

## MEDIA STATEMENT

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Issued by the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities  
Attention: Journalists and News Editors  
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### DWYPD CALLS FOR INTENSIFIED EFFORTS TO TACKLE YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES.

**Pretoria:** The Minister in the Presidency responsible for Women, Youth, and Persons with Disabilities (DWYPD), Sindisiwe Chikunga, calls for intensified and coordinated efforts across all sectors of society to tackle the persistent challenge of youth unemployment in South Africa.

As the country advances its development and transformation agenda, youth unemployment remains a critical barrier to inclusive growth, social cohesion, and economic opportunity. DWYPD stresses the need for stronger partnerships between government, the private sector, and civil society. These partnerships should expand access to skills development, entrepreneurship pathways, and sustainable job opportunities for young people. This is especially important for those from vulnerable and marginalised communities.

The President's emphasis on tackling youth unemployment, expanding access to skills development, and creating sustainable pathways into the economy affirms the government's recognition that youth empowerment is fundamental to inclusive growth and social transformation. The continued prioritisation of the Presidential Youth Employment Intervention (PYEI) and the expansion of public employment programmes signal a decisive step towards bridging the gap between education and economic participation.

The Government will continue to strengthen policy implementation and resource mobilisation. The private sector should increase investment in youth skills development, job creation, and mentorship opportunities. Civil society is encouraged to facilitate community-based initiatives and provide support mechanisms for youth. Educational institutions should align curricula with labour market needs and expand work-ready programmes. By working together in these focused ways, stakeholders can deliver more effective and sustainable solutions to youth unemployment.

According to the latest Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) for the fourth quarter of 2025, released in February 2026, there has been a modest improvement in youth labour market outcomes. The youth unemployment rate declined to 43.8%, down from 44.6% in the same quarter the previous year. Employment among youth increased by 44,000, while the number of unemployed youth decreased by 172,000. These figures show early signs of recovery and suggest the potential impact of targeted employment interventions.

Despite these improvements, long-term trends highlight the structural nature of youth unemployment in South Africa. This trajectory underscores the need for sustained and systemic responses to address the root causes of youth joblessness. In response to these challenges, the government is intensifying efforts to address youth unemployment through the implementation of the National Youth Policy, which focuses on strengthening skills development, supporting job creation initiatives, and improving pathways for young people to participate in the economy.

These include infrastructure-led job creation through public investment in transport, energy, and housing projects; support for entrepreneurship and small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs), particularly in township and rural economies; expansion of skills development programmes aligned with emerging sectors such as the digital economy, green economy, and care economy; strengthening of public–private partnerships to increase access to learnerships, internships, and apprenticeships; and the development of targeted social compacts to mobilise government, business, and civil society in creating sustainable youth employment pathways.

The National Youth Policy provides a comprehensive framework that prioritises education and skills development, entrepreneurship support, workplace readiness, and expanded access to economic opportunities. It also seeks to remove structural barriers that prevent young people from entering and thriving in the labour market.

The government acknowledges that responding to youth unemployment requires sustained and coordinated action. This includes improved alignment between education and labour market needs, stronger support for innovation and entrepreneurship, and increased investment in youth-led initiatives that can drive inclusive growth and social transformation.

As implementation continues, the government calls on all stakeholders to play their part in empowering young people and building an economy that is responsive to the aspirations of the youth. “The future of the country depends on how effectively we invest in, support, and include young people in national development. Government remains committed to working with young people to build a more inclusive, productive, and prosperous society”. Said Minister Chikunga.

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**Issued by the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities**