



**SPEAKING NOTES FOR EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON
DR SUNSHINE MYENDE**

**YOUTH IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW
KIMBERLEY, NORTHERN CAPE**

23 OCTOBER 2026

**SPEAKING NOTES BY THE EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON OF THE NYDA ON THE
OCCASION OF THE YOUTH IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW – *Remarks | ± 6-10
minutes***

23 October 2026

Programme Director

Representatives of the Northern Cape Department of Social Development

Representatives of the National Youth Development Agency

The management and staff of Molehe Mampe Secure Care Centre

And, most importantly, the young men we are here to engage with today

Dumelang

Thank you for welcoming us.

We are not here to only speak to you about your choices or make assumptions about your circumstances. We have come to listen, to understand your experiences and to learn what meaningful rehabilitation and support should look like from your perspective. If we are serious about developing effective responses for young people in conflict with the law, we must listen to the young people whose lives those responses are intended to change.

Each of you has a story shaped by your own circumstances, experiences and decisions. We must never assume that one explanation accounts for every young person's journey. Equally, we must recognise that a person's most difficult chapter does not have to define their entire life.

Our theme, "From Conflict to Contribution," challenges us to look beyond the circumstances that have brought young people into conflict with the law and ask what is required for them to build constructive, meaningful futures. This is not about overlooking wrongdoing or diminishing its consequences. It is about recognising that accountability and rehabilitation must work together.

Where harm has been caused, young people must have opportunities to understand its consequences, take responsibility and learn to make different choices. Where appropriate and safe, restorative approaches can also help address harm and rebuild relationships. But rehabilitation must go further than consequence management. It must equip young people with the emotional, social and practical tools to navigate challenges, resolve conflict and make decisions that support their development.



We must also be willing to understand the circumstances surrounding young people's choices. Family relationships, peer pressure, substance use, exposure to violence, difficulties at school and limited opportunities may influence individual experiences in different ways. Understanding these circumstances does not remove personal responsibility. It helps us identify the support required to prevent harmful patterns from continuing.

The latest published figures from the Northern Cape Department of Social Development show that 27 children accessed secure care centres across the province during the first quarter of the 2026/27 financial year, against a target of 19. During the same period, 211 people completed diversion programmes, against a target of 200. These figures reflect provincial service delivery, not the circumstances of individual young people at this centre. Behind every statistic is a human experience that numbers alone cannot explain.

This is why we must ask whether rehabilitation is equipping young people to move forward. Are they receiving the educational support they need? Are they developing practical skills and exploring pathways into further education, vocational training, entrepreneurship and employment? Can they access appropriate psychosocial support, mentorship and guidance to help them navigate difficult experiences and build healthier relationships?

We must also consider what happens when young people return to their communities. Reintegration may require support to resume education, rebuild family relationships, overcome stigma and access opportunities. Families, schools, government departments, community organisations and development agencies all have a role to play. No single institution can deliver sustainable reintegration on its own.

Where a young person has undergone rehabilitation before or returned to secure care, we must be prepared to examine what happened between those experiences. What support was available? Which challenges remained unresolved? What made it difficult to sustain change? And what could be done differently? These are important questions because successful rehabilitation should not be measured only by participation in a programme, but also by whether young people are better equipped and supported to move forward.

The NYDA's work with the Department of Correctional Services, formalised through a three-year Memorandum of Understanding in August 2026, reflects the importance of collaboration in youth development, skills training, entrepreneurship and reintegration. That agreement applies specifically to the Department of Correctional Services; it does not itself establish services at this centre. Nevertheless, the principle is relevant to our engagement today: young people need coordinated support and practical pathways to opportunity.



Young men, we want to hear from you. What do you believe has influenced your journey? What have you learnt about yourself through your experiences? What has helped you, and what has made change difficult? What do you hope to achieve, and what support would help you take the next step?

You are not required to disclose anything you are uncomfortable sharing. We ask that you engage honestly where you feel able to and respect one another's experiences. Your perspectives matter because interventions are more responsive when they take account of the realities of the young people they are intended to serve.

To those of you continuing your education, keep working towards your goals and seek support where you need it. To those considering what comes next, remember that your future can include learning, skills development, entrepreneurship, employment and meaningful service to your communities. These pathways require effort and responsibility, but young people should not have to navigate them without guidance or support.

Young men, your circumstances today do not have to determine your entire future. Your choices matter, but so do the opportunities, relationships and support that help you make different choices. You deserve to be treated with dignity, to develop your abilities and to have a meaningful opportunity to contribute to society.

As the NYDA, our responsibility is to listen to your lived experiences, learn from what you share and work with relevant partners to advance practical, youth-responsive approaches to rehabilitation and reintegration. Today's engagement must help us understand not only what young people need to change, but also what institutions and communities must do to make that change sustainable.

From conflict to contribution requires accountability from individuals, commitment from institutions and support from communities. Let this engagement be an opportunity to listen with honesty, learn with humility and strengthen our collective responsibility to ensure that young people have a genuine opportunity to build a different future.

Thank you.