



Higher Education Transformation Network

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For Immediate Release

PRESS RELEASE: RISING YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

The Higher Education Transformation Network (HETN) hereby registers its concerns regarding the rising unemployment rate of 27.3% percent for Quarter 2 of the 2019/2020 financial year as recently announced by Statistics SA.

Whilst jobless economic growth has remained the overall trend over the years, we remain nonetheless shocked at the loss of 237 000 jobs in the 1st Quarter of the 2019/2020 financial year alone. We are extremely alarmed by rising youth unemployment which currently averages 31% amongst youth graduates and 58.4% amongst youth with less than Matric.

South Africa already has a plethora of state strategies on the table to address youth development in the form of the recommendations from the National Development Plan (NDP) Vision 2030; Human Resource Development Strategy for South Africa and Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission (PICC) amongst others and further endless talks in this regard remain unnecessary. What South Africa needs at this juncture is immediate strategic action of grand Marshall-type Plan proportions.

Based on the key issues raised by communities in the recent national elections, it is clear that the main priorities of government at this juncture remains poor municipal service delivery and unemployment which we believe should occupy the centre-stage of state priorities in the immediate to long term.

It is evident that current state strategies aimed at addressing youth unemployment remain disjointed; ineffectual and need further review, refinement and streamlining to ensure greater effectiveness and strategic impact.

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CALL ON GOVERNMENT TO RINGFENCE KEY VACANT MUNICIPAL SERVICE DELIVERY-RELATED POSTS FOR GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

We hereby call on the South African government to ensure that all vacant service delivery-related posts in the South African local government sector **are ringfenced** for the employment of **qualified** and **experienced South African graduates** and most importantly that the employment of qualified youth graduates remains a priority in the sector.

Whilst we agree that multilateral multi-sector state strategies including private sector economic development remains key, our analysis indicates that out of the entire public sector, it is mainly national and provincial government tiers that have embarked on major notable initiatives aimed at youth development but that local government has not fully exhausted its immediate potential in mitigating youth employment.

A plethora of studies most notably the SA Institute of Civil Engineers (SAICE), Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) amongst others indicate how, as a result of chronic understaffing and lack of internal staff and management capacity, municipal infrastructure departments:-

- Suffer from high vacancy rates as high as 35% - 53%
- Are unable to spend their Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG) allocations
- Are unable to cope with the demands of municipal operations and maintenance, resulting in sewage spills, water quality problems and refuse non-removal
- Do not have asset registers or maintenance plans in place
- Suffer from very high losses in water and electricity supply due to poor metering management
- Suffer from significant turnover and retrenchments of older qualified and experienced staff

As far back as 2009, the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA)'s own *State of Local Government Report (2009)* found that municipal technical and institutional management capacity is a major challenge in municipalities, particularly in rural municipalities.

We believe that youth graduate employment in the local government sector and the eradication of vacancies in key service-delivery-related municipal roles offers an immediate short term labour-intensive solution to the challenges of high youth unemployment, poor municipal service delivery and poor institutional capacity of municipalities.

The scarcity of requisitely qualified and experienced municipal built environment professionals is directly linked with poor municipal infrastructure asset management, tendering irregularities, collapsing municipal infrastructure, lack of operations and maintenance as well as its related

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public health and safety problems leading to community service delivery community protests that infrastructure collapses typically elicits.

The scarcity of requisite qualified and experienced municipal officials in the water; sanitation; electricity (energy); construction (housing); roads; town planning; waste management and engineering (civil & electrical) professions is directly linked with poor municipal infrastructure asset management, tendering irregularities, collapsing infrastructure and its related public health and safety problems leading to community service delivery protests.

Lack of municipal service delivery has contributed to deep levels of frustration and unhappiness in communities thus contributing to many violent service delivery protests by communities.

All too often, flagship state programmes aimed at youth development tend to flop due to poor absorption of youth, maladministration and poor programme management. We remain concerned since certain flagship state programmes such as the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) continue to operate as cheap sources of manual labour to municipalities without any plans for absorption of youth participants and thus defeating the objective of such programmes.

We accordingly call on the State President, CoGTA, National Treasury and the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) and its constituent municipalities to ensure that all existing municipal vacancies in the water; sanitation; electricity (energy); construction (housing); roads; town planning; waste management and engineering (civil & electrical) sectors are **ringfenced** for the employment of qualified South African youth graduates and that the more funding is allocated to the National Treasury's Infrastructure Capacity Development Grant and that all state actors ensure that political deployments and job patronage by unqualified inexperienced political incompetents at municipalities is ended.

We call on the State President to ensure that all government departments, SETA's, private sector roleplayers and public state entities tasked with the youth economic development mandate, pool their respective budgets, better coordinate programme implementation; avoid unilateralism, endless talkshops and mutual competition including short term interventions which offers no overall strategic benefit to youth development.

We reiterate our view that whilst political deployment is an accepted universal phenomenon, it must be underpinned by the deployment of qualified, experienced and committed civil servants.



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About the Higher Education Transformation Network (HETN):-

The Higher Education Transformation Network (HETN) is an independent network of alumni and graduates from various higher education and further educational institutions across South Africa committed to the process of transformation of higher education to increase equitable and access to education, skills and learning to eliminate of socio-economic disparities.

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