

MEDIA STATEMENT:

YOUTH DAY - TEKANO CALLS FOR SOUTH AFRICA'S YOUTH TO LEAD IN ENSURING
THAT SACRIFICES OF THE 1976 GENERATION BECOME TANGIBLE GAINS FOR THE
YOUTH OF 2022

Attention: Editors

Date: 16 June 2022

Today, Tekano joins South Africa in remembering the 1976 uprising and youth who unequivocally rejected the oppressive status quo. We join the call of the country's youth, for a return to the development path envisioned through the National Development Plan and preceding vision documents. The time for young people to lead the country out of the current socio-economic and political morass is now! Every year on June 16, we honour the youth of 1976 who revolted against a white supremacist state. Their bravery and sacrifices 46 years ago were galvanised by the hunger for freedom and the demand for a better life for all. However, today, the country's youth face an uncertain fate as the promises of the democratic era are being betrayed.

According to Statistics SA, by 2021 estimates, South Africans' youth population stood at 20.6 million, making up **35.7 percent** of the country's total population of about 57.7 million people. Much like the rest of its home continent, South Africa's population will become increasingly younger over the coming decade. As young people dominate the numbers of the unemployed, the imperative to resolve the triple crises of poverty, unemployment and inequality has never been more urgent.

A youth unemployment rate higher than the national average is an indictment of the post-1994 State. The Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) for the first quarter of 2022, "places the unemployment rate at 63,9% for those aged 15-24 and 42,1% for those aged 25-34 years, while the current official national rate stands at 34,5%", says Stats SA. This paints a bleak picture for the future of our youth and undermines their wellbeing.

Persistent gender inequalities worsen this already dim picture. Black girls constitute the majority of child-headed households and face greater obstacles in the attainment of optimum health. Recognising the structural impediments that continue to inhibit the youth of South Africa from participating in the economy and taking drastic steps to remove these is urgent. A sustainable future for the country as envisioned in the NDP is not possible without the meaningful inclusion of youth.

Tekano notes President Cyril Ramaphosa's recent national budget vote in which he stated that a further 5000 youth will be absorbed into the National Youth Service in addition to the 7000 that have already started working. However, this is yet another peace-meal non-solution that will do nothing to secure youth jobs in an economy that requires major transformation.

In a post-pandemic era, indications are that poverty is on the rise, with many people having lost jobs and livelihoods. Young people are not immune to this. The toll that this growing strain

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is having on young people is worsening an already dire situation of mental health and youth unwellness.

In addition to prioritising employment of the youth, Tekano calls on the state to focus on the health status of the youth. Twenty-five years into our democracy, HIV & TB are still one of the top four causes of death amongst the youth. That South African youth are dying of diseases that are manageable with treatment speaks to a larger problem of access of health care and the failure to address the social and structural determinants of these diseases

The 16th of June is also International African Child Day. A day first recongised by the Organisation for African Unity on 16 June 1991, with calls for greater collaboration on creative solutions for the plight of the African child.

“As an organisation whose principles are based on Pan-Africanism, Tekano believes it would be remiss for the 16 June to be commemorated without the recognition that poverty is the most immediate impediment to the attainment of an improved health status for the African Child.” Says Siphon Mthathi, Interim Executive Director at Tekano

Tekano focuses on leadership development for health equity. We recognise that the dire situation and failures of leadership our country is experiencing can be daunting. Despite this, we are inspired by the spirit of the youth who lit the flames of revolution in 1976. We are motivated by the undaunted spirit of many young people today who despite many challenges, continue to work towards the attainment of a better life for the youth of 2022. We know some of these young people as leaders in our fellowship programmes and in communities across the country. Long live the spirit of the young lions long live!

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