

Archbishops Commission on Youth Unemployment

In line with the Provincial Synod 2021 Resolution on addressing the high unemployment rate among the youth, the Archbishop appointed a youth Unemployment Commission in May 2022, to begin the process of finding ways in which the Province could begin tackling the crisis.

Members of the Commission:

1. The Right Revd Dr Vicentia Kgabe (Commission Convener)
2. Prof. J.J Tabane
3. Prof. Tshidi Mohapeloa
4. Lay Canon Lulama Ntuta (AYSA President)
5. Ms Basetsana Makena (ASF President)
6. Ms Kim Williams

(Extracted from the Minutes of Provincial Synod 2021, p. 132)

MOTION 4.7 ADDRESSES THE HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT RATE AMONG YOUTH

This Provincial Synod,

Noting that:

1. In support of combating challenges of unemployment, inequality, and poverty, there is an opportunity for the Church to be more intentional in supporting local entrepreneurs.
2. A motion on entrepreneurship was passed at the 2019 Synod to encourage young people within the Province to get involved in this initiative.
3. The Third Mark of Mission calls for the church to respond to human needs by loving Service.

Acknowledging that:

1. The Provincial, Diocesan and Parish Youth, and other structures are currently having programs which seek to address entrepreneurship, skills development, and career paths within their context;
2. The Metropolitan has raised unemployment, poverty, and inequality as a concern;

Resolves to:

1. Respectfully ask the Metropolitan to call for the governments in the Province of ACSA to investigate and enact a law which instructs corporations and large businesses to increase their overall local manufacturing/insourcing of local products, which would open the market for

local entrepreneurship.

2. Respectfully request the Metropolitan to establish a task team to champion this campaign.

3. Encourage Dioceses, Parishes and Organizations within ACSA to make available internship/leadership programs for young people seeking employment opportunities and/or experiential training.

Proposer: Lay Canon Lulama Ntuta

Seconded: Ms Kim Williams

The Commission hosted a Webinar on the 30th of June 2022, inviting young people from across the province together with anyone and everyone who has an interest in addressing the youth unemployment rate.

Professor Tshidi Mohapelo delivered the Keynote presentation and started by defining unemployment to give an overview of the unemployment crisis we currently face. Employment is separated into different types, there is structural, seasonal and frictional. Understanding the type of unemployment, we face helps paint the picture of reality and gives hope for a solution. The Prof makes a distinction between the definition of youth unemployment in South Africa and elsewhere in the world as the ages in consideration are different. The youth status goes up to the age of 35 in South Africa while elsewhere it would be capped at 24. The second point of consideration in looking at youth unemployment is the fact that the definition includes the ages of 15-17 which are considered to be child labour in the Republic. Thirdly, there is a broader definition of youth unemployment that considers all those who fall into the youth category regardless of whether they are seeking employment or not barring those institutionalized.

Youth unemployment is increasing, the unemployment statistics for the age group 15-24 was 65% in 2022 Q1. Graduate unemployment is also rising, sitting at 33% for the period in consideration. COVID-19 also has its part in the worsening of unemployment in a continent that has a growing population. At a macroeconomic level, sustainable growth is the only solution to the broader unemployment crisis.

Youth Unemployment Statistics in Countries within the Anglican Church of Southern Africa:

- South Africa: Youth aged 15-24 (63.9%) and 25 - 34 years (42.1%).
- Lesotho: youth unemployment was 34.41% in 2019
- Eswatini: The unemployment rate for persons aged 15 - 24 is 50.9%, and the long-term unemployment rate for persons aged 15+ is 25.8%
- Namibia: The youth unemployment rate is projected to trend around 49% in 2022 and 47% in 2023, according to our economic models.

South Africa, Eswatini and Lesotho are in the top 10 in the global charts of unemployment with South Africa featuring in the global youth unemployment and topping both lists.

Above is how things are as things stand according to Professor Mohapeloa. The Prof goes further by pointing out opportunities that could be exploited. Innovative solutions for our societal problems, the digital space, smart technologies, both informal and formal sectors, green economies, sustainable development goals, use of skill sets to respond to the new world of work and being entrepreneurial.

Responses from the Youth:

Lulama Ntuta, President of the Anglican Youth of Southern Africa, and Basetsana Makena, the President of the Anglican Students Federation (ASF) were the two respondents.

- Connecting and collaborating require us to know each other and have a database that records who we have in our church.
- This knowledge will also help in setting up possible mentor-mentee relationships and career guidance.
- The church's intention towards young people will be reflected by actions, considerations and even budgeting like employing the youth at the diocesan and parish level.
- There is a concession that the church's ability to address unemployment as a whole is limited but the claim is that there are practical steps that the church can take in our different places.
- There must be a foundational shift in how the church approaches matters of the youth, embracing the youth as actual members today and not tomorrow's members.
- In addition to the church's loud voice, practical steps are still missing. CV workshops, skills development, availing land that is owned by the church for business ventures and feeding those who are in hard times.
- The skills that the World Economic Forum counts as critical going to the future with the next industrial revolution are skills that the church can cultivate through service to itself and its organization.
- Actual support of youth ministries, the biggest solution is rarely external.

More on what the Church could do:

Ownership of the church and its programmes must be taken up, like the youth that opened a career guidance office.

- There must be some measurable deliverables that will indicate if there is any work and results.
- The church's loud voice must be lent to holding governments accountable.

Our attempts must not fall into the trap of excluding those who are differently abled.

We must also avoid the prosperity messages without adding our hands to making lives better.

The church must open spaces within dioceses to allow conversations around unemployment to take place as that will allow those who have the capital to assist in identifying the gaps that they can fill.

The church needs pews, candles, wines and other materials, we must be able to see which of these can be used to aid in the fight against unemployment.

Conclusion:

Tackling the issue of youth unemployment and establishing the role of the church is a continuous process. The Commission has done its best to lay the groundwork for mapping out a way forward. A platform was created for those who would like to send through ideas/proposals that could assist the Commission and it is the hope of the commission that through ongoing efforts and discussions, the Province will begin to see positive results.