



Science and technology can be the answer to South Africa's youth challenges

By Department of Science and Technology

Youth unemployment remains at chronically high levels and despite several interventions by Government, the situation persists.

A recent youth social profile report released by Statistics South Africa revealed that structural factors such as a lack of education and skills development are largely behind the problems faced by South Africa's youth.

It also found that the new generation of black Africans – between 25 and

34 years – are less skilled than their parents, as well as every other race and age group.

The Minister of Science and Technology, Naledi Pandor, believes science and technology can be the answer to challenges faced by young people in the country.

Delivering the Department of Science and Technology's (DST) 2016/17 Budget Vote on 19 April in Parliament, the Minister said

that the Department would pilot a grassroots innovation initiative in this financial year, focusing on supporting young innovators and technology entrepreneurs in the informal sector and in marginalised communities.

"The Department of Science and Technology funds various initiatives directed at improving the education and socio-economic status of our youth. Science and technology can



play an effective role in addressing the challenges faced by young people," said the Minister.

She added that, in 2015/16, the DST supported 1 276 youth through the Technology Innovation Agency. This included support for 52 youth-owned SMEs, 951 youth-owned SMEs that receive support from the Technology Stations Programme, and 273 individuals trained through the Youth Skills Development Programme,

with 85 of them receiving international training.

Minister Pandor said that the DST was the largest funder of postgraduate students in the country: "We will continue to support more young people and ensure that they learn how to create businesses and social enterprises, using advances in technology and knowledge." She said that the Department had invested R741 million to support some 14 500

postgraduate students (9 715 or 67% of them black and 8 265 or 57% of them female).

As part of the Operation Phakisa Oceans Economy, the Department had allocated R20 million to supporting aquaculture activities in marginalised coastal communities, with a focus on women and the youth.

The Minister said her plan was to expand mLab Southern Africa, a mobile solutions laboratory and start-up accelerator designed to help young information and communication technology entrepreneurs.

"An allocation of R6 million to the project will allow us to expand the initiative beyond Gauteng and the Western Cape to the Northern Cape, Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal. We also want to reach young people in Soweto, Mamelodi and Soshanguve."

This year the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research will support

“We will continue to support more young people and ensure that they learn how to create businesses and social enterprises, using advances in technology and knowledge”

50 students through the Data Science Skills Development programme. Last year 33 third-year Computer Science, Electrical Engineering and Statistics students were trained.

Students in this programme provide data-related business solutions to various stakeholders, including government departments and industry.

Minister Pandor has urged young South Africans to take advantage of new opportunities made possible by science and technology in the country. ■



**science
& technology**

Department:
Science and Technology
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA