

Microsoft wants to invest in Zim

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Global technology giant Microsoft Corporation has pledged to invest millions in Zimbabwe's private and public sectors despite the problems dogging the economy.

Microsoft East and Southern Africa general manager Sebh Haileleul last week said his company was committed to supporting and investing in both government and the private sector in various technological initiatives that will result in the creation of more jobs.

Speaking at the Innovation Africa Summit in Uganda last week, Haileleul said the technology company was working closely with the Zimbabwean government to create effective collaboration in the sector.

This comes after Microsoft's announcement two weeks ago that it would invest US\$75m investment in community programmes to increase access to computer science education for the youth around the globe and Africa in particular.

Haileleul pledged his support to Zimbabwe at the same summit, saying irrespective of the challenges the Zimbabwean economy was facing, Microsoft was committed to supporting and investing in both government and the private sector in various technological initiatives that will result in more jobs being created.

He manages the group's Botswana, Ethiopia, Namibia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe business.



Image via DigitalTrends

Microsoft is closely working with the Ministry of Education to make in-roads for effective collaboration, encouraged and supported the growth of the company's representatives in the country, for ease of access to the group's educational tools and other products and started programmes where they volunteer in schools with the aim to educate students and equip them with the skill sets needed in the market.

Microsoft's Global vice-president of Education Anthony Salcito told an Innovation Africa Summit in Uganda, the continent's leading summit for education and innovation, that the technology company was looking at ways of supporting the country's education sectors. The summit brings together all education players from schools and civil society to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and education ministers from across the African continent.

To that end, Microsoft has officially engaged 50 Harare schools which will run some pilot projects aimed at equipping students and teachers with the vast educational tools at Microsoft's disposal.

"More and better education, combined with early access to the tools and skills used in the workplace, are proven to help create healthier communities, economies and workers who are ready to enter the workforce," said Salcito.

"At Microsoft we are committed to empowering this next generation of workers by building skills, providing access to technology, and giving young people tools to support their learning."

Considering Africa's labour force will be larger than China's by 2035, skill development that starts early in schools is becoming a priority. The theme for the summit was "*Skills Development in the 21st Century*".

Educators and their partners looked at ways to incorporate digital and soft skills into the classroom so that students are prepared for the future workforce.

In 2012, Microsoft launched its Employability Platforms to provide job-seekers with end-to-end career guidance, up skilling, job-matching and mentorship --all centred on a free online hub.

These platforms aim at creating over 100,000 job opportunities and reaching over seven million people in Africa and across the Middle East by the end of the year.

Microsoft's investments in education continue under various programmes including the 4Afrika Initiative and YouthSpark. Through the 4Afrika initiative, Microsoft has committed to upskill 200,000 Africans by 2016.

Additional elements of Microsoft's global commitment to increasing access for youth to the full range of computing skills

include Microsoft Imagine and YouthSpark Hub resources designed to inspire youth about the full spectrum of computing skills, ranging from digital literacy to computer science engineering.

In addition to providing access to the Microsoft Imagine tools, the YouthSpark Hub brings together opportunities to participate in activities such as DigiGirlz and YouthSpark Live, attend free YouthSpark Camps, and access training through Microsoft supported non-profits.

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