sparks gained soft skills, digital literacy, communication, and problem-solving skills, while leveraging the gig economy and their digital starter kits to secure freelance project-based work. This enables youth in the Spark network to earn income while gaining valuable practical skills and experience.

2. Sparks Need Training on Customer Interaction: In 2022, one of our lessons in relation to gig work from the 2021 cohort was that Sparks struggled with approaching clients, as a result, their first months of gig work were not very strong. We resolved to address this in their Bootcamp training with masterclass sessions on identifying pitch tactics and unique selling point strategies in how they market themselves and their brand.

3. Knowledge Distribution is Key to Achieving Social Equity: While communities have actively shared their ideas, there are traces of misinformation and disinformation not aligned with the needs, backgrounds and capabilities of South African citizens that perpetuate stereotypes and create further despondency. The

younger generation is aware, keen to see change and ask questions to learn new things and be better informed on the history of this country. Through conversations arising from the Active Citizenship film screenings, the generational gap was evident as old people tend to be more bound by cultural beliefs.

4. Mental Health is a Priority: In the context of global economic recovery and skills development, developing countries like South Africa face significant challenges. The impact of COVID-19 on young people was profound, with issues like mental health, imposter syndrome and load-shedding affecting them simultaneously. The Spark Impact Programme aims to provide a safe space for development, offering support and accountability. These common issues are addressed for all Sparks, but individual social issues also influence their active participation in the network. Moving forward, we plan to monitor each Spark's progress bi-annually, tracking their gig work earnings or career shifts, and assessing their overall mental well-being after completing the 10-month training.

5. Sunshine Cinema Contributes to Various Economies: Spark's gig work with NFVF/PESP highlighted the value of Sunshine Cinema's screenings contribution to the informal economy in marginalised communities. Since March 2023, with the integrated approach to gig work, we have learnt there is economic activity with an average of three community members to produce a quality screening (caterer, venue etc). Therefore, Sparks expand the pay-it-forward model as investment is made back into their communities.

TABLE 3: INFORMAL LIVELIHOOD JOBS CREATED

Informal jobs created	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	Totals per job
TOTAL AMOUNT paid for Catering	R7 941	R3 063	R150	R8 423	R6 430	R570	R7 972	R3 585	R1 461	R39 595
TOTAL AMOUNT paid for Venues	R2 105	R2 350	R500	R3 520	R2 300	N/A	R3 400	R3 400	R300	R17 875
TOTAL AMOUNT paid for Transport	R710	R2 410	R800	R4 278	R1 505	R450	R1 750	R200	R200	R12 303
TOTAL AMOUNT paid for Screening Assistants	R1 306	R3 500	R700	R5 790	R4 915	R700	R2 500	R3 585	R7 500	R30 550
TOTAL per month	R12 116	R11 323	R2 150	R22 011	R15 150	R1 720	R15 622	R10 770	R9 461	R100 323

To date, **112 informal invoices have been recorded**, with an average of **R898 per job**, and most of these informal suppliers have been paid **over three times**.

KGABO REJOYCE

LEGODI

CLIMATE JUSTICE CHAMPION FROM RURAL LIMPOPO

"When unpacking climate related social issues, films like Thank You for The Rain, My Octopus Teacher, Sisters of the Wilderness always land with the audience and help in Sparking Conversations. Sunshine Cinema skills and the facilitation course offered in partnership with UCT landed me in Geneva at the Science Summit, an overwhelming and exciting opportunity that I still reflect on to date."

- Kgabo Rejoyce Legodi

Kgabo Rejoyce Legodi is one of the youngest and most active Sparks in the 2022 cohort, originally from Polokwane, Limpopo. Before joining the programme, Kgabo enrolled with Sinelizwi Citizen Journalism Project and graduated Top Performer in Limpopo. She had also been exposed to amplifying and sharing leadership stories as an Activate blogger, and she felt Sunshine Cinema was the right fit for her.

She thinks the Spark Impact Programme has helped her take advantage of new work opportunities. *"I was not a LinkedIn enthusiast, I only became super-active in 2022*

when the Sunshine Cinema team motivated us to activate or update our accounts to be noticed by potential partners and be proud of our advocacy and activism work." LinkedIn is now Kgabo's networking space, offering her paid opportunities with #KeReady and Youth Climate Voices.

Kgabo has become a renowned climate change advocate across Limpopo and has partnered with a climate change organisation called People, Profit and Planet (PPP) to adopt native languages in her community outreach facilitations. From August to September 2023, Kgabo travelled with Rene Weston, SC programmes director to Kenya on a ten-part short-term impact screening project with a film called *Journey to Justice*. This campaign in collaboration with Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) highlighted the importance of active citizenry, community cohesion and external partnerships in advocating for natural resource conservation for livelihoods.

Kgabo's courage has seen her going to the core of the drug and addiction problem with an invitation to screen impact films in one of the rehabs in Polokwane and her reflection on this has been:

"The security measures were nothing I experienced before, but I learnt how ethics becomes a huge part when reaching such participants to ensure their identities are safe. We were searched going in and going out. At Sunshine Cinema, we believe 'the world has enough sunshine (Solar power) to support information equity' hence our approach to use the solar-powered cinema approach to promote active citizenship and green energy dialogues."

THE AUDIENCE SPEAKS

From recruitment to the five-day Bootcamp, we go on a journey of inclusive rigorous and intensive training to onboard Spark Impact facilitators. The annual Bootcamp³⁴ is critical for programme success. The Sunshine Cinema team and carefully selected facilitators spend five days planting the seed of social activism with the Sparks. Their 10-month journey is kicked off by Dr. Jude Clark, who focuses on facilitation training for courageous conversations.

“The Bootcamp is critical and gives each new cohort an idea of things they’re going to face. From different people to different personalities, the facilitation shows you how to articulate yourself in a situation where audience members do not understand the message.”

– FGD

Hlubi Mboya-Arnold, our board chair, feels that for our audiences the impact is the cinema experience itself. For many audience members, Sunshine Cinema is their first experience of watching a film. Films are not only for the rich or middle class; all communities get to have this experience through the work of Sunshine Cinema.

To monitor the primary outcome of increased knowledge on key social issues such as: democracy, media literacy, gender, mental health, and climate change, Sparks interact with audience members after screenings to capture their feedback and gauge if they have used information gained from previous screenings.

The following quotes are from audience members:

*This Land*³⁵ feedback **by an active citizen:**

“After a screening of *This Land* by Thabang Thapo in Soutpan in the Free State, as the audience we became aware of opportunities that could come out of the proper utilisation of tribal land. From there I was able to secure two pieces of land. Throughout the movie I asked myself, ‘What if I venture into farming?’ and now it is happening.”



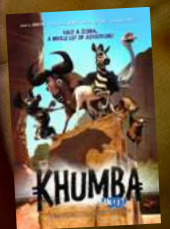
Uprize! feedback **by a School Principal:**

“June 16 is one of the topics the students have touched on, but after watching the films they wanted to ask their history teacher to revisit those topics, then compare what they saw and heard to what they are being taught.”



*Khumba*³⁶ feedback **from a primary school teacher:**

“Since Sunshine Cinema came to our school, we have seen a lot of change in our learners’ behaviour. Their academic performance has improved as they are learning to express themselves better.”



Womanhood feedback **from an audience member:**

“All these perfect bodies that we see on social media are not real. We need to clap for, and uplift other women.”



Losing Lerato **audience voice note** feedback:

The young audience member talks about the plot twist in the script that highlights the challenge of loving fathers who want to be with their children but are denied access because of financial constraints.



Good Madam **audience voice note** feedback:

The young audience member interestingly links this movie to issues of intergenerational conflict, and how it affects relationships between mothers and their daughters.



Shaina **voice note** feedback:

The audience member who is an educator openly shares the importance of having screenings as a chance to be in conversations that help them understand how to help minors embrace their sexual identities.



34: [Bootcamp 2022](#) & [Bootcamp 2023](#)

35: The Director, Miki Redelinghuys is the UCT Film Impact Screening Facilitator online short course convener.

36: The licence Sunshine Cinema holds offers a multilingual version of this film. Helping to bridge language barriers with the young audience from rural locations.

CHALLENGES FACED

DURING THE PILOT PHASE

Growing organisations typically face a number of foreseen and unforeseen challenges when piloting a new social change intervention. We have limited resources and need to explore all possible options to ensure Sunshine Cinema continues investing knowledge and skills to empower youth as confident active citizens, generating economic opportunities while they contribute to building stronger inclusive communities. Case study participants noted the following challenges, some known to us with ongoing activities (fundraising) working to resolve them, and others were a blind spot that we commit to paying attention to in the next months, as we conclude the pilot phase and implement outreach programmes in the pipeline.

KNOWN CHALLENGES

“Financing is always going to be the highest priority because money sustains it all”: The challenge is finding consistent funding.

“Dependency on availability of funds to retain Sunshine Cinema services for partners is a challenge”: We have lost valuable partners along the way due to funding constraints. We would ideally like to retain partners, but nothing is guaranteed.

“Heavy Workload”: Attending online classes and juggling online assignments gets overwhelming for some Sparks. One option is adding another month to make sure sufficient time is given, people understand what is required, and know what they must do. Another suggestion is giving the new ambassadors a scope saying what they are going to do in each quarter (e.g. three master classes), which allows them to mentally prepare.

“Language barriers can reduce impact of film screenings”: It can be good content but English as the medium of most films in the Facilitation Guide is restricting. While Sparks summarise in English at the end of the screening, this creates discomfort.

BLIND SPOT CHALLENGES

We need to pay more attention to needs analysis: We are learning communities evolve and self-identify their new needs with the Spark Impact facilitators. This could be after an outreach project catalogue and community mapping task has been completed. For this reason, we are becoming flexible to accommodate content aligned to social challenges and needs of each community. We work together with Sparks to help them explain that the themes we work on are intersectional.

Sparks need to be constantly monitoring and engaging to understand impact in communities: This will help in terms of understanding the priorities and the key community stories that need to be amplified to ensure maximum impact. Sparks feel working on this will help them to be accountable and become part of the solution in their own communities.



RECOMMENDATIONS

TO KEEP SPARKING CHANGE

Moving forward, the case study participants offered important recommendations for sustaining and expanding the programme's impact. In addition to the findings of this case study, as a learning organisation, we constantly gather feedback from our stakeholders. The whole team is committed to understanding how we can improve and adapt.

Do Not Underestimate the Cost of Marketing: According to Cheryl Jacobs from ESquared the Sunshine Cinema team can improve by not underestimating the cost of marketing the programme. The current team is stretched, but they can seek a solution for advancing marketing. In our discussion Jacobs stated: *"There's a need to have an active team building a pipeline for a programme like this. Tracking students and telling those impact stories on how they are using the training, that can increase paid sign-ups."* She suggested crafting out a marketing solution for groups or organisational discounts. Bursaries are also an option for advertising purposes. She added: *"One can look at this from a corporate level and say this is valuable for us and then send staff [for training] as they identify this as a valuable tool for M&E staff to tell an organisation's impact stories differently."*

More Strategic Marketing: When producers are making the film, they shouldn't wait until the film is finished to start talking to audiences. There should be impact campaigns beforehand in relevant communities and engagement through the Sunshine Cinema distribution network. Screenings should be advertised in advance, maybe three weeks before using different mediums, posters and social media. Word-of-mouth and interacting with your potential audience as well as door-to-door marketing are effective communication strategies.

Broaden the reach of the UCT Impact Facilitator Course: Sparks believe it would be advantageous to open the course to other institutions since there is such a great need for young people to tap into the space of activism and impact facilitation. One Spark says: *"Even if someone does not want to pursue impact facilitation as a career, they must look at it as a skill that will help them during tough times, and enable you to achieve whatever you want in life"*.

Spark Impact facilitators need to take ownership of the network: One of the long-term stakeholders who participated in the case study noted a need to *"Build a cohort of youth that over time will co-hold the work of Sunshine Cinema when funding is scarce to achieve the*

vision." He says that young people are naturally in transition, from education to work or education and work at the same time, trying to figure out what they want to do. *"Sunshine Cinema is a moment in their lives, but it could be five years of their lives if there was a different kind of funding structure to support it."*³⁷

Sunshine Cinema has adopted a transformative approach to sustain the model, contributing to the high retention rate. Our organisation relies on the commitment of Sparks as key participants to stay dedicated to the work. This entails involving Sparks in certain structures and broader employment positions to provide valuable insights that strengthen the learning organisation model. These positions include:

A three-month data capture contract:

Recruitment ongoing, 2023 cohort

Part time MEL assistant:

Refilwe Chiloane, 2021 cohort

Podcast editor (part-time):

Mofenyi Kgamane, 2018 & 2022 cohort

Communications Coordinator (full-time):

Nontokozo Sibanyoni, 2021 cohort

Board member:

Mbali Ntuli, 2021 cohort

Part-time content creator:

Sibusiso Mnisi, 2022 cohort

The success of the Spark Impact Programme is influenced by recruiting a high calibre of Spark Impact facilitators who are socially aware and committed to participation. Additionally, partnerships with other key contributors to social change play a crucial role in achieving our vision of supporting youth to become active citizens; generating economic opportunities and building stronger inclusive communities. The confirmed income generation of **R1 650 394** through gig work from April 2021 to January 2024 confirms a positive trajectory of how we can approach the scaling up method as we conclude the pilot phase. An average earning power of **R27 507** for each graduated Spark means they can earn a minimum of over **R2 500**, a **40% increase** from the initial target of **R1 500**.

37: In the future evaluation, in an impact study, we will endeavour to understand where the graduates are at after five years.

LIMITATIONS

The case study faced some **unforeseen challenges**, as did the drafting process. Capacity constraints and delays in funding sourcing extended the expected case study timeline.

- **Budgetary constraints** limited our ability to conduct on-site observations and gather additional information from the communities where Sparks are situated.
- The building of the **MERL and Knowledge Management Systems (KMS)** has been ongoing, and we are still in the process of securing and centralising institutional knowledge.
- We depended on **short audio interviews** to understand the contribution of the programme and key lessons for audiences. This prevents us from providing concrete evidence of the pilot's outcomes for audience members and communities, we have only presented their key takeaways and knowledge gained during screenings.



MORENA MOFOKENG

INDEPENDENT FILMMAKER AND DIGITAL ENTREPRENEUR

Morena Mofokeng, youth facilitator and managing director, creative producer and film director at Black Mode Production was drawn into Sunshine Cinema by aligned visions.

At the end of the 10-month programme, Morena reflected on his journey:

"It was tough and challenging, to gain gig work and be in the space of economic development within my community. Securing gig jobs and screening venues came with poor communication, sometimes ground partners didn't take my proposals seriously."

Morena's passion for community development showed up in his audience development strategies. *"You need to advertise your screenings in time before the actual week, maybe three weeks or less before the screenings and use different mediums, physical posters and social media. You can use word-of-mouth and interact with your potential audience and use door-to-door as a marketing strategy."* In his total **31 screenings** to date, he has reached **1 135 community members**.

Morena has ventured into independent filmmaking and sustains himself with earnings from his media business. He is economically active by securing clients who need social media promotion videos, online content creation, and local artists who need music videos. Morena confirms he can generate an average income of R4 040 per gig, and this has helped **Black Mode Production** with scaling up the vision of creating job opportunities in his community and youth in Orange Farm, Gauteng.

"Before I trained at Sunshine Cinema, I was a freelance filmmaker and struggling to make a regular income. When I learned about gig work, I started doing social media marketing for small businesses, things like product ads and promotions. I also did photo shoots and some film gigs as a PA. I am now able to earn about five times more than before!"

- Morena Mofokeng



CONCLUSION

Sunshine Cinema's impact on South African communities through the 2021-2023 pilot of the Spark Impact Programme is evident and promising. Throughout the pilot phase, Sparks generated a cumulative revenue of **R1 650 394**. This is indeed a comprehensive initiative designed to empower and uplift South African communities by addressing unemployment and fostering economic growth. Our approach comprises various outcomes and sub-activities aimed at creating a sustainable and transformative impact, building on the implementation lessons of the Spark Impact Programme and impact campaigns that have nurtured a robust internal monitoring and evaluation.

The focus is not only on addressing unemployment but also on creating a platform for young South Africans to become skilled social actors, fostering understanding, empathy, and sustainable change within their communities. This holistic approach goes beyond traditional employment, empowering individuals and transforming communities for a more inclusive and prosperous South Africa. Internal efforts to build monitoring systems for accountability and reporting continue, while recognising the need for further independent monitoring and evaluation, along with annual audits, to ensure transparency, accountability, and adherence to the programme's goals.

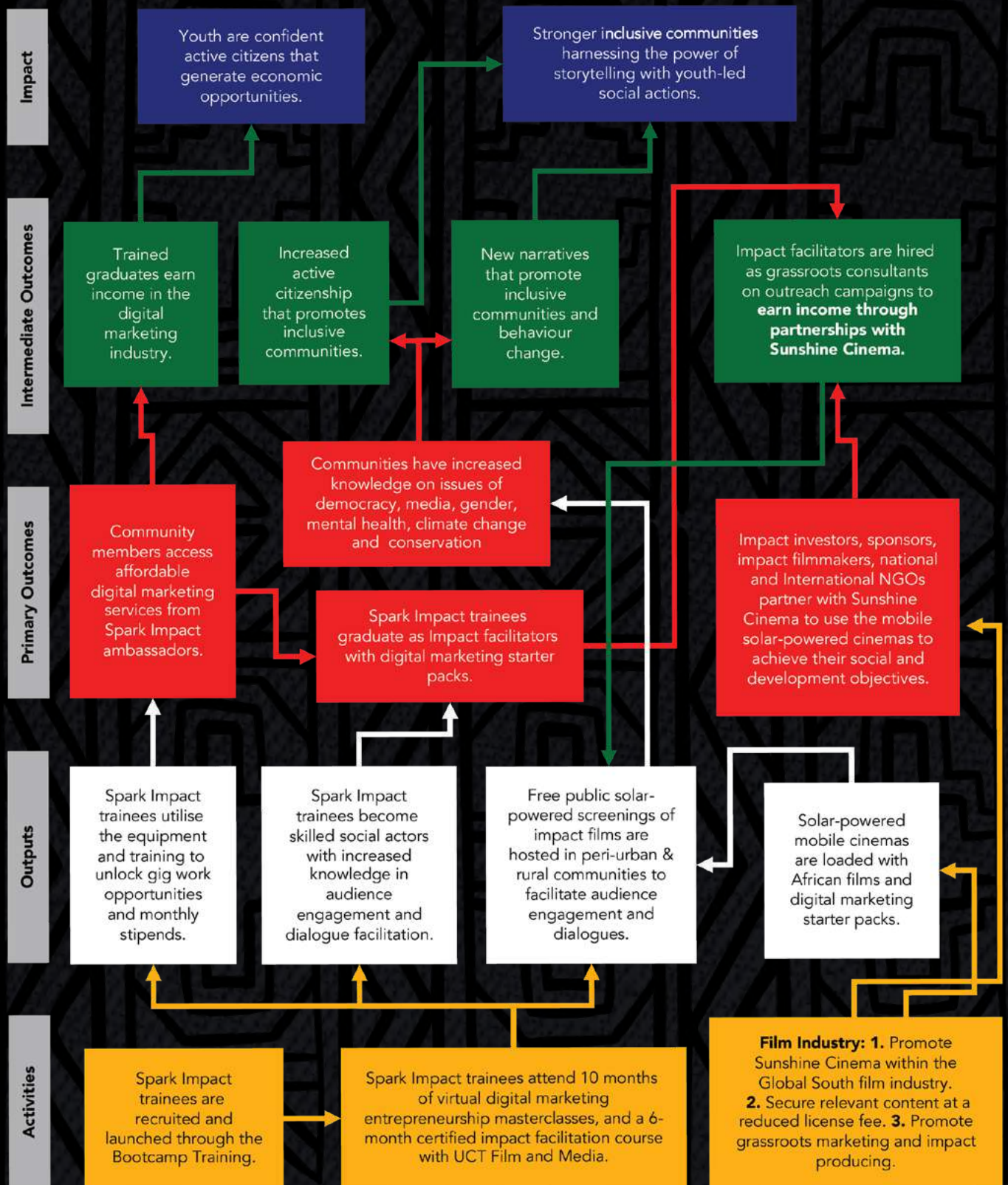
Since 2021, the strategic focus on digital tools, media and gig work has empowered upskilled youth to build portfolios and participate in the global market. In 2024 we are recruiting 20 new trainees, while working with our growing network of graduate Sparks as freelance impact facilitators for campaigns. The successful strategic focus on social media and marketing is illustrated by significant growth in visibility and engagement, leading to new fundraising leads and opportunities. The UCT Impact Facilitator Course is progressing well, with Sparks engaging in modules focused on film screening events and social change theory. Challenges such as in-

ternet connectivity are being addressed, and efforts to secure a data sponsor are underway.

Gig work is a cornerstone, with Sparks exceeding their annual target, showcasing the tangible impact on income generation and skills development. Notable success stories include ventures into virtual counselling, equipment leasing, and business start-ups. Sparked Conversations through impactful film screenings have reached diverse audiences, sparking dialogues on crucial issues. Looking ahead, the Sunshine Cinema team is poised to integrate lessons into 2024-2025 plans, remaining committed to empowering South African youth and fostering social change. The success of the programme underscores the transformative potential of combining media, entrepreneurship, and social impact for lasting change in communities.



Annexure 1: The 2023 Updated Theory of Change (ToC)



As gig work evolved, it changed how we viewed the Spark Impact Programme. The lessons learnt resulted in changes in implementation and enhancement to the overall programme, all visible in the updated version of the Sunshine Cinema 2023 ToC.

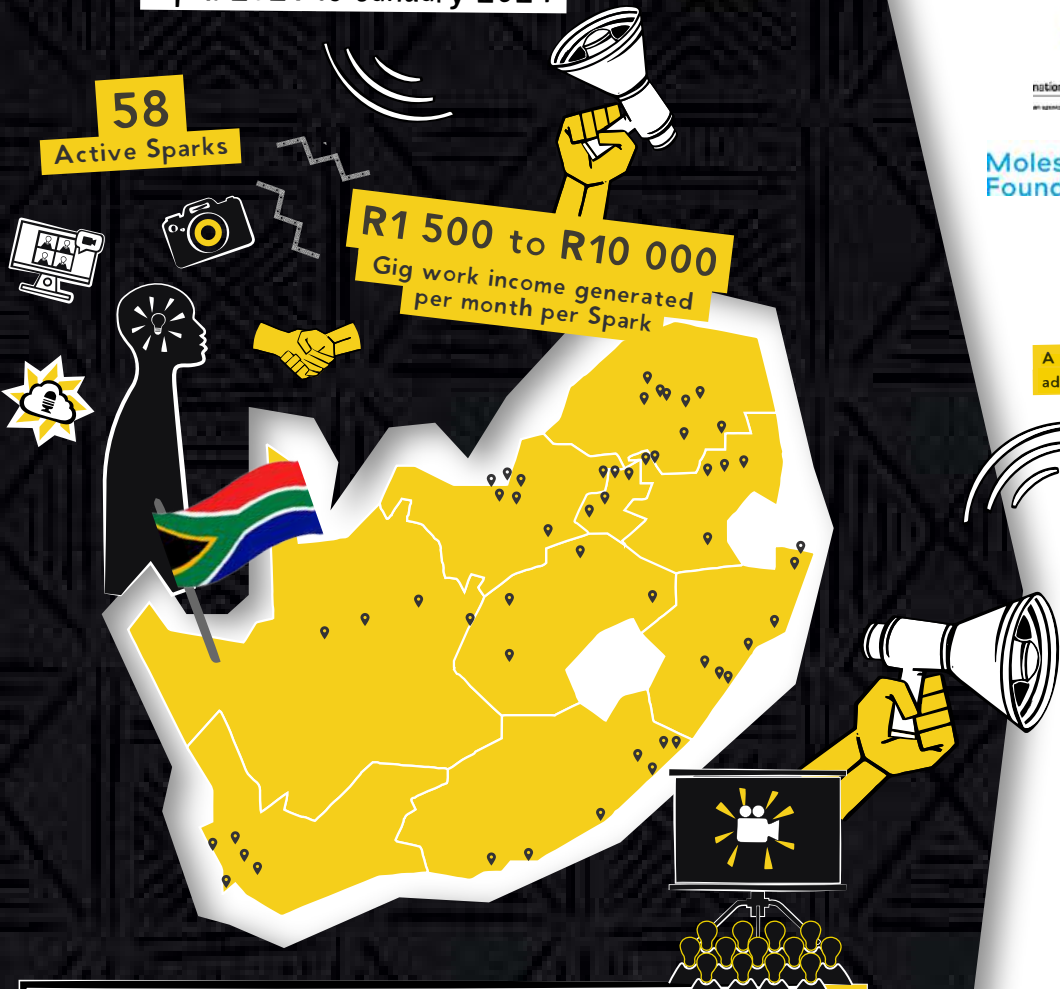
THANKS TO OUR SPARK IMPACT PARTNERS

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R1 650 394
 Total Income Generated
 through Gig Work from
 April 2021 to January 2024

58
 Active Sparks

R1 500 to R10 000
 Gig work income generated
 per month per Spark



79% Retention rate 📍 Reaching 53 peri-urban and rural regions in South Africa



A private client foundation administered by:



487 free public solar-powered cinema screenings from August 2021 to January 2024, engaging **15 603** audience members.