



## RISE MZANSI YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AGENDA SUBMISSION

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### **Promoting Youth Development in South Africa**

#### **Youth representation in leadership and governance**

As RISE Mzansi, we believe that the youth should not be relegated to the periphery of our conversations on governance and political leadership. The youth should not be relegated and limited to youth-focused institutions and forums. At present, people aged 15 to 34 make up approximately 50 percent of South Africa's working population. As such, the youth not only hold the key to South Africa's future but is also a vital part of our current reality.

It is therefore essential that the youth's voices are heard throughout the various spheres and institutions of government. Legislators should not only ask for the youth's views when it suits them. Rather, whenever a discussion is held or a decision is made, those around the table should ensure that the youth is present and empowered to play an active role at the table.

We must also equip and empower the youth with the necessary expertise to meaningfully engage in our government structures. To that end, we must implement youth leadership-programmes as public-private community projects. Through this, we must encourage portions of corporate social investment funds to be invested in programmes where young leaders with potential are identified in communities and provided with stipends and network opportunities are offered.

#### **Educating, training and empowering the youth**

South Africa has a dual challenge: its training and tertiary education sector not fully aligning with the skills demanded by the labour market and too many South Africans do not complete matric and even many of those who do, do not have access to post-school training and development opportunities. This not only hinders the youth from reaching their full potential, but the continued skills shortage also constrains South Africa's development.

As such, we must implement bold, comprehensive, and future-focused education reform. We must appoint an expert commission to quantify South Africa's job deficit, our training and educational needs and the funds we would require to equip the youth to meet the demands of the labour market. It is inevitable that this commission will reveal that we need engineers, but also plumbers, bricklayers, and entrepreneurs. As such, it is vital that we increase the funding to all tertiary education and training facilities including Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) centres and Community Education and Training (CET) colleges.

We must prioritise education in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). Nevertheless, we must also combat the stigma that you require a degree to unlock economic opportunities and rather ensure that all persons have access to the training and education opportunities that aligns with both their capabilities and the needs of our labour market. We

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must enable every young person to be empowered with the skills and knowledge they require to make a dignified living and to make a meaningful contribution to our country's development.

To that end, we must be proactive in reducing barriers to post-school training and education programmes such as high costs, lack of accommodation, and a lack of knowledge of the available training options. Additionally, we must focus our regional training facilities on tailoring their training to knowledge and skills related to key primary sectors such as agriculture, tourism, construction, and community health care, as required in the region.

Even with training and educational qualifications, many young people struggle to find a job or lack the funds to start their own businesses. As such, we should introduce a three-month conditional jobseekers grant which will be linked to the completion of a skills development programme.

In short, we must enable every young person to be empowered with the skills and knowledge they require to make a dignified living and to make a meaningful contribution to our country's development.

### **Facilitating economic access and employment for the youth**

South Africa is in desperate need of economic growth. However, this growth must be inclusive and sustainable, and we must always be cognisant of those that were and continue to be economically excluded based on their race, gender, and disability.

We must prioritise making our economy more inclusive by supporting black people, women and persons with disabilities to create wealth through productive enterprises. We should support these entrepreneurs with skills development and access to capital. We should also address the particular challenges faced by young single mothers and young people with disabilities in accessing the labour market and workplaces. To that end, we must ensure that workplaces are conducive and not hostile to the particular needs and circumstances of single mothers or persons with disabilities and that community childcare facilities are established for working mothers and families.

South Africa has rapidly deindustrialised and it must urgently be reindustrialised in a sustainable and equitable manner. To that end, there are key industries which holds tremendous potential and which we should support. This includes the green industries, tourism, the creative economy, cannabis and hemp industries, and advanced manufacturing. We should encourage the youth to partake in and develop these industries and equip them with the necessary skills, knowledge, and access to capital to do so.

### **Prioritising the safety and well-being of the youth**

The South African youth face a plethora of challenges. As such, our goal should not only be to ensure that they have access to economic challenges, but also their well-being and safety.

South Africa has a gender-based violence (GBV) crisis. We need to urgently sponsor education and development initiatives to address the culture of male violence, not only

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towards women and children, but also male-on-male violence. We also need to enhance the support networks available to GBV survivors – particularly at educational and training facilities – and strengthen our criminal justice system to ensure that perpetrators will be caught, prosecuted, and punished timeously.

South Africa also has a mental health crisis which results from the challenges arising from poverty, a loss of hope, and other traumas plaguing young people. We need to strengthen awareness of mental health challenges but also the options available to those who struggle with their mental health. We also need to urgently strengthen the mental health services at local clinics and investigate the barriers that young people experience in obtaining the help they need.

South Africa has incredible creative and sport talent which we must continue to celebrate and support. Community sports, arts, and culture programmes also provide important outlets to the youth and promotes a culture of competitiveness, success, and peer-to-peer role modelling. We must support the sports and artistic talents of the youth in every community and ensure that these programmes and facilities are adequately resourced.

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