



SPEAKING NOTES FOR EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON
DR SUNSHINE MYENDE

**YOUTH BUILD HOUSES AND TITLE DEEDS
HANDOVER CEREMONY
THE VAAL, GAUTENG**

02 JULY 2026



SPEAKING NOTES BY THE EXECUTIVE

CHAIRPERSON OF THE NYDA ON THE OCCASION OF THE YOUTHBUILD HOUSES & TITLE DEEDS HANDOVER – *Message of Support* | ±10 minutes

02 JULY 2026

Programme Director;

Honourable Minister of Human Settlements, Ms Thembi Simelane;

Honourable MEC for Human Settlements in Gauteng, Ms Tasneem Motara;

Executive Mayor of the Sedibeng District Municipality, Cllr Lerato Maloka;

Representatives of the National Home Builders Registration Council, SAWIPT, New Era Projects and all our valued partners;

Leaders from national, provincial and local government;

Our YouthBuild participants;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning.

There is something profoundly hopeful about watching young people build homes that many of them may never live in themselves. It reminds us that nation-building has never been about what we build for ourselves alone; it has always been about what we are willing to build for others. That is why today's ceremony carries a significance that extends well beyond the handing over of houses and title deeds. It tells a much bigger story about service, responsibility and the extraordinary potential of young people when they are trusted to become active participants in shaping the future of their communities.

As South Africa commemorates the 50th Anniversary of the 1976 Youth Uprisings, we are reminded that every generation is called upon to build the nation in different ways. The young people of 1976 confronted injustice because they believed that South Africa could become a country where future generations would live with dignity, opportunity and hope. Our responsibility today is to honour that legacy by ensuring that young people are not excluded from development, but are placed at the centre of it. Every opportunity we create, every skill we develop and every pathway we open for young people becomes another chapter in fulfilling the aspirations of those who came before us.



One of the greatest mistakes we can make is to believe that communities are transformed by infrastructure alone. Infrastructure matters. Homes matter. Roads, schools and clinics matter. But every one of those investments ultimately depends on people - people with the skills to build them, the discipline to maintain them and the values to ensure that they continue serving generations to come. Long before we build sustainable communities, we must build capable citizens.

That is precisely why the National Youth Service (NYS) remains one of South Africa's most important instruments for youth development. Its purpose has never been simply to occupy young people for a season. It is to cultivate a generation that understands that service to one's community is also an investment in one's own future. Through programmes such as YouthBuild, young people develop practical skills while contributing meaningfully to society. Communities benefit from improved human settlements, while young people acquire experience, confidence and a renewed understanding of the role they can play in building our country. That is the true spirit of service.

Over the past month, forty-five young people from different backgrounds came together with a shared purpose. They did not simply participate in another government programme. They became part of a collective effort to restore dignity to families, strengthen communities and contribute to the delivery of sustainable human settlements. Along that journey, they also discovered something equally valuable about themselves. They learnt new skills. They strengthened their ability to work as a team. They developed discipline, accountability and resilience. Most importantly, they began to recognise that they possess the capacity to shape their own futures.

It is here that the National Youth Development Agency finds its role within this partnership. The NYDA exists to ensure that young people are equipped not only with opportunities, but with the capabilities required to seize those opportunities and sustain them. We therefore saw it as essential that, before participants entered the construction site, they first invested in building something far less visible than the houses we celebrate today. They needed to build confidence. They needed to build discipline. They needed to strengthen resilience, leadership and character. Through our five-day Mental Toughness Programme, we sought to prepare young people mentally, emotionally and socially for the realities of the workplace and for the responsibilities that come with serving their communities.

Mental Toughness is often misunderstood as simply encouraging people to be strong. For us, it is about much more than that. It is about cultivating the resilience to face adversity without losing hope, the discipline to remain committed when circumstances become difficult and the confidence to believe that setbacks are not permanent destinations. These qualities matter because technical skills alone cannot sustain a career. They cannot build a successful enterprise or inspire confidence in a community. Character, integrity, teamwork and perseverance are what transform technical competence into lasting success.

Perhaps one of the most powerful lessons of YouthBuild is that some of the families receiving homes today may never know the names of the young people who



measured the foundations, mixed the concrete or laid the bricks that helped make these houses possible. Yet that is one of the greatest lessons of public service. Sometimes our most meaningful contribution is one for which we never expect recognition. We serve because we understand that our work has the power to improve someone else's life, and in doing so, we also transform our own.

Today's ceremony is therefore not the end of this journey. It is an important milestone within a much longer pathway. Participants will continue into structured technical training leading towards a Bricklaying NQF Level 3 qualification, while the NYDA will continue to provide Job Preparedness, Life Skills interventions, Business Management Training and Personal Development Plans that connect participants to employment, entrepreneurship, further education and other youth development opportunities. Our responsibility does not end with a certificate or a closing ceremony. It continues until young people are able to translate the opportunities they have received into sustainable livelihoods and meaningful economic participation.

It is perhaps fitting that we gather on a Thursday. Across the country, the NYDA has begun implementing Phanda Thursday, an initiative founded on a simple belief: opportunity should not remain distant or difficult for young people to access. Through this initiative, we deliberately bring employment support, entrepreneurship services, career guidance and access to government opportunities closer to where young people live. In many respects, this partnership reflects that same philosophy on an even broader scale. By bringing together the Department of Human Settlements, the Gauteng Provincial Government, the NHBRC, municipalities, development partners and the NYDA, YouthBuild has created an integrated pathway that develops skills, strengthens character and creates clear routes towards economic participation. This is exactly the kind of collaborative ecosystem South Africa requires if we are to address youth unemployment in a sustainable way.

Allow me to commend the Department of Human Settlements, the Gauteng Provincial Government, Lesedi Local Municipality, the NHBRC, SAWIPT, New Era Projects and every stakeholder who has contributed to the success of this programme. Your collaboration reminds us that youth development cannot be achieved by one institution acting alone. It requires partnerships that place young people at the centre of development and recognise that investing in them is one of the most important investments our country can make.

As we hand over these title deeds today, we celebrate families who will finally enjoy the dignity and security of owning a home. We also celebrate forty-five young South Africans who leave this programme carrying something equally valuable: new skills, greater confidence, stronger character and the knowledge that they have already made a meaningful contribution to the development of their country.

If we continue to invest in young people in this way, we will achieve far more than the delivery of infrastructure. We will cultivate a generation that understands that leadership begins with service, that opportunity carries responsibility, and that nation-building is not the work of government alone - it is the shared responsibility of every citizen who is willing to build something that will outlive them.



That, in my view, is the true legacy of YouthBuild. It does not simply build houses. It builds the people who will continue building South Africa.

I thank you.