

Empowering the next generation amidst ongoing socio-economic challenges

MAHIKENG MAIL - MAHIKENG: As South Africa marked Youth Day on 16 June, the Public Servants Association (PSA) paid tribute to the courage and resilience of the youth of 1976 and acknowledged the current generations' struggles in pursuit of a better future.

While young South Africans remain one of the country's major assets, they face systemic barriers that threaten their ability to thrive. These include staggering youth unemployment, where, according to Statistics South Africa, the youth unemployment rate was at a shocking 46.1% in the first quarter of 2025. Thousands of young graduates remain unemployed with no use of their valuable skills, which should be used to assist the country to grow its economy using new ideas, creativity and innovation.

The unemployment crisis and desperation contribute to many societal issues, including rising crime rates, substance abuse, gender-based violence, mental-health challenges, and high dropout rates from secondary and tertiary education.

Deteriorating service delivery in many communities exacerbates the challenges facing young people as they often experience a lack of access to quality education and health services. There is further inadequate support in respect of skills development, career guidance, and financing for higher education.

The PSA recognises that today's youths are, however, not passive victims of circumstance, but active drivers of innovation, activism, and social change. From developing tech solutions in township hubs to leading climate action movements, South African youth continue to redefine resilience and excellence and are deserving of support.

The PSA invests in long-term youth empowerment through advocacy for better public services, educational infrastructure, and fair labour practices. The PSA urges government departments to prioritise the implementation of youth-targeted strategies such as the Presidential Youth Employment Initiative and Labour Activation Programmes.

On Youth Day, the PSA calls on all sectors of South African society to join forces in dismantling structural barriers faced by young people.

Concrete action is required in recognition of the potential of the youth as builders of the country's democracy and economy.