



## **National Youth Service (NYS) in sub-Saharan Africa: Strengthening NYS as a strategy for youth employability, entrepreneurship and sustainable livelihoods in the region**

### **Project overview**

Innovations in Civic Participation (ICP) and The MasterCard Foundation are undertaking a research study to assess how National Youth Service (NYS) programs in Sub-Saharan Africa can better prepare young people for the workforce. The study, titled *“National Youth Service in Sub-Saharan Africa: Strengthening NYS as a Strategy for Youth Employability, Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Livelihoods”*, will produce greater knowledge on how NYS programs can be designed as a youth development and employment tool, build a network of NYS staff, policy makers and practitioners focused on youth employment, and provide recommendations for private sector engagement.

ICP will work with Volunteer Service Enquiry Southern Africa (VOSESA) to develop four resource documents: a report on the National Youth Service landscape in Sub-Saharan Africa; a report on promising practices for programming for youth employability through service within and outside Sub-Saharan Africa; case-studies of NYS program design and implementation in Kenya, Ghana and South Africa; and a report synthesizing findings. The findings will be discussed at a learning forum in August 2013 with key NYS practitioners and stakeholders from the region.

This project stems from an existing tradition of NYS programs in Sub-Saharan Africa, which were originally designed to cultivate a sense of national identity and mobilize skills for development in post-independence nations. Today, NYS programs operate in the context of a deepening regional youth unemployment crisis, which averages over 20 per cent, according to *African Economic Outlook*. NYS programs engage hundreds of thousands of young people each year and have the potential to equip them with strong civic skills and prepare them for employment and livelihood opportunities. Despite its potential as an economic strategy, little is still known about how effective NYS programs are at increasing youth employability.

### **About Innovations in Civic Participation**

Innovations in Civic Participation (ICP) is a nonprofit organization that facilitates the development of innovative, high-quality youth civic engagement programs and policies around the world. We believe that well-structured youth service programs provide innovative solutions to social and environmental issues, while helping young people develop skills for future employment and active citizenship. ICP aims to build a world where young people in every nation are actively engaged in improving their lives and their communities through civic participation.

To realize these goals, ICP carries out the following functions: (1) Incubates innovative ideas and scalable models for scaling up national youth service and service-learning; (2) Creates and expands global networks of individuals and organizations committed to developing youth civic participation; (3) Consults with governments, international organizations, and other clients on

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designing national youth engagement policies and programs, trainings and evaluation programs; (4) Conducts research and publicizes information on youth civic engagement, especially national youth service and service-learning, and (5) Serves as a financial intermediary to support the development of innovative youth service programs and to promote the development of national youth service policies.

### **About Volunteer Service Enquiry Southern Africa (VOSESA)**

VOSESA was created in 2003 in response to the clear need for well-researched and up-to-date information on volunteering and civic service in southern Africa. Based in Johannesburg, South Africa, VOSESA is the only not-for profit organization in southern Africa committed to strengthening and developing the voluntary sector in the region through research, publishing and evidence based advocacy.

VOSESA supports the growth of knowledge about civic service and volunteering in the Southern Africa Development Community region, made up of the following southern African countries: Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

### **About The MasterCard Foundation**

The MasterCard Foundation advances microfinance and youth learning to promote financial inclusion and prosperity. Through collaboration with committed partners in 49 countries, the Foundation is helping people living in poverty to access opportunities to learn and prosper. An independent foundation based in Toronto, Canada, it was established through the generosity of MasterCard Worldwide at the time of the company's initial public offering in 2006.

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