



SPEAKING NOTES FOR EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON
DR SUNSHINE MYENDE

RECREATION AID FOUNDATION
WHEELCHAIR AND MOBILITY TECHNICIANS
GRADUATION CEREMONY, SOSHANGUVE

15 JULY 2026



SPEAKING NOTES BY THE EXECUTIVE

CHAIRPERSON OF THE NYDA ON THE OCCASION OF THE RECREATION AID FOUNDATION WHEELCHAIR AND MOBILITY TECHNICIANS GRADUATION

CEREMONY – *Message of Support* | ± 5 minutes

15 July 2026

Programme Director;

The Honourable Minister of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, Ms Sindisiwe Chikunga;

Founder and Director of the Recreation Aid Foundation, Mr Themba Kenny Nkosi;

Distinguished guests;

Graduates;

Ladies and gentlemen.

Good morning.

Every graduation tells us something about the kind of country we are building. Some produce teachers who will educate future generations. Others produce engineers who will build our roads and bridges or healthcare professionals who will care for our communities.

Today's graduation celebrates another profession that is no less important. Today, South Africa welcomes twenty qualified Wheelchair and Mobility Technicians whose knowledge and skills will improve lives in ways that many of us often take for granted.

This graduation is therefore about much more than the awarding of certificates. It is about expanding South Africa's capacity to care, to innovate and to include. It is about recognising that technical skills can restore dignity, strengthen our healthcare system and create meaningful economic opportunities.

These graduates are entering a specialised field that responds to a real need within hospitals, rehabilitation centres, schools, workplaces and communities across our country. Their work will ensure that mobility devices continue to do what they were designed to do: enable participation, independence and opportunity.



I want to commend the Recreation Aid

Foundation for recognising that empowerment is most meaningful when it equips individuals with skills that have lasting value. Through this programme, you have demonstrated that inclusion is not an act of charity. It is a deliberate investment in human capability. By creating opportunities for youth, women and persons with disabilities to acquire accredited vocational skills, you are contributing to a South Africa where more people are able to participate productively in our economy and realise their full potential.

This vision resonates deeply with the work of the National Youth Development Agency. Under the leadership of the Fifth Board of Directors, we have made inclusion one of the defining priorities of our work because we believe that development cannot be meaningful if it does not reach every young person.

Last November, the NYDA launched its Disability Strategy, affirming our commitment to ensuring that young persons with disabilities are able to access the Agency's programmes, opportunities and services with dignity and without unnecessary barriers. That strategy continues to guide how we strengthen accessibility, improve participation and ensure that disability inclusion becomes part of how we plan, implement and evaluate our work.

Yesterday, we launched the NYDA Rural Youth Development Strategy, recognising another reality that demands our attention: where a young person is born should never determine the opportunities available to them. Young persons with disabilities living in rural and remote communities often experience multiple forms of exclusion at the same time. They face barriers created by distance, limited infrastructure, inadequate transport and unequal access to services.

As the NYDA, we are committed to ensuring that inclusion reaches every village, every township and every community because opportunity must never be reserved for those who happen to live closest to it.

As our society becomes increasingly digital, accessibility must also evolve. We can no longer define accessibility only in terms of ramps, buildings and physical infrastructure. Accessibility today must also include affordable data, reliable connectivity, assistive technologies and digital platforms that are designed for everyone.

For many young persons with disabilities, particularly those in rural communities, digital exclusion has become another barrier to education, entrepreneurship, employment and participation in public life. If South Africa is to build an inclusive digital economy, then accessibility cannot be an afterthought; it must be embedded in the very design of our digital future.



Today's graduates remind us that inclusion is ultimately measured not by the policies we write, but by the opportunities we create. It is measured by whether skills lead to employment, whether innovation improves lives and whether every young person is able to participate fully in the social and economic life of our country.

To our graduates, you leave here today as qualified professionals whose skills are both specialised and deeply valuable. Wear your qualification with confidence. Continue learning. Continue innovating. Continue serving your communities with excellence. You are entering a profession that reflects the very best of what South Africa needs more of = technical expertise, compassion, resilience and a commitment to improving the lives of others.

The National Youth Development Agency is proud to stand alongside partners such as the Recreation Aid Foundation because together we are demonstrating that inclusion is not simply an aspiration contained in policy documents. It is something we build through partnerships, through investment in skills and through creating opportunities that enable every young South African to contribute to the future of our nation.

I congratulate each one of you on this well-deserved achievement and wish you every success in the journey ahead.

I thank you.