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What matters to youth on the 40th anniversary of Soweto uprisings?

Bulletin identifies challenges facing youth 21 years into new democracy

Youth Matters, a bulletin published by the Poverty and Inequality Initiative (PII) and the Children's Institute at the University of Cape Town (UCT), unravels the challenges and possibilities young people face in South Africa today.

This comes as Youth Day this year marks the 40th anniversary of the Soweto uprisings, when young people stood up against unequal education and, eventually, the whole apartheid system.

Twenty-one years into the new democracy, a team of UCT researchers and young people has produced the *Youth Matters* bulletin to identify the challenges facing youth today and what kind of support they need from government, business and civil society in order to access opportunities.

SA youth are often portrayed in a not-so-positive light, or as trapped in a cycle of poverty; "a ticking time bomb" even, that could well form a threat to this country's stability.

In the bulletin, young people expressed their hope in a shared future and made it clear that the task in front of us is not only one for government, but for all of us as these extracts from the *Youth Matters* bulletin show:

"We are grateful for all the people who make a difference in our lives: the teachers who go the extra mile; the parents, who even despite their lack of education, are involved in our education; the government who protects us and builds facilities for us; the businesses who reach out to us; and the volunteers who mentor and support us. But we are still far from realising our dreams. We reach out to you to help us fulfil this generation's true destiny. We are not a lost generation. We are people with huge potential and great hopes."

The [2015 Child Gauge](#) presents evidence on the state of young people in the country. Data from the Child Gauge shows that the majority of young people continue to live in poverty when measured as average household income, but also by various other dimensions of poverty, many interconnected. Income, for instance, impacts (still) on the kind of education one can access; which in turn influences skills levels and employment opportunities. Income also impacts on the kind of housing one can access, which has an effect on health, stress levels, and so on. These may seem as endless barriers to a less

deprived life, but the 2015 Child Gauge argues that, with a concerted effort, it is possible to think about interventions that could help break the cycle of poverty.

Several “structural” interventions are possible, such as the extension of the social grant system, or ways to improve teaching and learning to prevent drop-outs, or to connect more young people to employment opportunities. But change also depends on young people themselves, their agency and resilience.

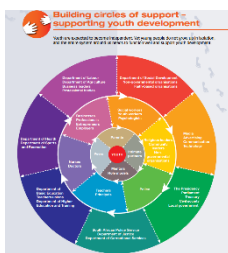
Youth do not simply “undergo” their context, they also act upon that context. They have dreams and aspirations that need to be supported and taken into account when designing interventions. In 2015, as part of the broader Child Gauge project, a group of inspiring young people held a series of discussions with other young South Africans in their communities, and then worked with a team of research experts to draw on data from the South African Child Gauge 2015 and to present their own message to South Africa.

About the *Youth Matters* Bulletin:

Youth Matters was developed by Zikhona, Zukisa, Zuko, Boitshepo, Clement, Nokukhanya, Nomonde, Mmeli, Bonolo, Portia, Cabral, Eugene, Athandile, Nqabisa, Naledi, Sihle, Chanice, Zintle, Shakier from IkamvaYouth, Axiom Education, GCU Academy and the South African Youth Project in collaboration with the Children’s Institute and the PII, UCT.

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The [publication](#) is available from the Children’s Institute website. The back page features a call to action, written by the youth themselves.

About the Poverty and Inequality Initiative (PII): The initiative seeks to harness dedicated and excellent research to help find and develop viable and impact-driven policies and interventions to overcome poverty and inequality.

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