

Unemployment Crisis in SA Continues to Affect Youth

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In South Africa, unemployment is a constant concern. Stats SA just reported that the youth unemployment rate for 2022 was 51.52%, which is a 1.66% increase from 2021.

There are a large number of youths who are living without jobs or shelter in big cities around the country. Many have dropped out of tertiary education institutions without graduating because of a lack of financial resources to see them through their studies; whereas others have left school out of a need to support their struggling families.

As I travelled the streets of Johannesburg's Central Business District (CBD), I met with Lungiswa Nene, a 33-year-old woman, who sells SIM cards and air fresheners to motorists who drive past. Nene hails from Mount Frere, in the Eastern Cape, and is the sixth child of seven. None of her family members are employed, and so she is the breadwinner and only hope for her family. From her earnings, she can send money to Mount Frere for groceries and to pay her rent in Soweto.

Like many youths from poor families, Nene aspired to be a doctor. She enrolled at the University of Cape Town for a medical degree, but in her second year, had to leave due to a lack of financial resources. She did not qualify for financial assistance from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS).

When asked about her prospects, Nene responded optimistically, "Until I get what I want, I will never rest. I want to be a medical doctor to assist the needy."

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