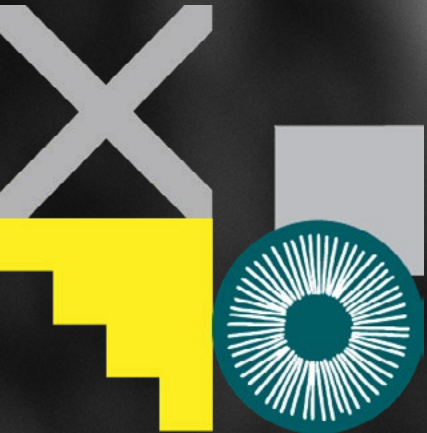




Bertha Centre for Social Innovation & Entrepreneurship

Annual Report 2024

changing the way we're changing the world



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Director's Note

Dr Solange Rosa

As we reflect on 2024, it is clear we live in a time of profound uncertainty. Youth unemployment continues to rise. Education systems are under pressure. The climate crisis is deepening, and inequality is widening. For many, daily life feels precarious. These realities can feel heavy, but they reaffirm why our work in social innovation, entrepreneurship and systems change are so necessary – and urgent.

At the Bertha Centre, our mission remains focused on reimagining how change happens. We believe deeply in the potential of people and ideas to transform the systems we live in. And we know that solutions must come from those who understand the problems best – local communities, young changemakers, social entrepreneurs, and cross-sector leaders who are committed to building a more inclusive and just world.

Our role is to support, enable, and amplify this work. Whether through education and training, research and policy engagement, or ecosystem-

building, we continue to explore how innovation – rooted in justice and driven by collaboration – can respond to complex social, economic, and environmental challenges.

One of the key milestones of this year has been our continued work in health systems innovation. Through the Mastercard Foundation's Healthy Futures South Africa initiative, we've partnered with UCT's Faculty of Health Sciences, the University of Toronto, and eight other African universities. Together, we are rethinking primary and community-based health care to stimulate youth employment and entrepreneurial pathways, while easing the burden on overstretched public services. This is long-term, collaborative work, focused not only on skills development, but on reshaping the way we think about care, prevention, and system-wide change.

At the same time, our youth team has been expanding support to young people who are not in education, employment, or training – through the Changemakers Programme at Philippi Village,



“We are embedded in a much larger ecosystem of people working towards a more equitable future.”

– Dr Solange Rosa, Bertha Centre Director

as well as broader efforts to strengthen South Africa’s youth development ecosystem. From mental health to social entrepreneurship, the work is holistic, recognising that real opportunity requires more than just technical skills, it requires belief, confidence, and the right support structures.

Our Bertha Scholarships continue to offer transformative opportunities for young leaders pursuing the MPhil in Inclusive Innovation and the Master of Business Administration at the UCT Graduate School of Business (GSB). These scholars are driving change in sectors like finance, education, and public policy – demonstrating what’s possible when we invest in leadership rooted in social impact. Many have pivoted their careers into new directions, inspired by systems thinking and a deeper sense of purpose.

This year also marked a significant moment for our Innovative Finance portfolio. With national advisory boards from Ghana, Nigeria, and Zambia, we were partners in the second Africa Impact

Summit in Nairobi, bringing together key actors to advance the impact-investing agenda across the continent. Our team continues to work at the nexus of capital and change – helping investors see opportunity not only in financial returns, but in social transformation.

Beyond individual programmes, 2024 also allowed us to engage more actively at the global level. As South Africa prepares to assume the G20 presidency, we’ve been working alongside Africa Forward, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Schwab Foundation, the International Labour Organization (ILO), and others to influence macroeconomic policy discussions – bringing in a perspective rooted in the impact economy and the social economy. It’s an exciting space, where we can connect dots between local social innovation and global systems change, and ensure Africa’s voice is shaping the agenda.

Looking ahead, we are also expanding our work on climate justice. With support from the World

Economic Forum, we’ve launched the Hoffman Climate Change Fellowship in partnership with UCT’s African Climate and Development Initiative (ACDI). This work explores how social innovation can support communities affected by climate change, and how principles of equity, justice, and inclusion must guide any serious response.

None of this would be possible without our dedicated team, our visionary funders, and our trusted partners – across South Africa, the continent, and the world. I remain so grateful for the commitment, generosity, and energy they bring to this work. We are embedded in a much larger ecosystem of people working towards a more equitable future.

We will keep showing up – with humility, curiosity, and determination. And we will continue to walk alongside changemakers, practitioners, and communities who are pushing boundaries, challenging norms, and crafting new paths towards justice, equity and prosperity.

Luvuyo Rani – Collaborating to Transform the Social Entrepreneurship Ecosystem

Executive Director of Africa Forward

Social entrepreneurs identify social problems in their communities and tackle these with a model combining business and social impact, explains Luvuyo Rani, Executive Director of Africa Forward, a collaborative initiative that empowers self-sustaining social entrepreneurs and innovators. The Bertha Centre is an active member, reflecting a strong alignment on social impact and social innovation.

“The key is to identify a problem, take a risk, mobilise resources, and get people to believe in you,” says Rani. He is a successful social entrepreneur who co-founded Silulo Ulutho Technologies – an IT services company focused on skills development, entrepreneurship, and digital access – and also established its impact arm, the Silulo Foundation.

Rani grew up in Komani (formerly Queenstown), South Africa, in a home where education was seen as the key to escaping poverty. He learned the basics of entrepreneurship – selling, customer

service, and most importantly, resilience – from his mother, who turned their lounge into a “shebeen” to make ends meet after losing her job as a domestic worker. When Rani finished school, there was no money to attend university, yet he, nevertheless, moved to Cape Town and obtained a BTech Degree in Commercial Education Economics from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT). It was during his subsequent three years as a teacher at a township school that he saw the need for teachers to use computers, and Silulo was born.

Seeing the impact of empowering township and rural communities motivates Rani, whether at a grassroots level through Silulo, or at an African or global level through Africa Forward.

“I started selling second-hand computers from the boot of my car. It took four years to get our business model right and now we have grown to 46 one-stop shops in the country,” he says. “For me it was always about the bigger picture: I was



“The key is to identify a problem, take a risk, mobilise resources, and get people to believe in you.”

– Luvuyo Rani, Executive Director of Africa Forward

part of the first generation of social entrepreneurs in post-apartheid South Africa and I realised that, if someone like me did not make it, young people would not have role models of the possibilities that exist.”

The Importance of an Ecosystem

Rani connected with the Bertha Centre in 2014 when he was ready to take Silulo to the next level.

“Collaboration is key. You need partners like the Bertha Centre for research, us on the ground, the government to put enabling legislation in place, and funders to unlock it. The ecosystem is not about ‘one wins all’ but about how to use our leverage to advance our goals.” He especially values the Bertha Centre’s leadership “going all out to bring the partners to the table” and having the university as a convening space.

“At Africa Forward, we try to create shifts in five areas: policy, narrative, funding, capacity building, and job creation. It is key for African countries to put policies for social entrepreneurship in place. Establishing a narrative for African social entrepreneurs is also important so that people can understand what it is. As for funding, we want to ensure that the smaller social entrepreneurs can also access it and help them address challenges preventing them from building capacity. And of course, the jobs that social entrepreneurs can create are important on the continent,” explains Rani.

To achieve scale, social entrepreneurs need to be able to grow beyond a certain level of turnover, an aspect Rani says needs attention. He’s also encouraged by the potential leverage created by the successes of those collaborating with Africa Forward.

That’s why he regards the upcoming G20 summit to be held in South Africa in November 2025 as a golden opportunity for Africa Forward and the Bertha Centre to create awareness about the potential of social entrepreneurship in Africa.

Luvuyo Rani is the Executive Director of Africa Forward, the founder of the Silulo Foundation, and the co-founder of Silulo Ulutho Technologies. Among his accolades are being named one of the JCI Ten Outstanding Young Persons of the World in 2014 and the Schwab Foundation Social Entrepreneur of the Year in 2016.

Africa Forward stems from Catalyst 2030, a global collaboration of social innovators wanting to achieve the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals by collaborating with governments, business, donors, and communities. Catalyst 2030 was launched at the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2020.



"It is heartening that in the current global context, the voices of the Global South, including Africa, are louder, stronger, and more potent. We believe we need to elevate these voices. We understand the best and the most powerful perspectives we can offer."

Dr.
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Introduction

Since our founding in 2011, the Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship has continued to shape and strengthen the ecosystem for systems change and social innovation across the African continent. In 2024, this mission has taken on renewed urgency as we face increasingly complex challenges – economic precarity, climate instability, health crises, and deepening inequality. Our role, as ever, is to respond with action grounded in rigorous research, human-centred design, and partnerships that honour the lived experiences and leadership of African changemakers.





This year, we surpassed our strategic target of supporting 5,000 changemakers well ahead of schedule, reflecting not only the scale of our programming but the growing need for innovative, just solutions. Whether through

equipping practitioners, nurturing youth-led enterprises, or advancing impact-investing models, our work has focused on unlocking the potential within communities and systems. Across all our portfolios – health systems innovation, youth development, innovative finance, and climate justice – we have deepened our collaborations and impact.

From expanding our flagship Impact Investing in Africa course to East Africa, to supporting young thinkers through the Youth Innovation Prize, as well as advising on the scaling of outcomes-based financing in health, this has been a year of growth, learning, and momentum. We have acted as a convenor to create spaces for shared knowledge, policy development, and catalysing action – while keeping inclusion and social justice at the centre of everything we do.



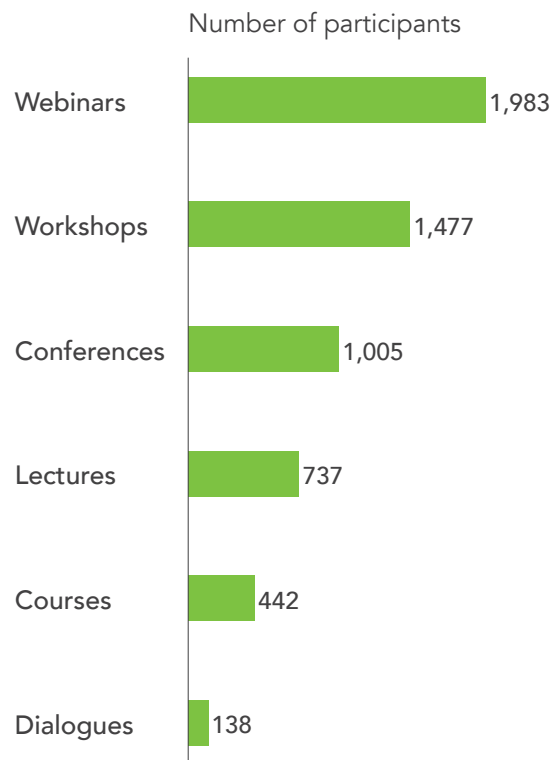
Strategic Priorities: Four Objectives to Advance Change

 Youth Innovation Portfolio	 Innovative Finance Portfolio	 Health Systems Innovation Portfolio	 Climate & Systems Justice Portfolio
<p>Helping young people between 15 and 35 years old develop social innovation, personal development, entrepreneurship, and workplace skills to improve their employability and feelings of self-efficacy.</p>	<p>Partnering with social finance experts, governments, enterprises, and investors to research, incubate, and test promising social financing vehicles across Africa to catalyse and scale social impact, and align public and private stakeholder incentives.</p>	<p>Bringing together organisations, cross-disciplinary practitioners, academics, students, and communities to use social innovation to obtain health equity, especially through frontline and community health workers.</p>	<p>Creating a social and ecologically just global agenda by teaching systems change for social impact, convening catalytic systems innovation, and fostering local and global networks to promote systems entrepreneurship.</p>
Primary pillars	Primary pillars	Primary pillars	Primary pillars
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helping youth hone their social innovation, personal development, entrepreneurship, and workplace skills• Engaging in strategic partnerships that help increase the impact of programmes on youth, and their awareness of opportunities available to them• Focusing on mental health and well-being• Conducting research that seeks to unearth, understand, and connect the most promising innovations in the youth development ecosystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building impact-investing ecosystem• Developing Innovative Finance models• Influencing through consultancy, research, collaboration, and teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creating and promoting spaces for social innovation in health• Identifying and driving new funding and financial models for health• Understanding and researching how health systems are changed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Amplifying the African influence in global systems change education and practice through research, knowledge production, management, and teaching• Catalysing systems innovation and integrative convening to enable more people, institutions, and networks to address unjust patterns and unlock novel solutions• Building and nurturing local and global networks that advance a systems innovation lens and justice orientation



Strategic Priority 1: Increase the Number of Changemakers Having a Systemic Social Impact

Capacity-Building Interventions (2022–2024)



At the Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship, we are committed to growing and equipping a dynamic network of changemakers who are tackling complex social challenges. Through six types of capacity-building interventions implemented between 2022 and 2024, we have already supported 5,782 changemakers – meeting and surpassing our 2022–2026 target of 5,000 well ahead of schedule.

By providing the tools and opportunities needed to drive systemic impact, we continue to empower both emerging and established changemakers to create lasting social change.

Bertha Scholars Continue to Drive Impact Across Sectors

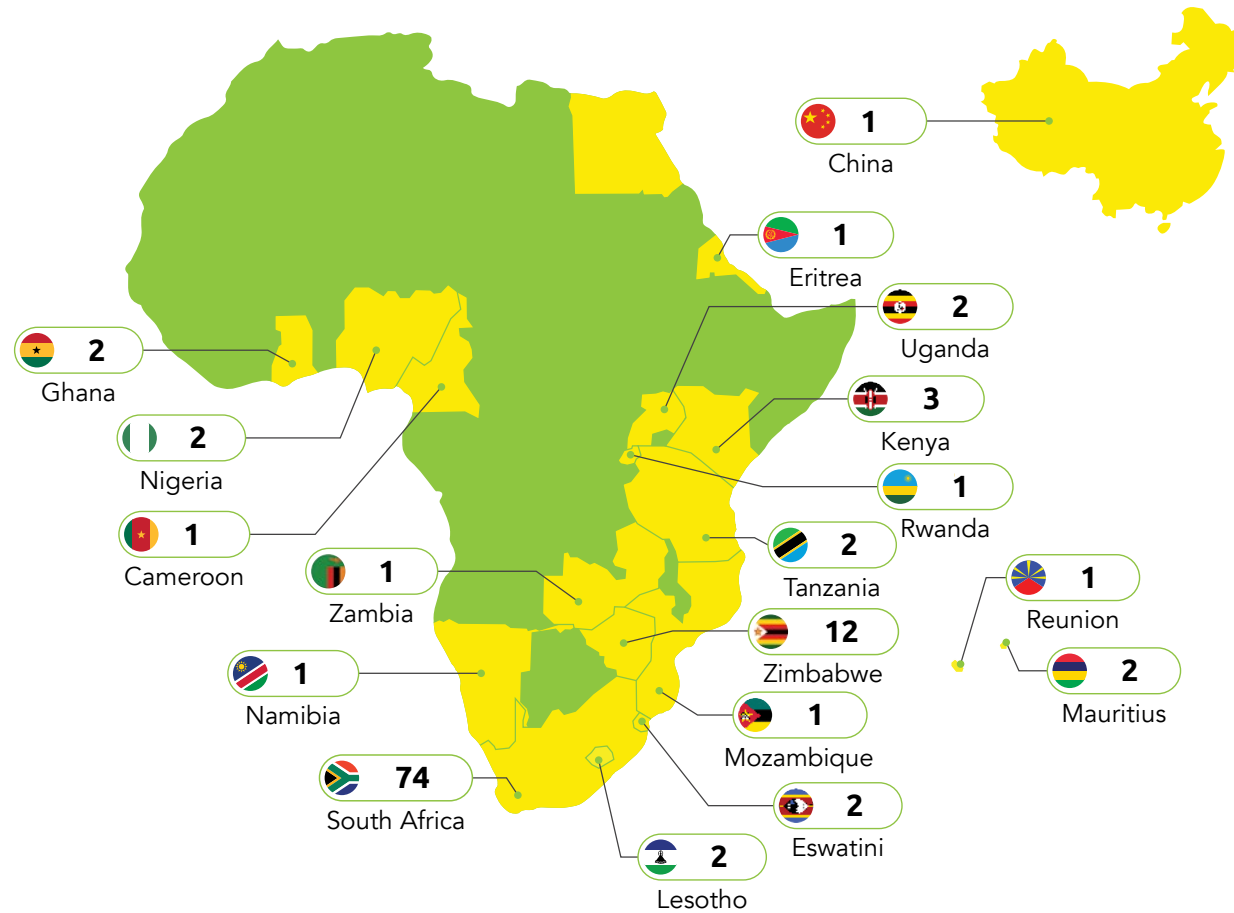
The Bertha Scholars programme aims to foster transformative leadership and innovation. Over the past 13 years, 111 scholars from 18 countries have been provided with funding for their MPhil

in Inclusive Innovation, Masters in Business Administration, or PhD at the UCT GSB, with South Africa (74 scholars), Zimbabwe (12 scholars), Kenya (3 scholars), and multiple other nations represented. The programme has maintained a strong gender balance, with 50 women and 61 men. Scholars across disciplines use the skills learned from their studies as a launchpad to help drive change across industries.

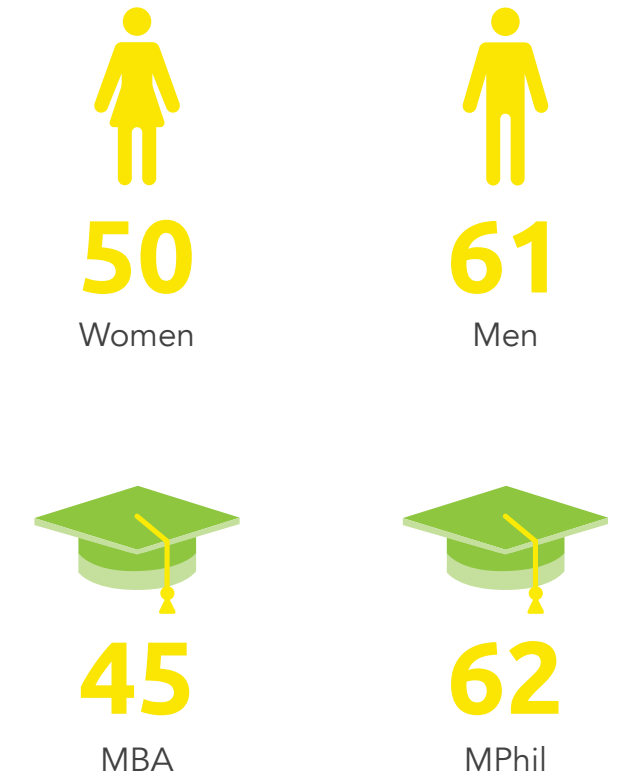
Bertha Centre Scholars in 2024 included:

- Dillon Collop – MBA MOD
- Kelvin Ashie – MPhil
- Masixole Nkumbesi – MPhil
- Tariro Nyimo – MPhil
- Terrence Souza – MPhil

Country of Origin of Bertha Scholars



Bertha Scholars in Numbers*



*Some students selected alternative courses not shown here.



Fostering Youth-Led Innovation for Social Change

Our dedication to empowering youth to become innovative is exemplified through the annual **Youth Innovation Prize (YIP)** essay competition. It provides a platform for young aspiring changemakers between the ages of 18 and 30 who are invited to submit their innovative ideas for addressing social issues in a practical way. YIP is a partnership between the Bertha Centre and Douglas Knowledge Partners (DKP). The Desmond & Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation joined as a partner in 2024. Expert mentorship for the finalists plays an important role in the value that YIP brings to help take their work to the next level.

The theme for the 2024 competition was **"Innovations for Gender Equality"**. Past themes included "Innovations for Planetary Health" and "Innovations for Mental Well-Being".

The competition had 30 entrants in 2024, and it awarded a total of R10,000 in prizes, with the opportunity for entrants to expand their networks.

The 2024 winning essay, "From Inequality to Equity: South Africa's Journey to Workforce Gender Balance", by Nelly Mtsweni, explored the structural barriers preventing skilled women from advancing in male-dominated industries. Second-place winner, Kamelia Boukhalifa, tackled men's mental health with her piece "From Stigma to Support: Creating Inclusive Mental Health Initiatives for Men", while Louise Simpson's "The Green Room: Creating Safe Spaces for Young Women in the Arts" secured third place. Jesudamilola Ajilogba received an honourable mention for her insightful essay on building gender equality through architectural community initiatives.



Wonder Muzari
Vukani Impact Co

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Innovest Advisory



The competition continues to prove its impact, with participants emphasising the value of mentorship and the opportunity to collaborate with experts. In the words of finalist Thabiso Mokoena:

“This showed me that impact begins with intention and requires action. It is about responsibility, courage, perseverance, and collaboration sparking transformation.”

Through this type of mentorship and financial support, YIP continues to amplify young voices and align with the Bertha Centre’s broader mission of cultivating future changemakers.

Leveraging the Creative Economy to Improve Youth Mental Well-Being

Understanding the critical intersection of mental health and creative expression, we convened stakeholders across education, arts, and psychology in the **“How to Utilise the Creative**

Economy to Improve Youth Mental Health” workshop, in Cape Town in March 2024. This initiative underscored the role of art, music, and storytelling in fostering resilience, particularly among youth in under-resourced communities. The event provided practical strategies for integrating creative approaches into mental health programmes, reinforcing our commitment to holistic youth development.

Empowering Young Leaders for Systemic Justice

In collaboration with the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), the **Youth Futures for Systemic Justice Project** equipped young leaders in East and Southern Africa with skills in strategic foresight and policy design. Participants developed actionable recommendations to address economic exclusion, climate change, and governance challenges, reinforcing the Bertha Centre’s commitment to youth empowerment and youth-driven policy influence.

Supporting Educators as Agents of Change

Education is a fundamental lever for systemic transformation. Through our partnership with the **London School of Economics (LSE)**, we hosted the **“How to Empower Teachers to Empower Learners”** workshop, led by Professor Harry Barkema, Professor of Strategy, Social Innovation, and Entrepreneurship at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) and Honorary Professor at the University of Cape Town. This initiative equipped educators with methodologies to enhance student engagement, integrate emotional and social development, and drive institutional reform. Building on the momentum of this work, we piloted a train-the-trainer model to extend the reach and sustainability of these practices across the education sector.

“This showed me that impact begins with intention and requires action. It is about responsibility, courage, perseverance, and collaboration sparking transformation.”

– Thabiso Mokoena, YIP Finalist

Advancing Systems Thinking for Social Impact

The **Systems Change and Social Impact** short course at UCT GSB continues to provide leaders with the tools to drive large-scale transformation. With a curriculum integrating complexity theory, movement-building, and collaborative leadership, the programme equips social entrepreneurs, government officials, and funders with actionable strategies for sustainable change.

By fostering cross-sector networks, the Systems Change and Social Impact short course has played an important role in advancing impactful social programmes across the continent.

As we continue our work, the Bertha Centre remains dedicated to fostering systemic impact through youth innovation, mental health advocacy, educational reform, and leadership development. By scaling proven solutions and strengthening

cross-sector partnerships, we aim to build a more inclusive and sustainable future – one where changemakers are empowered to facilitate transformation within their communities, and beyond.

Leveraging Research for Impact

The **UCT Reach Alliance Programme** continues to empower students to drive change through research. Part of a global initiative led by the University of Toronto’s Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy, and supported by the Mastercard Foundation, the programme enables interdisciplinary teams from universities across five continents, to explore challenges affecting hard-to-reach communities.

Following a highly competitive selection process, the 2024 cohort – our largest to date – comprises four teams focusing on key issues such as health systems, youth unemployment, and climate

justice. With mentorship, performance coaching, and global engagement opportunities – including participation in the annual Reach Conference in Toronto – these students are supported in producing research that seeks to inform local and global policy and practice.

Previous UCT cohorts have explored models such as social franchising for health care access and maternal health services for unhoused women in Cape Town. The latest cohort aims to build on these insights, generating case studies that offer tangible recommendations for stakeholders across sectors.

Strategic Priority 2: Transform the Way Resources Are Used for Social Impact

Innovative finance (IF) has emerged as a key enabler of sustainable development, unlocking new opportunities to drive social and environmental impact. The Bertha Centre remains at the forefront of this movement, using IF mechanisms to ensure that capital is mobilised effectively and directed towards solutions that address critical social challenges. Through targeted initiatives, strategic partnerships, and knowledge-sharing platforms, the Centre continues to help shape the landscape of impact investing, outcomes-based financing, and financial solutions aligned with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Expanding Impact-Investing Education Across Africa

The Bertha Centre's flagship **Impact Investing in Africa course** continued its expansion in 2024, reaching new regions and engaging an increasingly diverse cohort of impact-driven

professionals. A significant milestone was the launch in Nairobi, Kenya, in November 2024, marking the course's first entry in East Africa. This reflects the growing interest in impact investing across the continent and the Centre's ongoing commitment to promoting IF in Africa. With 15 attendees, the Nairobi edition was co-convened by Bertha Centre team members Dr Jason van Staden and Daniel Steenkamp, with external expert and course co-convenor Shiluba Mawela. The course attracted participants from Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Ireland, Ghana, Germany, and South Africa, representing various sectors, including senior advisory roles, investment analysis, and programme management. Delegates engaged in discussions on blended finance, catalytic capital, and SDG-aligned investment strategies. Interactive case studies and expert panels provided region-specific insights, equipping participants with practical tools to enhance their work in the field of impact investing.

Key takeaways from the course highlighted the role of IF instruments in supporting African entrepreneurs and the importance of catalytic capital in driving systemic change. Delegates also explored frameworks for impact measurement and the potential of emerging technologies such as blockchain, which can improve transparency and trust within the impact-investing landscape.

The course was held again in Cape Town in September with 38 attendees. This is the first time it has been hosted twice in one year, demonstrating the Centre's strengthened capacity to meet growing demand and its ongoing commitment to advancing the field through consistent, high-quality learning opportunities.

These offerings will continue to strengthen capacity within the sector and encourage collaboration among impact investment practitioners, reinforcing financial innovation as a driver of sustainable impact.



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SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

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Alignment With the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)



Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages



Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts



Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels

Strengthening the SDG Impact Finance Initiative

The Bertha Centre plays an advisory role in the **SDG Impact Finance Initiative (SIFI)**, which seeks to mobilise private capital for the advancement of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In 2024, SIFI launched its third funding call under the Financial Innovation Window, a dedicated funding mechanism designed to support the development and scaling of innovative financial solutions that drive impact investment. This third call focused on three priority SDGs:

- **SDG 3:** Good Health & Well-Being
- **SDG 13:** Climate Action
- **SDG 16:** Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions

Supported by SECO Economic Cooperation and Development (the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation), the UBS Optimus Foundation, and the Ministry of Finance of Luxembourg, the initiative aims to catalyse high-impact financial

solutions for emerging markets. Grants are provided for feasibility studies, proof-of-concept work, and the scaling of IF mechanisms. The call for applications closed on 15 March 2024, drawing significant interest from a diverse range of financial innovators wishing to develop scalable models for impact investment.

The Bertha Centre remains committed to supporting the design and structuring of financial solutions that advance climate action, health equity, and sustainable development. Through its expertise in IF, the Centre continues to contribute to global efforts aimed at harnessing capital for long-term social good.

Advancing Health Financing through Outcomes-Based Models

The South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) Invest4Health Initiative continues to drive the expansion of outcomes-based financing for health care in South Africa. Recognising the potential of social impact bonds (SIBs) to improve



public health outcomes, the initiative has focused on addressing challenges such as outcome measurement, multi-stakeholder alignment, and financial sustainability.

The SAMRC convened a webinar in June 2024, titled “Exploring the Opportunity and Assessing Feasibility of the Social Impact Bond (SIB): Lessons from the IMAGINE AGYW and Other SIBs”. This session formed part of a broader effort to build interest in outcomes-based finance for health. The webinar featured insights from key institutions, including Oxford University’s Government Outcomes Lab, South Africa’s National Department of Basic Education, Networking HIV and AIDS Community of Southern Africa (NACOSA), Genesis Analytics, and SAMRC’s Office of AIDS and TB Research.

To further dialogue and exchange knowledge, the Bertha Centre hosted the SAMRC Invest4Health hybrid workshop in December 2024 at the UCT GSB. The workshop focused on risk and relational contracting and social outcomes-based contracts,

which is a crucial aspect of structuring sustainable and scalable impact finance models. The webinar brought together members of the Invest4Health initiative who are interested in SIBs, as well as those stakeholders who have worked in a similar transaction.

The Bertha Centre’s Health Systems Innovation team plays a key role in supporting the **SAMRC Learning Action Network**, which is dedicated to growing the market for SIBs in South Africa. Through the dissemination of learning materials and engagement with key stakeholders, the Centre is ensuring that outcomes-based financing becomes a mainstream mechanism for delivering measurable social impact in public health.

As conversations around IF models continue to evolve, the Bertha Centre remains open to further collaboration with institutional partners. It will continue exploring opportunities to deepen its work in this space, reinforcing its position as a leader in financial innovation for social good.

Advancing Innovative Financing for Equitable Education

In 2024, the Bertha Centre deepened its strategic partnership with NORRAG, a global education and training policy network based at the Geneva Graduate Institute, and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), a premier social science university located in Mumbai. They have embarked upon a joint initiative, **Innovative Financing for Education (IFE) to Leave No One Behind**. As a core partner, the Bertha Centre has played a pivotal role in advancing the project’s objective of generating robust evidence on financing mechanisms that support equitable access to higher education across the Global South. Key contributions to date include the development of the publicly accessible Student Financing Resource Database, and leadership of the formative and summative evaluations, as well as the development of research papers on the

LEAP fund pilot in Kenya. Another contribution is the completion of a summative report on the **Innovative Budgeting and Investment for Impact in Financing (IBIF) initiative**, focused on Early Childhood Development (ECD). The Centre has also been instrumental in designing evaluation frameworks, co-ordinating multi-stakeholder research efforts, and managing institutional ethics approvals and local partnerships.

This collaboration underscores Bertha's ongoing commitment to inclusive education and reinforces its role as a regional knowledge leader in innovative financing for development.

The Bertha Centre's IF team has made substantial progress in transforming how resources are mobilised for social impact. By fostering IF models, strategic partnerships, and cross-sector collaboration, the Centre remains committed to unlocking capital for sustainable development across Africa through impact investing and social innovation. With ongoing initiatives and new opportunities on the horizon, the Centre's work continues to shape the future of impact investing and social innovation across the continent.





Associate Professor Tracey Naledi – Building Bridges Between Innovation Equity, and Health

Deputy Dean: Social Accountability and Health Systems, UCT Faculty of Health Sciences

As a public health physician deeply rooted in social accountability, Professor Tracey Naledi has long been exploring the intersection between public sector transformation and innovative financing models. Her participation in the Bertha Centre's *Impact Investing in Africa* course was a critical moment on this journey.

"I'm not an investment person by any stretch of the imagination," she says with a laugh, "but it just built my capacity so that when I do have these conversations, I understand a little bit better where people are coming from." At the time, Naledi was leading an initiative for a social impact bond (SIB) focused on the first 1,000 days of life – the crucial period from conception to a child's second birthday, which lays the foundation for lifelong health and development. It ignited her interest in using innovative finance tools to unlock public good.

What resonated with her was the potential of such tools – like SIBs – to leverage private sector capital for public outcomes. "I still believe that social

impact bonds are a potential tool that we could use around leveraging private sector money to invest into public sector outcomes," she says. "It was actually a very useful course for me."

However, as Naledi points out, navigating public-private collaboration is not without its tensions. "One is working for public good, one is working for profit. I'm not quite sure yet if where we meet is mutually beneficial," she reflects. "Those kinds of projects need to be big bucks – tens of millions – for the returns to start making sense for investors."

Pan-African Partnerships for Social Impact

In her current role at UCT, Naledi is spearheading initiatives that embody the complex but necessary journey of aligning innovation with equity. Central to this is the Africa Health Collaborative, a multi-country initiative supported by the Mastercard Foundation and involving nine academic institutions across Africa as well as the



“I choose to live in hope that together we can get this done.”

– Tracey Naledi, Deputy Dean

University of Toronto. UCT alone has received \$35 million in funding.

“The African Health Collaborative is a huge opportunity for all of us to really participate in a Pan-African engagement,” she explains. “We’re working on health entrepreneurship, youth development and employment, social accountability, and strengthening community-based primary health care across geographic centres.”

A unique feature of this initiative is its support for youth-led health entrepreneurship. While it doesn’t follow a SIB model, the project offers seed funding for social innovations aimed at improving health outcomes – showing how Naledi’s early experience with impact investing continues to shape her thinking. “When health entrepreneurship became a key element of the project, I went to the Bertha Centre for help, and now they’re a partner.”

This collaboration underscores a growing shift in the language and logic of public health. “In

our world, the word ‘entrepreneurship’ doesn’t always make us happy,” she admits. “It gives the impression of people making money off people’s illness. But ‘social innovation’ – even the word itself – feels more palatable.”

For Naledi, the challenge isn’t just technical – it’s cultural. “We’re all after the same thing, but we come from different worlds. Trying to find language we can all understand, trying to understand one another’s objectives – that’s the real work.”

Reimagining Health Systems Through Collaboration and Trust

This journey towards alignment is mirrored in one of the most critical developments in South Africa’s public health landscape: the push towards universal health coverage through the National Health Insurance (NHI). Naledi sees both promise and challenge in the current debates around NHI, especially as the private sector has responded with multiple legal challenges.

“It speaks to the mistrust on both sides. But I’m one of those people who believes that the NHI is something that will be good for all of us – regardless of whether you’re Black, White, or whatever,” she says. “Even with top-range medical aid, the system is becoming unaffordable.”

Ultimately, Naledi is a firm believer in transformation through collaboration – and in South Africans themselves. “We can’t run away from the fact that the health system is broken. But I have great faith in South Africans. When we put our minds to something, we get it done.”

Whether through social innovation, Pan-African partnerships, or a reimagined public health system, Naledi’s vision is grounded in hope. “I choose to live in hope that together we can get this done.”

Strategic Priority 3: Work With Partners to Apply Social Innovation in Priority Areas

Addressing systemic challenges in education, youth development, and health requires collaborative, research-driven solutions. The Bertha Centre remains committed to fostering social innovation by strengthening interdisciplinary research, enhancing teacher education, supporting youth entrepreneurship, and catalysing health innovation. In 2024, our focus has been on deepening partnerships and scaling impactful initiatives that align with the UN SDGs and the Centre's broader mission of systemic change and social justice.

Advancing Teacher Education Through TICZA

Teacher Internship Collaboration South Africa (TICZA), established in 2021, is a multi-stakeholder initiative designed to improve Initial Teacher Education (ITE) through a collective impact model. As this programme approaches its final

phase in August 2025, the Bertha Centre remains deeply involved to ensure that best practices are embedded in South Africa's teacher development ecosystem.

A key milestone this year was a workshop held in May 2024, where the Systems Justice Innovation (SJI) team facilitated discussions on the development of the Common Competency Framework (CCF) for student-teacher interns and newly qualified teachers. The CCF serves as a strategic tool, enabling educators to assess their competencies, prioritise professional development, and align their growth with national teaching standards.

The Bertha Centre contributed to the development of this framework as part of its broader role in professionalising teaching through innovative and collaborative models. The CCF forms part of a wider effort to promote extended

internships, competency-based training, and sector-wide co-ordination – core pillars of TICZA's model.

By fostering collaboration among training institutions, policymakers, and education practitioners, TICZA is helping to establish a shared language and understanding that will strengthen the quality of teacher education in South Africa for years to come. By building teacher confidence and adaptability, these initiatives are also contributing to the creation of more equitable and resilient education systems.

Improving Youth Mental Health

Mental health remains a critical issue for South African youth, exacerbated by socioeconomic barriers and limited access to support services. To address this challenge, the Bertha Centre has partnered with the strategic investor and public



innovator, DG Murray Trust (DGMT), to develop the **Youth Mental Health Services Directory** – a comprehensive resource that maps available mental health services, identifying service gaps and informing policy reforms.

This initiative seeks to enhance access to psychosocial support, particularly for young people in underserved communities. By strengthening partnerships between government agencies, mental health professionals, and grassroots organisations, the directory serves as both an advocacy tool and a practical guide for improving service delivery in the youth mental health sector.

Contributing to Global Climate and Health Dialogue

In recognition of the inextricable link between climate change and health, the Bertha Centre contributed to the **World Economic Forum**

(WEF) Climate and Health Report 2024, which was launched at the World Health Assembly. Titled *Climate and Health: The Social Innovation Landscape in Latin America and Asia-Pacific*, the report explores how social innovation can bolster health systems and climate adaptation efforts.

The Centre's research underscores the need for inclusive, socially innovative health systems, with a particular focus on empowering women entrepreneurs and communities disproportionately affected by climate change. Insights from this work are helping shape international policy discussions and paving the way for scalable, impactful solutions at the intersection of health and climate resilience.

Fostering Entrepreneurial Talent

Entrepreneurship is a vital driver of economic development, and the **Jasiri4Africa Talent Investor Programme** plays a crucial role in

equipping emerging entrepreneurs with the skills to create market-shaping innovations. In April 2024, the SJI team facilitated an intensive two-week Systems Thinking and Systems Mapping workshop for 50 fellows in the Liyu cohort, Kigali, Rwanda.

Participants – drawn from Rwanda, Kenya, and Ethiopia – engaged in modules covering team charter development, industry research, and systems thinking tools. Through this programme, entrepreneurs gain the ability to navigate complex systems, identify key levers for change, and develop solutions with long-term socioeconomic impact. Following the workshop, fellows conducted field research and progressed to minimum viable product development with industry experts.



Empowering Youth Entrepreneurs

The Bertha Centre continued its support for YD Co-Lab to serve as a bridge between young entrepreneurs and potential investors. The **Pitch & Match Event**, held in April 2024 in Johannesburg, provided an interactive platform where youth-led enterprises could showcase their innovations, connect with funders, and establish strategic partnerships.

Bringing together stakeholders from diverse industries, the event facilitated networking, knowledge exchange, and collaborative problem-solving. The Bertha Centre's involvement reinforces its commitment to strengthening South Africa's youth development ecosystem, thus fostering sustainable economic growth, particularly for young people.

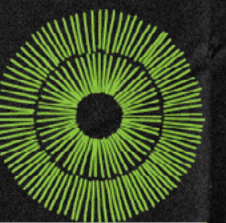
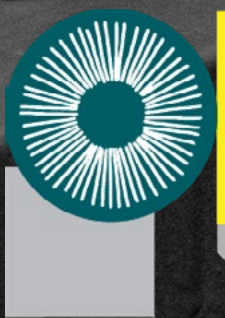
Driving Health Innovation

Recognising the importance of health entrepreneurship and innovation in driving sustainable development, the **Mastercard Foundation Healthy Futures SA (HFSA) Collaboration** continues to expand capacity within Africa's health sector. This ambitious ten-year initiative – co-developed with the UCT Faculty of Health Sciences and a network of African universities – aims to train health professionals, optimise entrepreneurial ecosystems, promote health innovation, and increase access to primary health care services in the Western Cape.

The initiative forms part of the broader Africa Higher Education Health Collaborative (AHEHC), which brings together nine African universities

and the University of Toronto. At the heart of UCT's contribution is the Bertha Centre's Healthy Futures SA programme – a dynamic platform that empowers individuals across educational backgrounds to engage with health challenges in their communities through innovation and entrepreneurship.

Operating in Klipfontein, Saldanha Bay, and George, the HFSA programme includes three core components: Bootcamps, an Accelerator, and a Fellowship. The five-day bootcamps enable local unemployed youth to identify and design solutions to health issues specific to their communities. In 2024, Entrepreneurship Bootcamps were held in Philippi Village and Vredenburg along the West Coast. Fifteen students attended the Philippi Village bootcamp and 26 attended the Vredenburg bootcamp.





The Accelerator supports aspiring and experienced entrepreneurs in launching scalable, health-focused ventures through a rigorous venture launch course – with top-performing participants gaining access to the venture scale programme for further growth. The Accelerator component consists of an online Phase I Venture Launch course, which comprises courses to develop business ideas and innovations over five weeks. Seventy-five students completed the course, 38 of whom passed with more than 60%. Fifteen ventures opted to pitch. Thirteen students were then eligible to progress to the online Phase II Venture Scale course, which consists of masterclasses and deep dives into entrepreneurship topics. The top 3 ventures were awarded prizes to further their initiatives.

Students were also matched with coaches from GSB alumni who provided mentoring on specific areas of need. This progress was shared among partners of the AHEHC during the Convening in Kumasi, Ghana, in October 2024, as well as the SIHI Sweden Conference in November 2024.

The Social Innovation in Health Fellowship is another health initiative that offers postgraduates a funded opportunity to conduct and publish social innovation in health-related research through the UCT GSB Bertha Centre. The fellows will pursue learning and teaching about social innovation in health research in the three identified geographical areas of the Healthy Futures South Africa project, and within the larger ambit of the African Higher Education Health Collaborative. The fellows will also be affiliated with the Social Innovation in Health Initiative, a network of individuals and institutions within the Global South that promotes social innovation in low- to middle-income countries. This network will provide opportunities for the diffusion of lessons and models globally beyond the UCT and African Higher Education Health Collaborative community.

Working alongside partners such as the Western Cape Department of Health, the Solution Space, and the Bertha Centre, the initiative is driving measurable impact by:

- Supporting the creation of sustainable health startups through university-led innovation hubs.
- Strengthening collaboration between academia, government, and the private sector.
- Generating employment in the growing health sector.

HFSA also supports a broader mission: to develop a Pan-African learning network that fosters collaboration, builds capacity, and improves health outcomes across the continent. By advancing health employment, entrepreneurship, and ecosystem development, the Mastercard Foundation Healthy Futures SA Collaboration is helping drive inclusive, long-term change and a healthier future for all.

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Strategic Priority 4: Be at the Forefront of Social Innovation Thought Leadership for Social Justice

In 2024, the Bertha Centre continued to strengthen its position as a thought leader in social innovation, shaping conversations, research, and initiatives that drive lasting change. Thought leadership initiatives included discussions with experts on its Just-for-a-Change podcast, insightful opinion pieces, research publications, and impactful events.

Shaping the Conversation

The **Just for a Change** podcast returned for a fourth season, centred on the theme of “The Power of Connections”. Hosted by the Bertha Centre’s Senior Manager, Ntombini Marrengane, the season explored the unexpected yet powerful relationships that fuel social innovation. Across ten episodes, the podcast covered a diverse range of topics – from the link between minibus taxi ownership and matric pass rates to the role of virtual reality in firefighting.

Social entrepreneurs, researchers, activists, and thought leaders joined the podcast offering fresh insights into issues such as recycling waste for agricultural purposes, the power of representation in communities, and the significance of second chances in education.

Season 4 reflected growing recognition for the podcast’s impact. *Just for a Change* earned a five-star rating on Apple Podcasts and was featured on Feedspot’s list of the top 15 social innovation podcasts globally. The podcast team was also invited to share learnings and insights as part of Amplify Mobilise Change’s Open Network series – an acknowledgment of the platform’s role in driving dialogue and sparking new ways of thinking. *Just for a Change* continues to be a critical platform for inspiring changemakers and amplifying innovative ideas. Listen to the podcast [here](#).

Expanding Global Influence

In 2024, the Bertha Centre further cemented its thought leadership through a series of high-profile opinion pieces, research contributions, and international presentations. Key publications covered a range of pressing issues, from youth mental health and systemic change to the intersection of social innovation and global economic agendas.

Notable articles published in leading outlets included:

- [OPINION | South Africa faces one big obstacle in its quest to go cash-free](#) in *Fin24* by Wenbo Zheng.
- [Dr Chat GPT: Can AI improve healthcare in Africa?](#) in *Health-e News* by Dr Desirè Ruhinda.

- Seizing the GNU moment – social innovation and collaboration can jumpstart South Africa in *Daily Maverick* by Solange Rosa and Ntombini Marrengane.
- Bela Act is exactly what South African education needs in *Daily Maverick* by Solange Rosa.
- Fire control innovation can rise from the ashes of Africa’s informal settlements in *Mail & Guardian* by Francois Petousis.
- SHILUBA MAWELA and LERATO LEPHOLLETSE: Leveraging billions flowing into Africa to transform continent’s economic narrative in *Business Day* by Shiluba Mawela and Lerato Lephalletse.

- How social innovators and entrepreneurs guide the G20 in Business Day by Solange Rosa, Luvuyo Rani, and Yogavelli Nambiar.

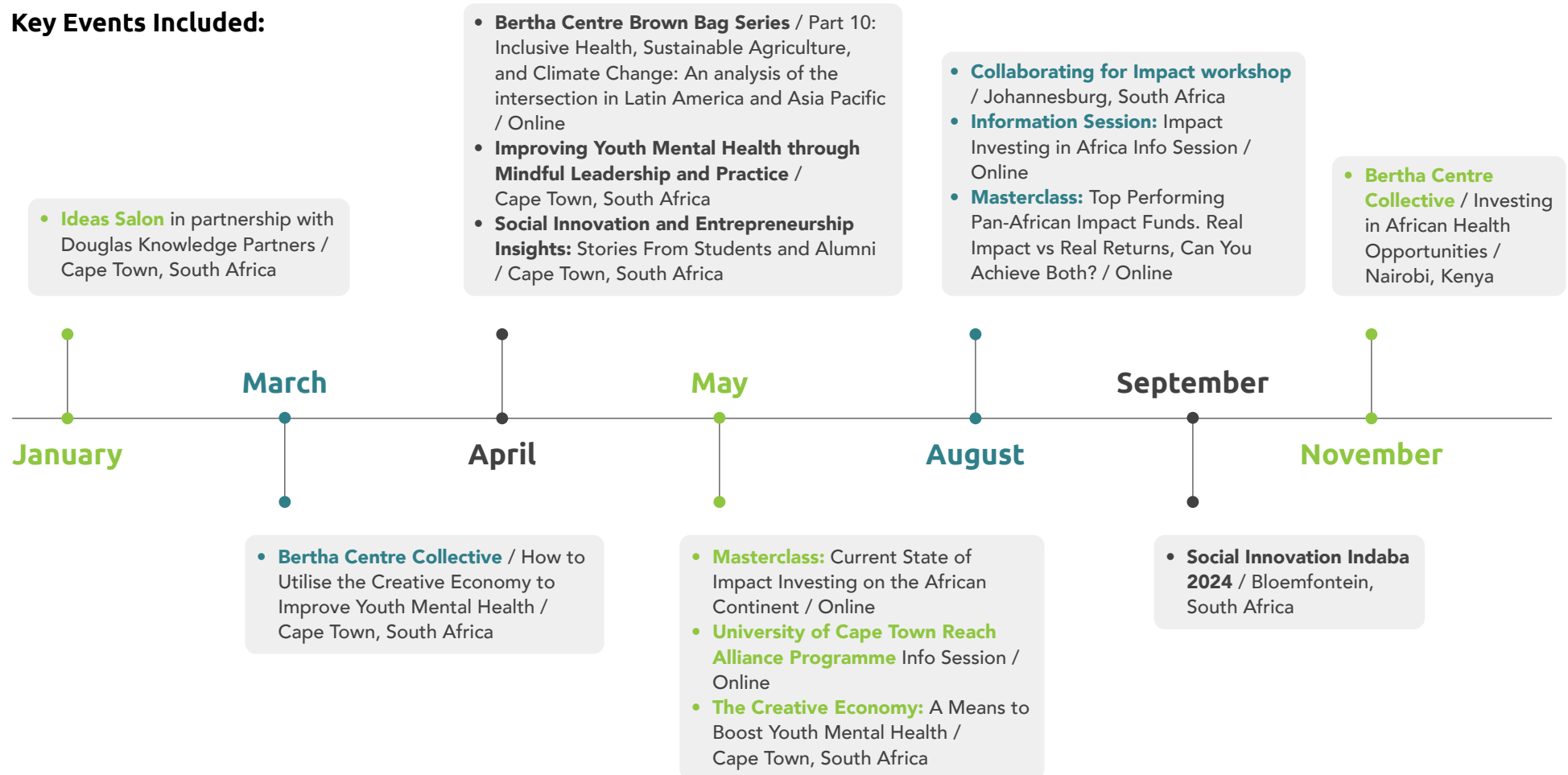
Additionally, the Centre’s research was featured at prominent global platforms, including the South Africa–Sweden University Forum (SASUF) Sustainability Forum – hosted by Malmö University, Lund University, and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences – and the Invest4Health Webinar. These engagements reinforced the Centre’s role as a leader in advancing climate justice, health equity, and financial inclusion. They continue to help shape policies, investment strategies, and innovation frameworks across the continent, providing key insights that can drive systemic change.



Hosting Impactful Convenings

Throughout 2024, the Bertha Centre facilitated a range of influential events, bringing together social entrepreneurs, investors, policymakers, and academics to explore innovative solutions to pressing social challenges. These convenings provided platforms for knowledge exchange, networking, and cross-sector collaboration, fostering new partnerships that drive systemic change.

Key Events Included:



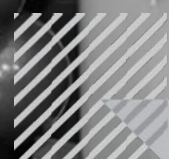
INVESTING IN AFRICAN HEALTH OPPORTUNITIES



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Marketing and Communications Overview and Highlights

The Marketing and Communications team remains committed to fulfilling the Bertha Centre’s mission of driving social innovation, capacity-building and advocacy, and pioneering practices for justice and inclusion across Africa and the Global South. Over the past year, we have continued to expand our reach, strengthen our engagement, and solidify our presence across various platforms.

Our communications strategy has consistently used a mix of digital and traditional media to amplify our message on [LinkedIn](#), [X](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and our [website](#). We have continued to produce high-quality videos showcasing our team, projects, and events, bringing our work to a wider audience.

Through our newsletters, we have engaged with our network, ensuring they stay informed about key developments. Our subscriber base now stands at 5,437, reflecting growing interest in our work. We have also seen a notable increase in website visits and downloads, particularly around major events and initiatives, reaffirming the importance of a strong digital presence.

The Bertha Centre has been featured in prominent publications and platforms, such as *Daily Maverick*, *Mail & Guardian*, and *Business Day*, further enhancing our credibility as thought leaders in social impact.

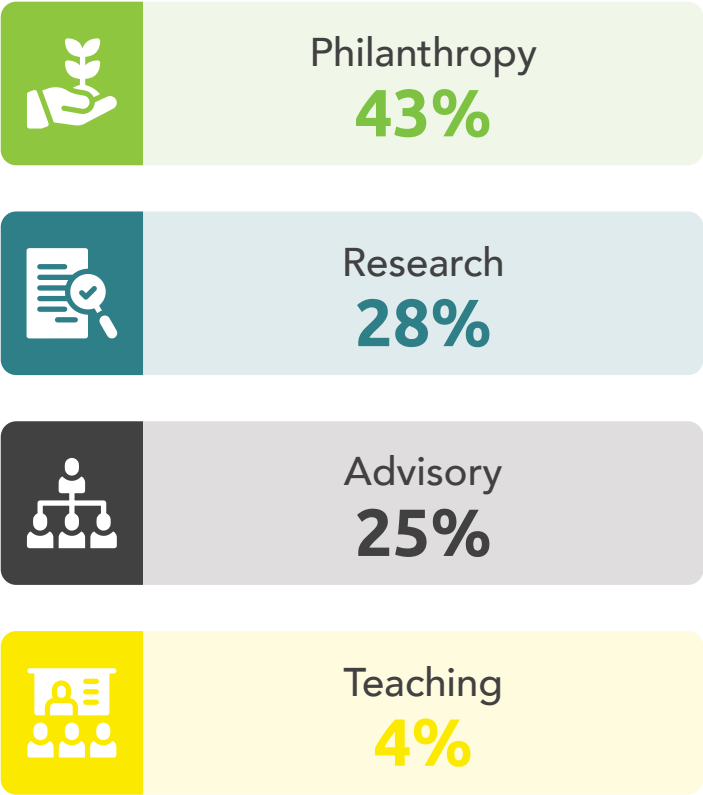
We have successfully hosted regular online and in-person events, providing spaces for meaningful discussions and collaboration among changemakers. This year, we engaged 1,610 participants, fostering connections across different sectors.

Looking ahead, we aim to further strengthen our impact by enhancing our digital storytelling, increasing our social media engagement, and fostering strategic collaborations and convenings. By using these platforms, we will continue to champion thought leadership, promote justice, and drive social change across Africa and further afield.

Bertha Centre 2024 in Numbers



Funding Overview

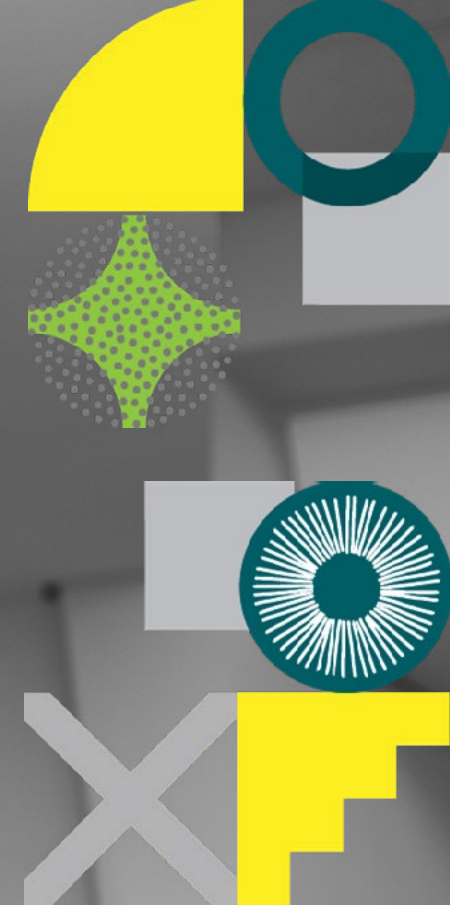


We Thank Our Partners





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A View of the Future



The path forward is clear: we have a responsibility not only to dream of a more just future, but to shape it with intention. In the final stretch of our 2022–2026 strategy, our focus remains firmly on deepening systemic impact across Africa. We are prioritising partnerships that accelerate implementation and scale, particularly in areas where innovation and justice intersect most urgently – such as climate, health education, and youth employment.

Our upcoming work will include an expanded climate justice agenda by embedding climate equity thinking into our broader innovation framework. We also aim to revitalise our Education Innovation portfolio to respond to the structural needs of the sector.

In line with our commitment to influencing global discourse, we are also preparing to engage with

the [G20 summit](#) taking place in South Africa in November 2025. Through a series of thought leadership pieces and side events in the lead-up to the summit, we aim to shape the narrative from an African perspective – highlighting the importance of inclusive and sustainable development, and advocating for policies that reflect the realities and aspirations of the continent.

Ultimately, we believe that transformation happens when people – particularly young people – are trusted with the tools, platforms, and resources to lead. In 2025 and beyond, we will continue to back changemakers and co-create with communities to ensure that the solutions shaping Africa’s future are just, inclusive, and enduring.

“The path forward is clear: we have a responsibility not only to dream of a more just future, but to shape it with intention.”

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Impact Investing in Africa



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