



REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MINISTRY OF WOMEN, YOUTH AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

SONA DEBATE 2021

SPEAKING NOTES FOR

DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY:

WOMEN, YOUTH AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

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THEME / TOPIC / AGENDA:

STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS DEBATE

Honourable Chairperson;

Honourable President;

Honourable Members of this House

I'm grateful for the opportunity to address you on matters pertaining to the:

- 1) *National Strategic Plan on Gender-based Violence and Femicide (GBVF);*
- 2) *Legislative interventions to address GBV and Femicide; and*
- 3) *Women economic empowerment.*

Before I address the above issues, allow me first to state that I stand here today in the year in which we celebrate 150 years of the trailblazer, Imbokodo, iSithwalandwe, a Freedom Fighter who fought for the emancipation and rights of black women. I am speaking about Mme Charlotte Mmakgomo Maxeke who fought against gender inequalities all her life.

As Mme Maxeke argued, the social ills of gender based violence and femicide and issues of gender equality and women's empowerment are socially constructed.

Relegating women and persons with disabilities to third class citizens is a historical phenomenon rooted in patriarchal and apartheid systems. Consequently, women are perpetually victims of triple oppression of classism, racism and sexism. Persons with disabilities continue to be excluded from all areas of everyday life, including children with disabilities being excluded from accessing education.

Hence, high levels of poverty, unemployment and inequality experienced by women, youth and persons with disabilities are perennial. This continues despite the fact that our country has undergone major socio-economic and political restructuring and transformation since the advent of democracy, with a strong social transformation agenda.

Inequality calls upon all of us, men and women of our country to put shoulder to the wheel to ensure that no women and children go to bed without food, but rather enjoy the Constitutional right to life and security of the person that so many fought and died for.

Since the joint sitting of Parliament where we discussed the crisis of *violence against women by men* as the President correctly named this, men in their diversity continue to brutalise and kill women and children unabated.

Women and children with disabilities face even higher risk of abuse due to their dependency on their abusers, or vile perpetrators taking advantages of their communication and intellectual disabilities.

In 2020 there was a 64.9% drop in cases of GBVF compared to the same period in 2019. This was still 5445 cases in 2020! Although these figures showed reduced reporting during the COVID-19 lockdown, we know that lower numbers of reported domestic violence cases is due to the fact that many victims could not report these crimes. We know this lack of reporting applies to women and children with disabilities as well.

On many occasions and speaking on public platforms, the President of the Republic declared GBVF as a crisis and emergency; and urged South Africans to work with government to eradicate the scourge. A commitment needed 365 days of the year.

In his State of the Nation Address, the President reiterated that *"ending gender-based violence is an imperative if we lay claim to being a society rooted in equality and non-sexism"*.

The NSP sets out to provide a cohesive strategic framework to guide the national response to the hyper endemic GBVF crisis.

To achieve this NSP vision "*A South Africa free from GBV directed at women, children and LGBTQIA+ persons*", the NSP has the following pillars: 1. Accountability, Coordination and Leadership; 2. Prevention and Rebuilding Social Cohesion; 3. Efficient and Sensitive Criminal Justice; 4. Adequate Care, Support and Healing; 5. Building Women's Economic Power; and 6. Better Information Management to Inform Action.

Honourable Members,

In September 2019, there was a spike in femicide cases that sent shockwaves throughout the country, raising awareness to the on-going scourge of violence against women. The Emergency Response Action Plan that we implemented between October 2019 and March 2020 was a response to this upsurge and subsequent GBVF related protests.

Within a short space of time, the Interim Gender-based Violence and Femicide Steering Committee (IGBVF-SC), managed to a large degree, to galvanise the nation and mobilise resources within public and private sectors towards the fight to end GBVF.

The **Emergency Plan Report** details progress we made in a number of areas. These include:

- 1.Availability of evidence collection kits in all police stations;
- 2.Setting up of shelters to house victims and survivors of gender-based violence;
- 3.Analysis of over 785 thousand dockets relating to sexual offences by the Cold Case Task Team;
- 4.Establishment of new Thuthuzela Care Centres; and
- 5.Drafting of legislation on GBVF.

We developed a gender-responsive planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation and auditing framework. We are using this framework to facilitate programming, resourcing, and ensure all departments integrate NSP deliverables into their core mandates.

In addition to the achievements listed above, we sought to review the legislative framework governing and regulating cases of gender-based violence in the country. Responding with urgency and agility, the 3 Bills: 1) Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Bill; 2) Criminal and Related Matters Amendment Bill; and 3) the Domestic Violence Amendment Bill were drafted and submitted for consultation.

Chairperson,

As part of institutionalising the implementation of the six NSP Pillars we are employing a number of processes to ensure:

1. A draft National Council on Gender-based Violence and Legislative Framework is in place;
2. The strengthening of partnerships such as those with various UN agencies, GIZ and the EU;
3. A broad Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework for the NSP that seeks to have a 5-year and 10-year focus is being developed;
4. Parliament recently finalised and released the Parliamentary Oversight Framework on the National Strategic Plan on Gender-based Violence and Femicide.
5. A multi-sectoral platform comprising of all sectors of society worked on high impact initiatives that support collective efforts in the implementation of the NSP; and
6. Working with all Premiers' offices, COGTA and SALGA, in facilitating the establishment of provincial and local multi-sectoral structures that will be responsible for the roll-out of the NSP as part of the District Development Model.

Chairperson,

According to the NSP the state has an obligation to fund the National Council and the roll out of the NSP.

As the department we are working on the demonstration of government's commitment through financial and infrastructure investment, aimed at prevention and mitigation of GBVF as outlined in Pillar 2 of the NSP.

We welcome the recent launch of the Private Sector led **GBVF Response Fund1** which raised R128 Million to resource the NSP in the fight against GBV.

As the country regroups and embark on its path to economic recovery, our response to GBVF must be at the epicentre of the economic recovery plan to ensure sustainable future growth of the country.

Honourable Members,

Economics is about the power to access resources, and ownership of assets, therefore women's access to economic resources is at the heart of women empowerment.

South Africa's economy was built on mining and agriculture, with land being a key factor. We are a prolific producer of minerals. However, the wealth of this country remains in the hands of the few.

My department has signed an MOU with the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development with regard to the distribution of land to ensure that women, youth and persons with disabilities also receive and own land.

In his address President Ramaphosa stated that persons with disabilities must be considered for economic opportunities. We must empower through economic opportunities.

South Africa has made a commitment to earmark 40% preferential procurement to women-owned businesses nationally.

Task teams have been established to collaboratively work together on initiatives and capacity building workshops aimed at fast tracking the empowerment of Women owned Businesses (WOB's) to better take up opportunities within the implementation of the 40% preferential public procurement.

My department is coordinating the implementation of the Sanitary Dignity Implementation Framework by provinces. 3.5 million learners have benefited from this programme.

In 2019/20 budget year R157 million was allocated to this programme. This will increase to 258 million in the outer years to ensure this programme meets its goal of ensuring all girls are able to manage their menstrual cycles with dignity.

We are working with the South African Bureau of Standards to facilitate certification of products to ensure local manufacturing and the involvement of women in the entire value chain of the production.

Honourable Members, The SheTradesZA Project is being led by the Department of Small Business Development and implemented through SEDA. SheTradesZA is a digital / online platform that serves as a unique opportunity for women owned business to participate in the regional and global value chains and markets.

In closing, we must all heed the President's directive issued in his State of the Nation Address, in committing to making South Africa safe for women across ages, genders and sexual identities, disability and geographic location.

To save the lives of women, we must empower them economically and socially to be able to walk out of abusive situations. The link between economic empowerment and eradicating gender-based violence and femicide cannot be overstated.

We should all join the President in embracing Maya Angelou's poem "I rise". We must all unite to end inequality and ensure that women enjoy freedoms enshrined in the Constitution. Victory is guaranteed. Women **will rise** above the oppression they face, to take their rightful place in society, and move South Africa forward.

Malibongwe!

Thank you.