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## 2024 YOUTH MONTH COMMEMORATION

June is celebrated as Youth Month in South Africa in recognition of events that took a dramatic turn in Soweto on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June 1976. Youth Month serves not only as a reminder of the critical importance of young people as agents of change, but it is also an opportunity to address the concerns facing today's young people, who have a significant role to play in the country's future. This year marks 48 years since young people from Soweto took a stand against an oppressive regime demanding for their voice to be heard.

This year's commemoration of Youth Month will be held under the theme "**Actively advancing socio-economic gains of our democracy**" which will have an added significance as it coincides with the celebration of 30 years of freedom and democracy. The focus of 2024 youth month will be on sports as a commitment to a celebration of diversity and the people's unity, human rights values and a mechanism to achieve social cohesion. As stated by the late President, Nelson Mandela: *"Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand."*

Government's commitment and determination to prioritise youth development and empowerment, is demonstrated through the development of the National Youth Policy 2030, which emphasises the key pillars such as *quality education, skills and development, economic transformation, entrepreneurship and job creation, physical and mental health promotion; social cohesion and nation building* remains a framework to address and accelerate positive youth development. In helping to draw young people into the economy, the government has under the Presidential Youth Employment Intervention initiated various youth development and empowerment initiatives to support young people. These range from formal education and training; learnerships and internships as well as support for youth entrepreneurship.

### National Government Focus of 2024 Youth Month

The 2024 Youth Month activities will be championed and coordinated by the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities (DWPYD) together with National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) and the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture (DSAC). The focus will be on promoting Sport for Youth Development (S4YD) agenda as a tool for social cohesion and solidarity in South Africa. The following activities are planned in celebration of youth month:

- Youth Month Build up activities – There will be build up awareness raising weekly sessions based on the weekly sub-theme in every province, starting from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the last week of June 2024.
- Youth Day (June 16) Activities – The 2024 Youth Day will be celebrated in the Limpopo Province at the Old Peter Mokaba Stadium in Polokwane and the activities will comprise of the following:
  - President’s Youth Month Marathon
  - Cultural Programme
  - President’s Address and Award Ceremony
  - Skills Training, Career, Job and Entrepreneurship Expo.

### **SALGA’s contribution to Youth Development, 2024 and beyond**

As part of institutionalising youth development in local government, SALGA is focusing on the establishment of the SALGA Youth Commission (SYC). The SYC will serve as a machinery to drive advocacy processes and facilitate local government response to the national call on youth development in the country and shape SALGA’s intervention and programme activities in line with SALGA’s strategy. The SYC will be a dedicated political youth structure aimed at enhancing youth development and the implementation of youth programmes in municipalities.

To date, a National Steering Committee consisting of Members of the Community Development and Security National Working Group was established as political champions to spearhead the process for the establishment of the SYC. The National Steering Committee will work with nominated Provincial Champions to oversee the establishment of the SYC provincially and nationally.

The priority of youth development has also prompted SALGA to engage in various partnerships with organisations like the United Nations Population Fund Youth Advisory Panel (UNFPA) Youth Advisory Panel, the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) and Harambee to support and drive the youth development and empowerment initiatives in local government.

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