



**MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY: WOMEN, YOUTH AND PERSONS WITH
DISABILITIES
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**LAUNCH OF YOUTH MONTH OPENING AND WELCOME REMARKS
BY HONOURABLE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY FOR
WOMEN, YOUTH AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES,
PROFESSOR HLENGIWE MKHIZE**

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CEO of NYDA, Waseem Carrim

Members of the Media

Distinguished Guests

Young people of this country

My task today is to open this launch and welcome you to this important occasion. As the Deputy Minister in the Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities I look forward to ushering in Youth Month.

The occasion allows South Africa to focus on the many achievements young people continue to notch up every day.

Indeed we are in difficult times as a country, and globally. The COVID-19 pandemic has widened long-existing inequalities and has exposed the challenges youth face on a daily basis. Out of this challenges, youth continue to innovate and show incredible resilience.

In launching Youth Month, we encourage youth to emulate the values and energy of Mme Charlotte Mannya Maxeke, who, from an early age, knew where she wished to be agent for change.

As a young women, she defied all roles set out for her and forged her own path, challenging every single stereotype, and choosing to define herself through her hardships.

Young people today find themselves in a challenging situation. Globally, economies are slow to recover and youth find themselves with obstacles to overcome that will define their character. We must all use Youth Month to focus our plans, programmes and resources to benefit young people. Here, I also stress the need to ensure young people with disabilities are also considered for education and employment opportunities.

As we launch Youth Month 2021 today, I wish to remind you that the objectives of Youth Month are:

- To **educate and commemorate 45 years of Soweto uprisings** and the 1976 the youth by creating awareness of our history and the role played by young people in the struggle for national liberation.
- To highlight **youth excellence** in the age of COVID-19 and promote the need to continue empowering them.

- **To encourage engagements and dialogues that foster nation building and social cohesion during COVID-19 and beyond.**
- **To highlight achievements and key government programmes** for youth development.
- **To promote commitment on the implementation of the Integrated Youth Development Strategy**

As we move through June, celebrating youth, we must never forget the 1976 Student Uprisings. We must remember the toll this fateful day of 16 June 1976 had on our youth, but also on society as a whole, as hundreds of students were gunned down in cold blood.

In the year of Charlotte Mannya Maxeke, we must acknowledge that our struggle is far from over. Many of our youth are living in poverty; they continue to be unemployed; COVID-19 pandemic is widening the inequality gap; they are also facing a double-edged sword of Gender-Based Violence and Femicide; and the state of their mental health is severely and negatively impacted.

Young girls remain disproportionately affected by gender-based violence and femicide, period poverty, unequal access to education opportunities, harmful stereotypes and gender roles, and a host of human rights violations ranging from forced marriages, to unequal pay for work of equal value.

Young people with disabilities face multi-dimensional challenges, largely brought on by attitudes towards them.

Many youth are discouraged with the labour market and they are also not building their skills base through education and training. There are more than 10,3 million young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET). The majority of these youth in the NEET category, are females.

Ladies and gentlemen, members of the media, perhaps one of our greatest challenges, remains the empowerment of youth to access education and employment opportunities. Youth in rural areas remain even more isolated from job opportunities, losing hope in their prospects. This heart-breaking reality must spur all of us to do more.

As we move through June I encourage government, civil society, media and the citizenry to share their efforts in involving youth as part of their empowerment programmes.

Today's media briefing will provide an outline of government's plans for the month, but also more importantly, share our vision for a South Africa where youth development is an apex priority.

With these few words I wish to welcome you to this media briefing, and hope that you are inspired by what you hear here today.

I wish to paraphrase from uTata Nelson Mandela:

Our youth are our future and our greatest treasure. Those who abuse them tear at the fabric of our society and weaken our nation.

Indeed, for us to realise the National Development Plan 2030, inclusive development must be a central tenet of what we do, and must become daily practise.

I welcome you to the launch of Youth Month 2021, and wish to take this opportunity to wish, especially all young people of South Africa, a happy Youth Month!

I thank you