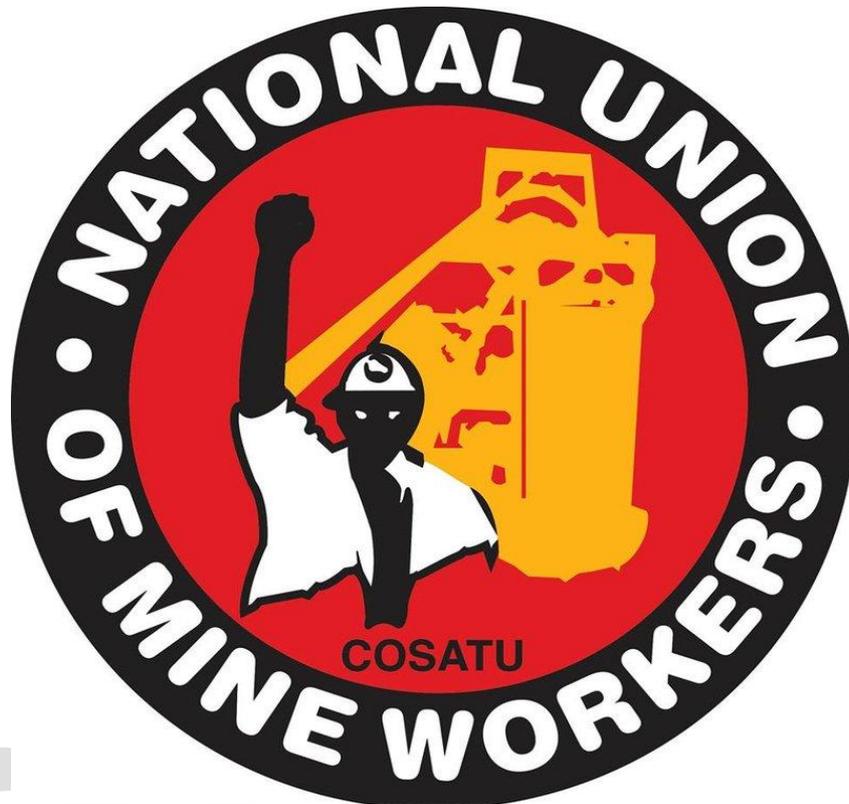


# NATIONAL YOUTH STRUCTURE POSITION PAPER



**P20 YOUTH PARLIAMENT (2025)**  
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## **Introduction**

The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) presents this submission to the 2025 P20 Youth Parliament as a political intervention, not a ceremonial gesture. Under South Africa's G20 Presidency, this moment must drive a bold, youth-led transformation of the economy. NUM rejects tokenism and demands real, legislated change backed by resources and accountability.

South African youth particularly from the working-class, rural, and marginalised communities remain trapped in structural unemployment, poor education, and social neglect. They are not the future; they are the present, and their continued exclusion is a political crisis.

NUM's position, aligned with the National Youth Policy and G20 priorities, insists on a new social compact anchored in:

- **Decent work over precarious labour**
- **TVET and skills for industrial sovereignty**
- **Mental health and social support as rights**
- **Worker-led oversight and institutional accountability**

Parliament must move beyond symbolic commitments. The youth are watching and **NUM will not be silent.**

## **2. Rationale**

The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) submits this intervention to the P20 Youth Parliament under South Africa's G20 Presidency as both a moral imperative and a political necessity. The socio-economic crisis confronting South Africa's youth is not just a statistic it is a systemic indictment of a state that has failed to transform the material conditions of its most vital demographic. Young people in South Africa, especially those from rural, township, and working-class communities, face intersecting crises: mass unemployment, deteriorating mental health, a failing education system, and structural exclusion from meaningful economic participation. According to the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA, 2020), entrenched

inequalities and underdevelopment in marginalised communities continue to widen the gap between promise and lived reality for youth.

Education, in particular, reflects these structural failures. Limited access to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges, inadequate infrastructure, weak career guidance, and the consequences of diluted matric standards all contribute to a cycle of exclusion. For those who drop out or underperform, there are few second chances. The current system abandons them to precarity, with no clear path to employment or further education (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2021). Health challenges further exacerbate this exclusion. Substance abuse, unprotected sex, rising suicide rates, and untreated mental health conditions among youth are not isolated trends they are the human cost of policy neglect, violence, and social disintegration. Yet where coordinated public investment and health education have been implemented such as in reducing teenage pregnancies and HIV transmission significant progress has been made (South African National AIDS Council, 2023).

NUM insists that the time for rhetorical commitments is over. What is needed is a coherent, well-funded, and democratically accountable youth development agenda one that centres working-class realities and empowers young people as agents of change. This submission, therefore, represents not only NUM's organisational responsibility to the youth within our sectors but also our broader political commitment to social justice, redistribution, and structural transformation.

### **3. NUM's Commitment to Youth Empowerment and Development**

NUM's historical mission has always been the upliftment of the working class and marginalised. Today, that mission must be urgently realised through deliberate policies that centre young people particularly Black youth in rural, mining, and industrial zones as agents of economic reconstruction. Our Youth Desk, guided by the NUM Youth Strategy, has long advocated for education reform, skills investment, and workplace rights for young workers.

#### **4. Alignment with the National Youth Policy and NUM Youth Plan**

This submission is firmly grounded in the National Youth Policy (2020–2030), particularly its emphasis on inclusive growth, education access, and youth engagement (Presidency, 2020). It also draws from NUM's own Youth resolution, which calls for direct youth participation in collective bargaining, industry skills planning, and policy development in mining, energy, construction and metal.

#### **5. Contextual Overview**

Highlights the Significance of South Africa's G20 Presidency and the P20 Speakers' Summit. This subsection explains that South Africa's leadership of the G20 in 2025 and the hosting of the P20 Speakers' Summit presents a rare and powerful opportunity to reposition youth development on the national and global agenda. It criticises the risk of these platforms becoming technocratic and elite-driven, and instead calls for the advancement of the working-class youth empowerment from a Global South perspective.

##### **5.1 South Africa's G20 Presidency and the P20 Speakers' Summit**

South Africa's 2025 G20 Presidency and the associated P20 Speakers' Summit present a rare platform to reimagine youth development from a Global South perspective. As a progressive labour movement, NUM asserts that the G20 must not be a platform for elite consensus, but a space for bold commitments to dismantle African soil youth poverty, wage inequality, and exclusion from strategic sectors (ILO, 2023).

##### **5.2 Youth Challenges in the Mining, Energy, Construction and Metal Sectors**

South Africa's mining, energy, construction, and metal (MECM) sectors continue to exclude youth from meaningful participation, despite the promises of transformation charters such as Mining Charter III and the B-BBEE Codes. The sectors remain exploitative—extracting not only resources but also cheap, precarious labour from young workers without offering real pathways to skilled employment or ownership.

NUM highlights several systemic failures:

- **The collapse of the skills pipeline** due to underfunded TVET colleges, poor workplace integration, and lack of graduate absorption.
- **Delayed infrastructure investment** and **retrenchments** in mining and construction, which have wiped out thousands of potential youth jobs.
- **The Just Transition**, while promising in theory, has excluded young people in coal-dependent areas from training, reskilling, or ownership opportunities.
- **Youth exclusion from decision-making** in employment equity and transformation forums, undermining real empowerment.

NUM argues that transformation charters must shift from **compliance box-ticking to structural economic change**, with youth at the centre. This means binding commitments to youth quotas, targeted funding for artisan and energy transition training, and democratised sector governance.

### **5.3 Strategic Importance of Youth Parliament for the Labour Movement**

The P20 Youth Parliament is not merely consultative it is a battleground for ideas. NUM views it as a necessary space to reclaim youth agency, assert the role of labour in shaping youth policy, and challenge technocratic approaches that ignore class, race, and spatial inequalities.

## **6. NUM Analysis of G20-Aligned Priorities: A Dialectical Labour Perspective**

The G20's thematic priorities inclusive economic growth, industrialization, youth engagement, social development, education, and African integration are welcomed by NUM in principle. However, the priorities realisation requires a fundamental transformation from elite-driven agendas to worker-led policy frameworks. This section interrogates each priority through a dialectical lens, offering labour-grounded alternatives that centers working-class youth as agents of national and continental development.

### **6.1 Inclusive Economic Growth – A Labour Perspective**

G20 and government policy circles often celebrate "inclusive growth" as a pathway to shared prosperity. In practice, South Africa has experienced jobless growth,

driven by capital-intensive sectors that exclude young, low-skilled workers, especially in mining-affected areas. Without redistribution and public development, this model deepens inequality (Turok, 2021). NUM calls for a redistribution, wage-led growth model, anchored in public sector development, infrastructure, and labor-intensive manufacturing and services. We support the creation of a Youth Employment Pact built on decent, unionised work not exploitative internships or short-term contracts (ILO, 2022).

## **6.2 Industrialisation and Employment – Youth in Mining, Energy, Construction and Metal Industries.**

Industrialisation is a pillar of youth employment in national and continental development agendas. Young people in mining and energy are relegated to internships, learnerships or outsourced roles, with little chance of permanent employment. Industrial decline in mining towns compounds youth unemployment and social despair. NUM demands a reindustrialisation strategy rooted in worker-controlled beneficiation, localised supply chains, and youth-led cooperatives. We call for the absorption of young workers into core mining operations, not the periphery and insist on equity ownership mechanisms for young workers in newly licensed energy and mineral projects (Turok, 2021).

## **6.3 Meaningful Youth Engagement – Democratising Participation**

G20 frameworks encourage youth participation in policy and economic reform processes. Current youth engagement structures are tokenistic and symbolic, often excluding young workers, especially from rural and working-class communities. NUM proposes the institutionalisation of youth worker forums within bargaining councils, SETAs, and SOEs, with budget allocations, voting rights, and direct links to policy and workplace decisions. Democratising participation must mean power-sharing, not public relations.

## **6.4 Inclusive Social Development – Addressing Inequality and Exclusion**

Inclusive social development is vital to achieving long-term equity and resilience among youth. Austerity policies and fragmented social welfare programmes fail to reach NEET youth (Not in Education, Employment, or Training), especially in mining regions, reinforcing cycles of poverty and exclusion (StatsSA, 2023). NUM supports

a Universal Basic Income Grant (UBIG) for unemployed youth, publicly funded school-to-work transition programmes, and massive development in TVET colleges in rural and mining areas. Social development must be structural, not charitable.

### **6.5 African Development – Youth Role in Regional Industrial Integration**

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) promises regional development and youth empowerment. If led by multinational corporations and elite negotiators, AfCFTA risks becoming another extractive project that excludes young workers and favours capital mobility over labour rights. NUM advocates for youth-led industrial cooperatives, cross-border vocational training, and labour rights harmonisation under the AfCFTA. We demand regional development in worker-controlled productive capacity, including in energy, construction, and infrastructure sectors (AfCFTA Secretariat, 2024).

### **6.6 Universal Access to Education – Focus on Technical and Vocational Learning**

Education is universally acknowledged as the foundation of economic opportunity. The current TVET system is chronically underfunded, disconnected from industrial needs, and fails to produce job-ready artisans (DHET, 2022). Technical education is still treated as inferior to academic learning. NUM supports mandatory technical education from Grade 8, the resourcing of public TVET institutions, and the creation of union-industry skills hubs that directly align training with mining, energy, and infrastructure sector needs. Education reform must be part of labour market transformation, not siloed policy.

## **7. NUM Youth Development Priorities and Proposals**

NUM supports a bold, state-led, worker-centred agenda for youth development that breaks with neoliberal orthodoxy. We reject piecemeal solutions and short-term fixes. Instead, we advocate for transformative structural reforms anchored in democratic ownership, decent work, and industrial justice. Youth must not merely be beneficiaries — they must be agents of change.

### **7.1 Expanding Access to Decent Jobs for Young Workers**

NUM rejects the ongoing normalisation of youth unemployment and precarious work. The public and private sectors must co-develop a Youth Employment Pact guided by decent work principles, as defined by the ILO (2022). Employment must be permanent, regulated, and unionised, with a minimum living wage and pathways for advancement. The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) must be transformed into a gateway for secure, skills-accredited employment.

### **7.2 Revitalising the Mining Skills Pipeline and Artisan Training**

A just skills revolution is needed. NUM calls for the reintroduction of state-funded mining and energy colleges in affected regions, with mandatory integration of practical training in mines and energy plants. The Mining Qualifications Authority must prioritise rural youth and ex-mineworker communities. We support public ownership of artisan training facilities to counter corporate capture and skills dumping (DHET, 2022).

### **7.3 Youth-Targeted Social Protection and Mental Health Programmes**

NUM supports a holistic, intersectional approach to youth well-being. This includes the urgent rollout of a **Universal Basic Income Grant (UBIG)** starting with unemployed youth, alongside universal access to mental health services. Mining towns must be equipped with mobile health units, trauma counselling services, and addiction rehabilitation, particularly in areas hardest hit by mine closures (StatsSA, 2023).

### **7.4 Strengthening Labour Rights for Young Workers and Interns**

Too many young workers are trapped in internships without rights. NUM insists that all internships be covered by labour law, with union recognition, minimum wage standards, and grievance mechanisms. Bargaining councils must create Youth Desks to champion the rights of young workers, ensuring fair treatment, training opportunities, and upward mobility (ILO, 2022).

### **7.5 Promoting Youth in Green Economy and Just Transition Initiatives**

NUM views the Just Transition as an opportunity to create dignified work, not deepen exclusion. Youth must be integrated into community-owned renewable energy projects and skills hubs for solar, wind, and hydrogen technologies. We call for equity stakes and co-determination rights in new energy ventures, particularly for youth in communities impacted by decommissioned coal plants (Turok, 2021).

### **7.6 Enhancing Collective Bargaining Structures for Youth Representation**

Collective bargaining must evolve to meet the needs of a new generation. NUM calls for the amendment of labour legislation to recognise youth representatives within unions and bargaining forums. Government must legislate quotas for youth representation in workplace forums, SOE boards, decision making responsibilities and sectoral training authorities to institutionalise generational justice.

## **8. NUM Recommendations for the Medium-Term Youth Development Agenda**

The Medium-Term Youth Development Agenda (MTYDA) remains a critical opportunity to reframe youth policy away from technocratic tinkering and towards a transformative, worker-centred paradigm. NUM asserts that any youth development programme must be grounded in the realities of working-class youth — those who face the brunt of unemployment, exclusion, and informalisation. We reject the neoliberal orthodoxy that reduces youth potential to "entrepreneurship" without addressing structural inequality or the erosion of decent work.

South Africa's youth crisis is not the result of individual apathy, but a deliberate outcome of deindustrialisation, underfunded public services, and corporate-friendly labour reforms. The MTYDA must disrupt this trajectory through bold redistributive policy anchored in the lived realities of young people in mining towns, rural communities, and working-class urban areas.

### **8.1 Policy Reform Proposals**

Policy remains the only vehicle through which structural transformation can be institutionalised and defended against market volatility and corporate evasion. For

too long, youth development has been diluted into uncoordinated projects, donor-driven “innovation hubs”, and precarious internships — all lacking enforceability and rooted in neoliberal assumptions that ignore the material realities of class, race, and geography.

NUM contends that the time for aspirational rhetoric is over. What is required now are redistributive, worker-led policies that hardwire youth rights into the fabric of the labour market and national economy. If the state is to uphold its constitutional obligation to progressive realisation of socio-economic rights, it must legislate mechanisms that shift both economic power and workplace access toward the youth majority.

Our policy reform proposals are as follows:

- **Legislate Sector-Based Youth Employment Quotas:** NUM demands the urgent adoption of binding youth employment quotas across the mining, energy, and construction sectors, with a mandated floor of 30% youth employment in new hires and contractor appointments (Department of Labour, 2023). Anything less reinforces generational exclusion and corporate ageism.
- **Reform the Skills Development Act:** This Act must be amended to give trade unions and communities direct oversight of SETA disbursements, enforceable compliance audits, and an expanded public sector role in skills planning. Employers who fail to train or absorb youth must be penalised not subsidised by the state (DHET, 2022).
- **Rebuild State-Led Technical Training Institutions:** NUM calls for the reestablishment of state-run technical colleges in mining belts, particularly in rural and former homeland areas where industrial collapse has decimated artisan pathways. The current model, reliant on private providers and erratic funding, has failed to produce industry-relevant skills (Turok, 2021).
- **Anchor Procurement to Youth Empowerment:** State procurement policies including those under Eskom, Transnet, and SANRAL — must include

enforceable youth employment and training conditions. Public money must not reproduce private exclusion.

- **Guarantee Labour Protections for Youth:** We reject the increasing trend of youth being channelled into unregulated platforms, temporary agencies, or “learnership mills”. All young workers, including interns and apprentices, must be covered by the Basic Conditions of Employment Act and be eligible for union representation and collective bargaining (Buhlungu, 2010).

The state must no longer legislate around youth it must legislate **for** them, with trade unions and working-class youth formations at the policy table, not on the sidelines.

## 8.2 Strengthening Intergovernmental and Stakeholder Partnerships

NUM advocates for:

- A **Youth Employment Coordinating Council** co-chaired by labour, government, and youth formations to integrate efforts across departments and eliminate fragmentation.
- **Mandatory youth representation on local economic development (LED) forums**, especially in municipalities heavily reliant on mining and energy, to ensure alignment between IDPs, skills strategies, and job creation (CoGTA, 2023).
- **Public-private labour compacts** that bind companies receiving state incentives to invest in youth employment and training, with penalties for non-compliance.

## 8.3 Monitoring, Evaluation and Oversight Mechanisms

Accountability cannot be outsourced to consultants. NUM proposes:

- A **Parliamentary Youth Employment Oversight Committee** to track progress on MTYDA targets with quarterly reporting.
- **Public disclosure of youth employment statistics** by sector and company, as part of corporate scorecards.

- **Community-based social audits**, led by trade unions and civil society, to monitor TVET quality, youth job placement, and implementation of youth hiring obligations.

#### **8.4 Role of Trade Unions in Implementation and Accountability**

Trade unions are not peripheral actors we are central to the delivery of any sustainable youth development agenda. NUM commits to:

- **Establishing workplace-based Youth Committees** with organising, bargaining, and educational mandates.
- **Negotiating youth clauses** into collective agreements, including protections for interns, apprentices, and contract workers.
- **Partnering with institutions of higher learning** to design labour-market-aligned curricula and research youth transitions in the mining economy (Buhlungu, 2010).

The working-class youth of South Africa must not remain a demographic footnote in policy. Their demands must shape the future. NUM will continue to mobilise, organise and fight for a youth agenda built not on slogans, but on solidarity, socialist principle, and structural change.

#### **9. Conclusion**

NUM rejects symbolic gestures. What young people need is a transformative agenda that confronts neoliberalism, extracts value for public good, and rebuilds this nation from the townships and mining towns outward. As the union that rose from the dust of the mines to the chambers of Parliament, NUM reaffirms its role as a revolutionary voice for youth. This submission is our mandate to fight, to organise, and to build power for the next generation of workers.

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