

Hon. Chairperson, I've said this many times and will say it again: If the ANC really prioritised equal opportunities for all and focused on true empowerment of our youth, and had not just paid lip service to this, we would not be in the situation we are in. As is, I do not know what this department and its youth development entity concretely does to empower our youth.

This department as it currently stands is a farce.

Stats SA's Quarterly Labour Force Survey that was recently published showed that almost 250,000 young people lost their jobs in the first quarter of 2023. This led to the youth unemployment rate, measuring job-seekers between 15 and 24 years old, to rise to 62.1% in the first quarter of 2023; the highest in a year. This is up 1,1% from the last quarter's stats.

Participation in employment, education or training is important for youth to find employment and achieve self-sufficiency. Youth in South Africa, however, continue to be disadvantaged in the labour market with an unemployment rate higher than the national average as you've just heard.

South Africa has over 10 million young people aged 15-24 years old and, of these, only 2,5 million were in the labour force in 2022. The largest share (7,7 million) of this group of young people are those that are out of the labour force and inactive. The main reason for being inactive is discouragement. They have lost hope of finding a job that suits their skills or in the area they reside.

These young people do not need another party hosted by the NYDA, or another short term job opportunity created by the state without the necessary skills transfer. They do not need another hand out.

They need a labour market that is unburdened by strict legislation keeping them out of employment. They need skills training that they can practically implement when entering the job market. They need true assistance when assistance is offered. We need to empower our youth to become independent and free from the shackles of government providing for their whole being.

I commend the committee for questioning whether the NYDA monitors beneficiaries who received funding from the NYDA to ensure that they were utilising the funds effectively. This is what should happen automatically to ensure that there is not only value for money, but ensuring that the business can become self-sufficient. This is how you truly ensure empowerment has taken place.

What is also welcomed is that the committee queried how the NYDA intends assessing the effectiveness of the market linkages and mentorship programme in the year ahead as these are important areas in which young entrepreneurs need to be supported.

Taking a look at the NYDA, we see that, according to their website, they see themselves as lobbyists and advocates of Youth Development. Noble, but it doesn't get the job done.

They also spend a lot of money on creating jobs or finding jobs in government for young people. Let me be clear when I say this: the NYDA cannot address the issue of youth unemployment by itself or by forcing other departments to create jobs in government. If we are bent on keeping the NYDA they should focus on the development and support of young people. They need to empower young people to be able to either get a job or to create a job. Take young entrepreneurs for example. They might need assistance with the drawing up of a business plan. This is what the NYDA should be able to assist with.

I differ from the portfolio committee, however when they resolve that the NYDA should improve on its branding especially in rural areas to ensure that young people are aware of services being offered. Branding alone will not solve the NYDA's problems. Branding alone will not improve services rendered and most definitely not improve the lives of young people in rural communities.

The NYDA needs to prioritise projects and how they can actively partake in youth development to improve the chances of youth being absorbed into the labour force.

The NYDA are failing our young people.

This department is failing our youth.

South African youth deserve better.