

**MEDIA RELEASE**                      **Youth Day 2023: PSA calls for empowerment of young people**

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On Youth Day, the Public Servants Association (PSA) remains concerned about government's failure to support learners and also to create long-term employment opportunities for the youth to cement the country's future and rescue the economy.

Recent unemployment statistics released by Statistics South Africa underline that decisive action is needed to empower young people. The shocking statistics show that almost 250 000 young people lost their jobs in the first three months of 2023. This is an increase of 1.1% from 32.7% to 32.9% in this period.

Disturbingly, problems facing the youth begin in the development phase. This is evidenced by a study conducted that showed that only 19% of South Africa's Grade-4 learners can read for meaning. This is a decline from the study undertaken in 2016, which found that 22% of Grade-4 learners could read for meaning. A decent education offers children an opportunity to improve their circumstances, yet they are being failed by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) that still blames the COVID-19 pandemic for the drop in the comprehension rate. The DBE has, however, for many years failed to address challenges in the education sector. These include inadequate resources for low-to-middle income learners in impoverished or rural areas, staff shortages at schools, overcrowded classrooms, pit latrines, as well as social issues such as violence in schools.

The PSA, being fully aware of the challenges facing South African learners, continues with its *#SchoolSafety* project. The Union assists schools across the country with various needs to create an environment that is conducive for teaching and learning. In addition, the PSA during Workers' Month launched a project to support young learners in poorly performing schools, by providing solar-rechargeable LED lights to ensure that Grade-11 and -12 learners' studies are not interrupted by loadshedding.

President Cyril Ramaphosa continues to tout news of foreign investments being made to grow the economy, yet the results of these investments are not visible and are not benefiting to country's growing group of unemployed youth and young graduates. The PSA urges government to address the challenges facing the youth. This includes improving and empowering the education sector to produce young citizens who are ready to contribute to the country's economy.

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