

Letter from NYDA CEO

SA's youth leading the next frontier of the nation's growth and development

A little over one hundred days ago, I accepted the call to lead the National Youth Development Agency, not just as an accounting officer, but as a custodian of a generational mission: to restore the centrality of young people in South Africa's story of inclusive development and long-term growth.

Over this time, I have been reminded that the measure of leadership is not found in the noise of activity, but in the quiet discipline of purpose. It is in building institutions that endure, in partnerships that expand the horizon of what is possible, and in choices anchored in evidence, not sentiment.

I once reflected on the story of Singapore, the idea of being a "nation by design", which reminds us that progress does not happen by chance. Nothing we have today, not our growth, our cohesion, or our shared identity, occurs naturally or by accident. It is a result of deliberate thought, planning and purposeful action. Similarly, to the remarks I made at my first staff dialogue, where I presented the thought experiment, that if I was given an hour to solve a problem, I would spend the first 55 minutes understanding the problem and the remaining five minutes solving it at its root cause. It is in keeping with these principles, that has defined the last few 100 days.

As we mark the next phase in the NYDA's journey, our partnership with Statistics South Africa (StatsSA) represents more than collaboration, it's a declaration that data and evidence will be the foundation upon which we build South Africa's youth economy. Through this alliance, we will strengthen our ability to design and implement interventions that are not only impactful but measurable and sustainable. The evidence of this foundational work, is found in the strategic pivot of consolidating the agency's role, as a National Coordinator of the entire youth employment system. This is strengthened by the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation's (DPME) affirmation to enforce youth targets in all government Annual Performance Plans (APP's) and Strategic Plans. This foundational work will further be reflected in the strategic partnerships that are to come.

In the months ahead, my focus as CEO will centre on seven strategic pillars: refining our strategic and operational direction, deepening accountability across leadership, advancing partnerships that expand opportunity, improving financial and operational efficiency, enhancing governance and compliance and building a learning organisation that nurtures talent and innovation.

This work will be anchored in the legislative power that is found in the NYDA Act, that empowers the agency to initiate, design, coordinate, evaluate and monitor all programmes aimed at integrating youth into the economy. Aligned with the Medium Term Development (MTDP) 2024 – 2029, National Development Plan (NDP) 2030, Integrated Youth Development Strategy and other salient strategic policy frameworks.

And as we modernise the NYDA's systems and operations, our focus is clear, to reach the unreached youth in rural areas, youth living with disabilities, and those whose aspirations have are yet to birthed.

As the nation looks to the agency for solutions and disciplined implementation, even with the challenges and opportunities that will present themselves. May we remember the words of a former South African head of state, that: "...those who complete the course will do so only because they do not, as fatigue sets in, convince themselves that the road ahead is still too long, the inclines too steep, the loneliness impossible to bear and the prize itself of doubtful value."

Placing youth development as an important driver for investment and the center of the nation's industrial and socio-economic growth and development, is a prize worth enduring for.

None of this is possible without our greatest asset, the staff of the NYDA. The NYDA's success depends on the passion, professionalism and performance of every staff member who turns vision into disciplined execution and ideas into impact.

Today, we are building an Agency that doesn't just serve young people, it empowers them to lead the next frontier of South Africa's growth and development.

— **Ndumiso Kubheka-Hadebe**

Chief Executive Officer

National Youth Development Agency