



# Statement by NYDA Board Executive Chairperson

The year 2024 has been a remarkable one, marked by the 48th Youth Day Commemoration, the 30th Anniversary of our Democracy, and the historic 7th General Elections. For the first time in our democracy, no political party secured the majority of the votes. The political maturity displayed by most political parties in peacefully accepting the results, without protests or violence in our streets, is something worth recognising, applauding, and nurturing for the future.

Now, more than ever, we are alert to the crucial steps required to drive youth development in South Africa. Our efforts are directed by the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030, rooted in the National Youth Policy (NYP) 2030, and reinforced by the Integrated Youth Development Strategy (IYDS) 2022–2025.

At the core of this national agenda are young people, who represent the vital human and intellectual capital needed to achieve its objectives, and as the future of our nation, they must be its primary beneficiaries. The recently enacted National Youth Development Agency Amendment Bill refines the Agency's focus on empowering young South Africans and enhances its governance structure. The new provisions streamline the Agency's objectives, addressing concerns that the previous mandate was too broad and impractical to implement. The Amendment Act clarifies that the NYDA's primary mandate is within the youth sector, limiting its scope to objectives that can be feasibly funded.

Data on labour market activities collected by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) continues to reveal an untenable situation. Over 8.4 million South Africans are unemployed, with an additional 16.3 million not economically active. While the expanded unemployment rate includes even more individuals, this crisis directly affects the livelihoods, security, and futures of all South African youth.

## **The stark reality is that the unemployment rate**

among young people (aged 15–34) stands at 45.5%, significantly higher than the national average of 32.9% in the first quarter of 2024.

Overall, females experience higher unemployment rates, lower absorption into the workforce, and lower labour force participation compared to males. The situation is even more dire for those living in rural areas, townships, and for individuals with disabilities.

In this data, we note that education and practical experiences, such as apprenticeships, internships, or other forms of workplace exposure, play a critical role in improving access to better job opportunities for the youth. It is against this context that the Integrated Youth Development Strategy (IYDS) 2022–2025 is serving as our key instrument for driving the effective implementation of the National Youth Policy 2020–2030.

Our flagship program, the Revitalised National Youth Service, established in partnership with the Presidency as part of the Presidential Youth Employment Initiative, has the widest reach in placing young people in paid service opportunities, with the majority transitioning into longer-term, more sustainable economic pathways. Despite its significant potential, more resources and support are required to meaningfully address the challenges confronting South African youth.

The monumental task ahead cannot be achieved without adequate funding for the Department of Women, Youth, and Persons with Disabilities. We believe that the current funding is severely insufficient, significantly limiting the impact and reach of our sustained efforts. Our already modest fiscal budget was further reduced by approximately 7%, despite the country's population growing by around 1.3% annually. This reduction is especially concerning in a nation that has seen a stable influx of approximately 1.35 million new learners each year since 2016, with 897 775 students registering for grade 12 final exams in 2023.

Education and skills development are key areas that will deliver the greatest benefits for society and our economic future. We remain committed to advocating for, contributing to, and leading initiatives aimed at empowering the youth. Over the past 10 years, we have supported this mission through the Solomon Kalushi Mahlangu Scholarship Fund. We have supported qualifying and deserving youth from the most underdeveloped and disadvantaged regions of our country. Our assistance has spanned various disciplines, including health sciences, the built environment, natural sciences, commerce, law, and social sciences, enabling students to pursue their studies at





institutions of higher learning and training across South Africa.

Our efforts are centred on expanding opportunities for young people, education, and skills training, enhancing service programs, and launching new community-based initiatives focused on life skills development and entrepreneurship training.

Our international engagement with continental and multinational organisations continues to foster valuable partnerships and mutually beneficial cooperation, offering significant potential to advance the NYDA's current vision.

The successful 10th BRICS Youth Summit, held in Russia earlier this year, marked a significant expansion as Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates joined the BRICS Plus group. This opens vast opportunities for South African youth, granting them access to 43% of the global population, 32% of the world's landmass, 27% of global GDP, and a stronghold in key industries, including 5 of the world's top oil producers and 3 leading natural gas producers.

The Summit Declaration highlighted the critical work being done in areas such as Education, Training and Skills Development; Entrepreneurship; Science, Technology and Innovation; Youth Community Service and Volunteer Work; and Promoting Sports and Healthy Lifestyles.

Furthermore, the institutionalisation of the BRICS Youth Council was highlighted as essential to effectively advancing and consolidating the youth development agenda across BRICS Plus nations. This could lead to exciting new avenues for South African youth to connect with global partners, giving them access to resources and opportunities that could help uplift both their local communities and the broader African region.

Likewise, our involvement in the World Youth Development Forum, the G20 Youth Engagement Group meetings, and other global platforms is centred on promoting these priority areas. These include addressing hunger, poverty, inequality, climate change, energy transition, sustainable development, inclusion, and diversity, as well as fostering innovation and shaping the future of work.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I extend our sincere appreciation to all management and staff for their dedication and hard work. Looking ahead, our priority remains to position youth at the heart of South Africa's economic recovery and prosperity. We encourage all young people to embrace the opportunities provided by Government and private sector initiatives to pursue their dreams and realise their full potential.

**Ms. Asanda Luwaca**

Executive Chairperson: National Youth Development Agency

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