

Africa Youth Day

Today, Thursday 1 November 2018, we celebrate Africa Youth Day. It is a day on which we emphasise the engagement and development of young people. The youth must be empowered to play their role in building a wealthy, integrated and peaceful continent. Bottom-up development is a building block for a participatory approach to community development. The interventions we implement on our local government grassroots should have a continental perspective and thereby contribute to global development.

1 November was proclaimed and instituted as Africa Youth Day by the AU when its executive council adopted the African Youth Charter in 2006 in Banjul, Gambia.

This year's AYD theme, "Raising youth voices against corruption in Africa", highlights the need for participation, representation and inclusion of young people in political processes to diminish corruption. Young people must be active citizens that proudly live out their civic responsibility in shaping a more inclusive society.

My special message to the Youth of Africa, in particular the youth of George; a city with an estimated population of 212 120 of which about 80 000 are between the ages of 15 and 34. When analysing the condition of the youth population we must consider the socio-economic circumstances and political circumstances that shape the society in which they grow up. Before we say young people must discover their purpose, find the right paths; gain the necessary skills and experience, we must critically reflect on the barriers they face, the historical conditioning and marginalisation and the intergenerational transfer of poverty. Statistics prove that the income inequality continues to grow in George, the unequal distribution of wealth can be seen as 1% of the population is consuming 60% of the market.

Firstly, be proud to be African, to be from Africa and of Africa, be proud of living at the southern tip of Africa.

Secondly, understand that you must take action for your future as an individual and as an active member of the South African society.

Young people represent the labour force needed to industrialise our economy; our country needs to generate more wealth by economic growth, which will benefit the poor and marginalised majority of our country and continent.

Industries such as agriculture, automobile manufacturing, technology, renewable energy, arts and social entrepreneurship have huge potential to be developed and expanded to absorb the youth demographic. South Africa must move away from being a welfare state filled with social contradictions caused by unequal concentrations of wealth.

There is a need for high quality Youth development projects. These projects would work to capacitate young people from disadvantaged communities to be change drivers. We need a society where civil servants think like activists and not career public sector employees.

Here in George we will be hosting an arts-based youth empowerment event at Parkdene Primary School. This year's Africa Youth Day celebration project is made possible through a collaboration between Guidy Worx and Expression Session George.

Hein Scheepers

Young African leader, Youth empowerment facilitator, community development practitioner, social justice activist and founder of Guidy Worx.