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NATIONAL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
OUR YOUTH. OUR FUTURE.

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE
CHAIRPERSON**

**SPEECH ON OCCASION OF YOUTH
CONSULTATION 2025**



PROVINCE: Gauteng

Event Date: 09 October 2025

Youth Consultation 2025

Minister in the Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, Hon. Sindisiwe Chikunga

Deputy Minister, for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities Hon. Steve Mapaseka Letsike

Deputy Minister for Mineral Resources and Energy, Hon. Phumzile Mgcina

Member of Parliament, Hon. Palomino Jama

Member of Provincial Legislature in Gauteng, Hon. Moipone Mhlongo

CEO of NYDA Mr. Ndumiso Kubheka

Executive Deputy Chairperson Mr. Bonga Makhanya

Advisor in the Minister's Office Dr Mukovhe Masutha

Board Members

Prof. Abejide Ade-Ibijola

Prof. Mlamuli Hlatshwayo

Leaders of young people from all sectors

All protocol observed

Today as we gather for this historic youth consultation, the first of its kind, one is reminded of Frantz Fanon when he said, *"Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfil it, or betray it."*

However, when we analyse and try to come to terms with the current epoch, we cannot forget the words of Antonio Gramsci in his Prison Notebooks when he stated, *"The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum, a great variety of morbid symptoms appear."*

Honourable Minister, these powerful words from Fanon and Gramsci remind us that every generation must face its defining moment. Ours is now. We are living through a time where the old ways of doing things are falling away, but the new ways — more just, more inclusive, more equal — have not yet fully emerged.

This is our interregnum — a moment between what was and what can be. And in this moment colleagues, young South Africans are being called to step forward, to imagine, to build, and to lead.

Today, we meet as young people from all walks of life — from political movements, community organisations, academia, business, and civil society. Whether we are from the

ANC Youth League, DASO, DA Youth, SASCO, COSAS, the YCL, the IFP Youth Brigade, the MKP Youth, the NFP Youth, the EFF Student Command, or the ANC Women's League Young Women's Desk — we must remember one thing: poverty, unemployment, and inequality do not know political boundaries.

Colleagues, the reality is — we are all affected by the same challenges. We share the same frustrations. But we also share the same aspirations: to work, to contribute, to belong, and to live with dignity in our own country.

That is why the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) has convened this Youth Consultation 2025 — not as a symbolic event, but as a call to unity. A call to bring together the voices of young people — from every province, every community, and every background — to shape the future we all deserve.

This gathering is about more than discussion. It is about reclaiming our agency. It is about us reimagining youth development in our country. It is about recognising that young people are not spectators in South Africa's story — we are authors, builders, and catalysts of transformation.

Through this consultation, we are striving for social cohesion — creating a space where young people can engage across political and social lines, where dialogue replaces division, and where unity becomes our greatest strength.

And while this may be the first consultation of its nature, let me be clear — it is not the last. This marks the beginning of a national journey. These consultations will move across the country — to every province — so that no young voice is left unheard and no young person is left behind.

This is how we begin to rebuild faith in our democracy. This is how we turn frustration into action. This is how we, as the youth of South Africa, discover our mission — and fulfil it.

Hon. Jama, as Fanon reminds us, our mission as young people has already been written by our circumstances. It is up to us — together — to ensure that we fulfil it, not betray it.

Colleagues, On 07 October 2025, the NYDA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) — a partnership that underscores our commitment to evidence-based youth development. During this engagement, the Statistician-General raised critical issues surrounding the girl child, who continues to be left behind and remains the face of poverty and hunger in our country. He reminded us that only through evidence-based programmes, grounded in factual data, can we achieve real

impact — not symbolic gestures or box-ticking exercises — in addressing the deep-rooted challenges facing our youth, including issues such as the crisis of teenage pregnancy.

Hon. Minister as you know across our provinces, the story is the same — young people face unemployment, exclusion, and a growing sense of hopelessness. Unemployment among the youth is a national crisis that demands urgent, innovative and coordinated solutions. As of a March 2024 South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 had not achieved significant success in improving the situation for youth, with progress falling far short of key targets. High youth unemployment remains a "national crisis" despite various government initiatives. The latest statistics remind us that 46.1% of young South Africans between the ages of 15 and 34 are unemployed, and over 4.8 million young people are out of work — many of whom have never had a single opportunity to gain experience. These aren't mere numbers, these are real lives, real pain, and real dreams deferred.

Every day, we witness how unemployment erodes confidence and dignity, how it pushes many of our young people into depression, anxiety, and despair. Currently, in Kwazulu-Natal a family is mourning the loss of their son, a young man from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, a brilliant graduate who had just completed his Master's degree, but took his own life because he could no longer bear the frustration of being unemployed. His story is not isolated — it is a mirror held up to us as leaders and to a society that needs to do more for its youth.

The challenge of unemployed graduates is indeed a pressing reality we cannot ignore. In South Africa, the youth graduate unemployment rate was reported at 12.2% in the second quarter of 2025 — more than double the rate recorded in 2008, when it stood at 5.8%. This represents a steady and troubling increase from nearly 12% in 2023, highlighting a worsening situation. Behind this trend lies a combination of economic stagnation, a growing workforce, and a labour market saturated with inexperienced graduates who find themselves qualified but excluded. The burden is particularly heavy on young graduates who come from rural, township and informal settlement communities, who make up the majority of the unemployed.

Colleagues, we believe targeted intervention must focus on work experience, as it influences young people's access to employment opportunities. It has been suggested that this work experience should not apply from level 1 to level 6. One of the main milestones in the past five years of the 6 administration is that the Department of Basic Education has made great strides with the Teachers' Assistance intervention programme in partnership with the Presidency of South Africa.

For us at the NYDA, the key word is collaboration because we believe organizational

collaborations and partnerships are crucial for success in today's dynamic environment, offering benefits like increased innovation, improved problem-solving, and access to new markets. By sharing resources, knowledge, and expertise we can achieve greater efficiency, resilience, and a stronger market position.

Colleagues, at the NYDA we have ensured collaborations and partnerships with more than 16 SETAs out of 21 SETAs in the country which essentially contributed to the development of our young people in skills development and issues of youth unemployment. We are determined that we will continue to forge partnerships with all government departments at national, provincial and local government. The Presidential Youth Employment Intervention is a direct response to the challenge that too many young people are not transitioning from learning to earning.

The Youth Consultation 2025 must therefore challenge us to think differently about the pathways from education to employment — to ensure that our graduates are not just equipped with degrees, but with skills that respond to the demands of the digital economy, the green economy, and the innovation-driven future that South Africa must build. For the NYDA, this is not a theoretical debate — it is a call to action to ensure that the promise of education truly becomes a passport to opportunity.

This is why the Youth Consultation 2025 is not just an event; it is a moral and developmental imperative. It is about giving young people — especially young women — a platform to voice their realities and shape the solutions that affect their lives. Teenage pregnancy reflects a broader failure of our society: the absence of safe spaces, the lack of access to information, and the silence that too often surrounds young people's struggles.

And so, as we begin these consultations, we do so with a renewed sense of duty — to confront the evidence, to listen to the lived realities of young people, and to act with urgency and unity to build a future that leaves no young person behind.

As we reflect on the realities confronting young people — from unemployment and mental health struggles to the barriers faced by graduates — we must also turn our focus to action. The Youth Consultation 2025 is not an academic exercise; it is about building a concrete roadmap that changes lives.

To achieve that, several critical steps must guide our way forward.

First, we must facilitate the co-creation of youth development interventions. In other words young people must be brought to the table — not as beneficiaries, but as co-authors of the policies, programmes, and projects that shape their lives. We must also mobilise resources,

both financial and technical, to ensure that ideas born in this consultation translate into real opportunities on the ground.

We must further strengthen our linkages with stakeholders beyond government. The future we want cannot be built by government alone. It requires the participation of business, civil society, academia, and the development community — all working together to drive inclusion, skills, and innovation.

Moreover, we must find practical ways to integrate youth-focused plans through the District Development Model. The DDM offers us an opportunity to align national priorities with local action, ensuring that youth development is not fragmented, but coherent and effective in every district and every community.

Additionally, we must improve how we market and communicate youth services. Too many young people remain unaware of the opportunities available to them. We must make youth services visible, accessible, and responsive — especially for young people in rural areas, townships, and informal settlements.

We must also embrace digital transformation across all youth services. The world is changing rapidly, and if our programmes do not evolve with technology, they will leave many young people behind. Digital innovation must become the backbone of our approach to education, entrepreneurship, and participation in the economy.

Colleagues as I sit let us be reminded that through the Youth Consultation 2025, the NYDA is saying to the young people of South Africa: we see you, we hear you, and we are acting. Ours is to build pathways of inclusion, to ensure that every conversation today leads to tangible change tomorrow — in schools, in workplaces, and in our communities across the country.