



SPEAKING NOTES FOR EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON  
DR SUNSHINE MYENDE

**IYDS CONSULTATION WOMEN EMPOWERMENT  
WEBINAR**

22 OCTOBER 2026

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## **SPEAKING NOTES BY THE EXECUTIVE**

### **CHAIRPERSON OF THE NYDA ON THE OCCASION OF THE IYDS**

#### **CONSULTATION WOMEN EMPOWERMENT WEBINAR – *Remarks* | ±5 minutes**

22 October 2026

*Programme Director,  
Representatives of Government, Business and Civil Society  
Representatives of women's organisations,  
Fellow development practitioners,  
And all participants joining us today,*

*Good afternoon.*

Thank you to the organisers and facilitators for this important opportunity to reflect on women's empowerment within the framework of the Integrated Youth Development Strategy.

Women's empowerment is fundamental to economic transformation, social justice and inclusive youth development in South Africa. Yet, the latest available data remind us of the scale of the challenge. Statistics South Africa reported that women's unemployment stood at 37.5% in the second quarter of 2026, while 39.2% of young women aged 15 to 24 were not in employment, education or training in the first quarter of 2026.

We must also confront the unequal risks facing women with disabilities. National research found that the lifetime prevalence of sexual violence by a partner was 14.6% among women with disabilities, compared with 7.2% among women without disabilities. These figures demand interventions that address economic exclusion, violence and the structural barriers that prevent women from participating fully in society.



The IYDS provides a framework for addressing these interconnected challenges through coordinated action across government, the private sector and civil society. Crucially, women must not only benefit from development; they must have the power to shape it.

Women's organisations are indispensable partners in this process. Their community knowledge, advocacy and lived experience help identify barriers that institutions may overlook. They must be meaningfully involved in designing programmes, influencing policy, monitoring implementation and holding institutions accountable. Their participation must translate into real influence, supported by meaningful partnerships, resources and opportunities to lead.

We must also recognise that young women do not experience exclusion in the same way. Rural and township women, young women with disabilities and LGBTQIA+ young people may face multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination.

An inclusive youth development agenda must confront these barriers directly. It must promote accessible programmes, safe and affirming environments, equal economic opportunities, and the meaningful participation of those whose voices have historically been marginalised. No young person should have to compromise their dignity or conceal who they are to access opportunities.

As the National Youth Development Agency, we recognise that youth development is a shared responsibility. The IYDS provides a basis for aligning interventions, strengthening partnerships and ensuring that commitments translate into tangible outcomes.

Our task is to move beyond participation as a measure of success. We must ask whether young women are accessing funding, developing viable enterprises, acquiring relevant skills, entering employment and assuming leadership. We must also ask who remains excluded, why they remain excluded, and what institutions are doing to change that reality.

As youth development stakeholders, we must establish clear, measurable key performance indicators that track young women's access to employment,



entrepreneurship funding, skills

development, leadership opportunities and protection from gender-based violence.

These indicators must be disaggregated by age, disability, geographic location and other relevant factors to identify who is benefiting, who remains excluded, and where interventions are falling short.

Women's organisations and young women themselves must participate in monitoring these outcomes and holding institutions accountable, ensuring that empowerment is measured not by the number of programmes delivered, but by the tangible improvements in young women's lives.

I encourage all stakeholders to make women's empowerment a practical commitment reflected in our programmes, budgets, partnerships and accountability mechanisms.

Let us build a youth development system in which every young woman has not only a seat at the table, but also the opportunity, resources and agency to influence the decisions that shape her future.

Thank you.