



Role of Parliament in Youth Development

In promoting the theme: *“A caring Parliament that advances youth development to achieve economic freedom,”* Parliament has created various platforms to deal with issues affecting the youth.

Parliament has the following committees to deal with youth issues:

- **Portfolio Committee** on Women, Children and People with Disabilities
- **Select Committee** on Women, Children and People with Disabilities.

These Committees are responsible for oversight on youth matters and must deal with legislation that affects young people.

Parliament has various initiatives targeted at different sectors, for example, Youth Parliament (held during Youth Month) in which matters pertinent to youth are discussed. Participation is restricted to young people, and proceedings are dedicated to them.

The Constitution obliges Parliament to involve the public in its activities and processes, therefore youth as part of society are frequently invited to take part in Parliament’s initiatives, such as Public hearings, the State of the Nation Address and other outreach and public participation programmes.

They can also make their voices heard through oral or written submissions.

The youth also form part of the public that can attend Committee Meetings where most of Parliament’s work takes place, and young people can attend sittings in order to observe, enrich and empower themselves.



PARLIAMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Celebrating Youth Month

“A caring Parliament that advances youth development to achieve economic freedom”

“Youth Parliament: Taking Charge of the Future”



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“Our history has always forced our young people to take responsibility from an early age. They became freedom fighters when they should have been playing or at school. Now the youth of South Africa face major challenges because of the years of deprivation, violence and interrupted education. Great courage and commitment will be needed to overcome the obstacles and for young people to fully enjoy the benefits that our fledging democracy holds for them.”
(Nelson Mandela, 15 June 1997)

The significance of June 16

June 16 was declared a public holiday by the democratic government of South Africa after 1994. This is to commemorate the youth uprising that occurred in June 1976. The whole month is set aside to celebrate the struggle of young people of South Africa against the apartheid regime.

It marks the highpoint of resistance by the youth of South Africa, which began in 1976 and continued until the advent of democracy in 1994.

This struggle by young people led to the development of an educational system that respects human dignity, cultural diversity, and freedom of choice, and strives to ensure equal access.

The young people of the 70s contributed greatly to shaping the future of our country.

They continue to play an important role in society, and the democratic government is committed to the development of the youth, as future leaders and the custodians of our hard-won freedom.

Challenges facing Youth

The youth of today are confronted with many challenges that include:

- high unemployment
- poverty
- crime
- diseases and infections
- lack of skills
- lack of access to basic services

The impact of HIV/AIDS has been greatly felt by young people. Youth and child-headed households are on the increase due to the death of parents as a result of HIV/AIDS-related opportunistic diseases, like TB.



Opportunities available to Youth

In his State of the Nation Address, President Jacob Zuma declared 2011 a year of job creation. He stated that employment initiatives should be aimed at enhancing youth development.

To help address unemployment, the government is subsidising the cost of hiring young people to encourage employers in the private sector to employ people without experience.

The issues of education, skills and small enterprise development for youth featured strongly in the budget speech of Minister of Finance Pravin Gordhan, for the 2011/2012 financial year.

The Finance Minister indicated that student financial assistance would be stepped up to give more young people access to further education and training colleges, for skills development. More money was put into the National Skills Fund, which funds training for work-seekers.

Other government programmes include:

- **The National Rural Youth Service Corps Programme**, initiated by the department of Rural Development and Land Reform to help young people to develop new skills that will be beneficial in their communities
- **The National Youth Chefs Training Programme**, initiated by the department of Tourism, to provide skills, knowledge and experience to young people so that they can get sustainable employment in hospitality and tourism industry
- **The Artisan Development Programme**, initiated by the national Department of Public works to develop essential skills for young people in the built-environment sector

The democratic government has put in place structures like the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), which is mandated by law to deal with all youth matters, from policy to development.

The NYDA is the structure established by government to respond directly to the economic challenges that young people face, and as a development-funding Agency, it is geared to establish a platform for job creation, skills development, and skills transfer for South Africa's youth.