



SPEAKING NOTES FOR EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON DR SUNSHINE MYENDE

SHE LEADS DRAKENSBURG, KZN

27 AUGUST 2026



SPEAKING NOTES BY THE EXECUTIVE

CHAIRPERSON OF THE NYDA ON THE OCCASION OF THE SHE LEADS CAMP

– Message of Support | ±5 Minutes

27 August 2026

Programme Director and Facilitators

Representatives of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Social Development

The Sinethemba Women's Foundation,

Our government and development partners,

Representatives from business and the financial sector,

And, most importantly, the women leaders participating in She Leads KZN,

Sanibonani

It is a privilege to join you at this stage of the She Leads KZN Women's Leadership Camp. What I find particularly meaningful about this programme is the intentional journey it has taken you on. You began with connection, belonging and shared purpose; you were then encouraged to look inward at your identity, values, confidence and voice; and you subsequently explored what it means to lead with others through trust, collaboration and collective responsibility.

Today, the programme moves into an important next phase: turning potential into opportunity.

That transition matters because we have become accustomed to speaking about the potential of women, particularly young women, as though recognising that potential is sufficient. It is not. Potential becomes meaningful when it is supported by an environment in which people can access the resources, relationships, markets, knowledge and institutions necessary to translate their capabilities into sustainable participation and impact.

For me, that is the significance of the programme before us today. The women who have gathered here are being connected not simply to inspiration, but to parts of the



wider ecosystem that can help them advance their enterprises, organisations and initiatives. The stakeholder programme brings together government institutions and partners working across enterprise development, empowerment, finance, procurement, supplier development and market access.

I therefore want to encourage you, as women leaders, to approach today's engagements with both confidence and curiosity. You have already spent this week reflecting on who you are, what you value and how you lead. Today is an opportunity to articulate what you are building and to understand more clearly what will be required to take it forward. Engage the institutions represented here, ask questions, build relationships and be prepared to explain not only what you need, but the value and impact of what you are already creating.

This becomes particularly significant in the pitching sessions later today, where 41 participants will present their purpose, achievements, impact, growth potential and support requirements. Those presentations are an important bridge between leadership development and economic participation, because they provide women with the opportunity to place their work before people and institutions that may be able to contribute to its next stage of development.

But while we ask women to be prepared, ambitious and confident, we must also ask whether our institutions are prepared to meet them with the same seriousness.

Women's empowerment cannot be reduced to telling women that they are capable. If we are serious about expanding women's participation in the economy, then we must be equally serious about the systems through which opportunity is accessed. That means making information understandable and accessible, strengthening pathways to finance and markets, opening procurement and supplier-development opportunities, and ensuring that women who demonstrate potential can find institutions prepared to engage with them beyond the duration of a particular programme.



This is especially important for young women. We cannot place the entire responsibility for overcoming structural barriers on individual determination. As the National Youth Development Agency, we have a responsibility to contribute to an enabling environment in which young people can develop their capabilities and participate meaningfully in the economy and in their communities. Young women should not be viewed simply as beneficiaries of programmes; they are entrepreneurs, professionals, innovators, community leaders, employers and decision-makers whose participation is essential to the future we are trying to build.

I am equally encouraged that this camp has treated leadership as both personal and collective. The emphasis on collaboration and shared responsibility reminds us that sustainable progress is rarely achieved in isolation. The relationships built during these five days can become part of the support systems that allow women to continue learning from one another, identify opportunities together and strengthen one another's work long after the camp concludes.

As you participate in today's programme, I hope you will therefore see yourselves not only as women with potential, but as women with something to contribute to the development of your communities, your province and our country. Take seriously the opportunity to make your work visible, to establish meaningful institutional relationships and to identify the practical steps that can move your ambitions forward.

And when you leave Didima, I hope the value of this experience will extend beyond what each of you is able to achieve individually. Leadership becomes more consequential when the knowledge, opportunities and relationships we gain are used to widen the possibilities available to others. The progress of one woman should increasingly become a pathway through which another woman can see what is possible and find the confidence and support to pursue it herself.

That, ultimately, is the promise contained in a programme such as She Leads KZN: not simply that women will leave more confident than when they arrived, but that



they will leave better equipped to convert their leadership into meaningful economic and social participation.

I wish every woman participating today a productive engagement with our stakeholders, confidence in presenting the work you have built, and the determination to carry the relationships and opportunities created here into the communities and enterprises you represent.

May this be a meaningful step in the journey from potential to opportunity, and from opportunity to lasting impact.

Thank you.