



SPEAKING NOTES FOR EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON DR SUNSHINE MYENDE

PHANDA THURSDAY LAUNCH

28 MAY 2026



SPEAKING NOTES BY THE EXECUTIVE

CHAIRPERSON OF THE NYDA ON THE OCCASION OF THE PHANDA

THURSDAY LAUNCH – Address | ±10 minutes

28 May 2026

*Programme Director,
Honourable Minister in the Presidency responsible for Women, Youth and Persons
with Disabilities, Ms Sindisiwe Chikunga
Honourable Minister of Small Business Development, Ms Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams,
Honourable MEC for Economic Development and Tourism, Ms Jesta Sidell
Representatives in the Office of the Premier of Mpumalanga Province,
Leadership of the Gert Sibande District Municipality and the Govan Mbeki Local
Municipality,
Members of the Board of the National Youth Development Agency,
Leadership and Officials from government departments, entities, business, civil
society and traditional leadership,
Stakeholders and partners,
Most importantly, the young people of eMbalenhle, Secunda, and the broader Gert
Sibande District,*

Sanibonani eMbalenhle! Indawo lapho amaphupho amasha engafuni ukulinda khona.

(Chant - uzoyithola kanjani rhythm)

eMbalenhle siyaPhanda, noma kunzima! Noma kunzima, eMbalenhle siyaPhanda!

Across eMbalenhle this morning, there are young people who woke up long before sunrise carrying CVs in plastic sleeves, business ideas in notebooks, qualifications in folders, and hopes they have carried for years.

Some woke up preparing for another day of searching for work. Some woke up trying to keep small businesses alive. Some woke up determined to continue applying, continue trying, continue showing up despite systems that often feel difficult to navigate and opportunities that can feel out of reach.

We also recognise the exhaustion many young people feel after years of searching, applying, waiting, and hoping. That is the reality that brings us here today.



We gather here in eMbalenhle to launch a programme, but additionally, to make a statement about the kind of South Africa we are trying to build - a South Africa where young people feel seen, supported, and included in the future of this country.

Sizothi lana namuhla, usually uma ithuba lingafiki kithi, siyalilandela la likhona. Kodwa namhlanje, uhulumeni usuyasondela ebantwini abasha.

And the presence of leadership gathered here today matters deeply. Because it demonstrates a collective recognition that the challenges facing young people cannot be addressed in isolation. They require collaboration, coordination, and institutions willing to work together in practical and visible ways.

The reality is that young people are no longer asking only for hope. They are asking for meaningful economic participation. They are asking for institutions that respond faster, listen better, and create practical pathways into opportunity. Too many young people are excluded not because they lack potential, but because systems remain fragmented and unequal. Too many are discouraged not because they lack ambition, but because opportunities often fail to connect with the realities of where they live and how they survive. That reality demands a different response from us as government.

That is why today we launch *Phanda Thursday*.

Phanda Thursday is more than a programme. It is a commitment. A commitment that government and its partners must become more visible, more practical, more coordinated, and more responsive in the lives of young people. The word “Phanda” itself speaks deeply to the spirit of young South Africans. It speaks to resilience. To striving. To planning. To surviving difficult circumstances while still holding onto hope for a better future.

Across townships, villages, peri-urban communities and informal settlements, young people continue to phanda every single day. They continue to search for opportunities, build small businesses, support their families, pursue education, and fight for dignity even under difficult economic conditions.

A Nomfundo or a Sabelo in South Africa would rather attempt ten business ideas, watch some fail, learn from each setback, and rise again, than remain trapped in hopelessness and inactivity. That speaks to the character and resilience of the young people of this country. And perhaps that is what continues to distinguish this generation - its refusal to surrender optimism despite difficult realities. Government must therefore match that determination with equal urgency and equal commitment.



There is an African proverb that says, “umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu”, and perhaps today, Phanda Thursday asks us an important question - how can young people fully rise when institutions remain disconnected from their lived realities?

As the leadership of the NYDA, we refuse to accept that where a young person is born must determine whether they are able to participate meaningfully in the economy of this country. Because dignity is not only found in employment or income. Dignity is also found in being recognised, supported, and given a fair opportunity to participate.

Young people today are not only asking for a seat at the table. They are also asking to shape the conversation taking place around that table. They want to participate meaningfully in decisions that affect their lives, their futures, and their communities. And they are prepared to change the table manners of that table if it is serving a menu that does not represent young people. Because nothing about young people should ever be discussed or decided without young people themselves being present, heard, and actively involved.

As the NYDA, we have already seen the impact that becomes possible when services are brought closer to communities. Through the work of our Secunda office and partnerships across the district, young people have already accessed support in entrepreneurship development, career guidance, CV writing, digital literacy, market access, skills development, and business support services.

We have seen young people supported in sectors ranging from agriculture and construction to tourism, manufacturing, transport, retail, technology, and the green economy. We have seen partnerships with institutions such as TVET colleges, municipalities, Sasol, the Allan Gray Orbis Foundation, SANParks, and other development partners creating real pathways for youth empowerment and economic participation.

But the scale of the challenge before us requires us to move faster, work smarter, and collaborate more intentionally. No single institution can solve youth unemployment alone. No single department can carry the burden of youth development alone. No single municipality, entity, or private sector institution can address the scale of exclusion facing young people on its own. Young people cannot continue carrying the burden of institutional fragmentation.

That is why today I want to make a direct call for integrated regional task teams across the country that will ensure the success and sustainability of Phanda Thursday.



We need municipalities, government departments, SETAs, TVET colleges, development finance institutions, the private sector, community organisations, traditional leadership, and civil society to work together in a coordinated and consistent manner.

Today cannot simply be another attendance exercise. It must become the beginning of sustained institutional cooperation. We need integrated planning. Integrated service delivery. Integrated accountability. Because young people do not experience their challenges in silos. Unemployment is connected to education. Education is connected to transport. Transport is connected to geography. Geography is connected to access. And access is connected to dignity.

If we truly want to transform the lives of young people, then we must begin working in a way that reflects the interconnected nature of their realities. This is why Phanda Thursday is not intended to become a once-off event or a symbolic campaign. It must become part of the weekly rhythm of government delivery in communities across South Africa.

Imagine a South Africa where every Thursday becomes a day young people associate with access, opportunity, support, guidance, economic participation, and hope. A young person must know that every Thursday, opportunity will arrive closer to where they are. They must know that support is not something reserved only for urban centres or those with connections and resources. They must know that government sees them, hears them, and is prepared to walk alongside them.

Young people are tired of symbolic interventions that disappear after launch day. Phanda Thursday must therefore earn trust through consistency, visibility, implementation, and measurable impact. History will not judge us by the number of launches we held, but by whether young people could genuinely feel the impact of our presence in their lives. Years from now, we must be able to say that we did not remain spectators while young people carried the weight of exclusion alone. Perhaps years from now, we will look back at gatherings such as this one in eMbalenhle as the moment government began reimagining how it reaches young people.

As we launch this initiative today, we do so with the understanding that the work ahead remains significant. But we also do so with hope. Because when institutions work together, when communities are mobilised, and when young people are placed at the centre of development, meaningful change becomes possible.

Let this launch therefore mark the beginning of a different approach to youth development in South Africa. One that is practical. One that is visible. One that is



accessible. One that restores dignity and creates pathways to economic participation. No young person should have to leave their community to find dignity. No young person should ever feel that where they were born has determined how far they can dream.

May the young person carrying a CV in a plastic sleeve never again feel invisible to the country they are trying so hard to contribute to.

As the feminist, author and poet, Audre Lorde once reminded us, “Without community, there is no liberation.” And further that, “Revolution is not a one-time event.”

Perhaps that is the true meaning of Phanda Thursday. Not a once-off intervention. Not a symbolic campaign. But the beginning of a sustained national commitment to ensuring that young people are consistently seen, supported, heard, and included in the blueprint and in the future of this country.

A commitment that says young people will no longer navigate exclusion alone. That institutions must work together. That opportunity must become visible in communities where hope has too often been forced to survive on its own.

And from eMbalenhle today, may we begin building that future together.

Noma kunzima? eMbalenhle siyaPhanda. eMbalenhle siyaPhanda? Noma kunzima.

Siyabonga.