

PRE-STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS MEDIA RELEASE

FEMINIST CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS CALL ON PRESIDENT AND MINISTER OF FINANCE TO MAKE GOOD ON PROMISES TO FUND THE FIGHT AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

20 June 2019 – despite President Cyril Ramaphosa’s pronouncements in the February 2019 State of the Nation Address (SONA) that funding would be allocated to combat Gender-Based Violence, when Finance Minister, Tito Mboweni, delivered his budget speech on 20 February 2019, there were no new allocations to combat Gender-Based Violence.

In the February SONA, President Ramaphosa said that government would be “strengthening the functioning of various specialised units such as the Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Units and improving our administrative and record keeping capacity at all levels.” He also said “we are expanding and dedicating more funds to places of support, such as the Thuthuzela Care Centres and Khuseleka Care Centres”.

As Civil Society Organisations supporting women impacted by the scale of the violence directed against us, we believed the President when he said that government had “listened to the call to make funds available to combat Gender-Based Violence, and have allocated funding in the current budget to support the decisions taken at the Summit.” We felt that our call had been heard and anticipated that the National Treasury and the various mandated departments would follow through and this would be reflected in the budget speech.

However, the budget presented by Minister Mboweni did not indicate where government intends to reallocate the money from for these functions. It therefore appears that President Ramaphosa was merely paying lip service to the eradication of Gender-Based Violence and Femicide with no political will to follow through.

Violence against women in South Africa has become widespread and normalised. South Africa’s femicide rate is almost five times the global rate. According to the World Health Organisation, South Africa’s femicide rate was 12 per 100,000 in 2016, whereas the global average is 2.6. In 2015/16 alone, some 275 536 applications for protection from domestic violence were lodged with South African courts. According to official crime statistics for 2017/18 financial year, 177 620 social contact crimes were committed against women.

Thuthuzela Care Centres are one-stop facilities that provide support to victims of rape and abuse. Not only did the Thuthuzela Centres not get the allocation that the President promised, they have now also lost international donor funding and more than half are without counselling services.

When it comes to supporting women and child victims of abuse, shelters for victims of abuse and counselling services play an important role. Yet shelters are also underfunded.

What does this say about how government views women in society? Whilst Treasury has demonstrated an ability to respond rapidly to crises at State Owned Enterprises and climate related disasters, when it comes to women, there is no sense of urgency and we as activists are given the runaround. What type of behaviour is government endorsing when it prioritizes corruption induced crises and makes a decision to ignore the pleas of the women of this country? Whilst the aforementioned crises do need to be attended to, we wish to remind cabinet that more than half of the population are women and the extent of violence directed at us is a crisis that you can no longer ignore.

As Civil Society Organisations, we note that there will not be a special budget speech following the installing of the new Cabinet and the delivery of the State of the Nation Address. We also note that this means that the adjustments to the mandates of departments, particularly those that have been amalgamated, will not be funded differently until February next year.

With the cabinet announcement, the Department of Women has been renamed to the Department of Women, Youth and People with Disabilities. Without allocating additional funds for the expanded mandate, the concerns of vulnerable groups will once again be paid lip service only. Government does not take the challenges of these groups sufficiently seriously.

We call upon the Presidency, the National Treasury, the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, the Department of Social Development, the South African Police Services, Department of Justice & Correctional Services, the Department of Health and the Department of Small Business Development to ensure that before the October Medium Term Budget Policy Statement, there is intergovernmental alignment and follow through with regards to funding commitments and implementation of the decisions emanating from the National Summit on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide.

If government is serious about addressing the issues of vulnerable people, it must also place focus on the LGBTQIA++ community and sex workers.

In confronting the patriarchal system of society, we need to move from a time of failed promises and a lack of accountability towards a more humane society where public officials serve the people in an efficient and effective manner.

If this country is ever going to end Gender Based Violence, the state needs to put money towards prevention and other programmes.

We commend the President for ensuring that fifty percent of his cabinet comprises women. This is a step in the right direction and we trust the beginning of greater progress towards gender equality in our country.

To successfully combat Gender-based Violence, we agree with the President that we need a multi-departmental effort on the part of government. Gender-based violence is, as the President affirmed in his previous SONA, an urgent national priority that requires the mobilisation of all South Africans and the involvement of all institutions.

As civil society organisations working to advance the rights of women, we stand ready to work with the departments mandated to address women's issues.

For further information contact:

Mandisa Khanyile
Rise Up against gender based violence
073 506 2143

Nondumiso Nsibande
ActionAid South Africa
084 756 2813

Civil Society Organisations who endorse this statement:

1. ActionAid South Africa
2. Access Chapter 2
3. African Diaspora Forum Women's League
4. African Diaspora Workers Network (ADWN)
5. Black Womxn Caucus
6. Budget Justice Coalition (BJC)
7. Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR)
8. Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria
9. Curriculum Development Project (CDP)
10. Democratic Nursing Organisation of South Africa (DENOSA)
11. Dobsonville Human Rights Advice Office
12. DramAide
13. Equal Education Law Centre (EELC)
14. Lifeline SA
15. EPOC LGBTI
16. Feminist Women's Art Network
17. Gender Links
18. Gender Based Violence Lifeline SA
19. Hlanganisa Institute for Development in Southern Africa
20. Institute for Economic Justice
21. JASS Southern Africa
22. KZN Network on Violence Against Women
23. Lawyers Against Abuse
24. Lesaka La Basadi
25. One in Nine Campaign
26. Oxfam South Africa
27. Passover Community Building Organisation
28. National Shelter Movement (NSM)
29. Nisaa Institute for Women

30. People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA)
31. Remmoho Women's Forum
32. Rise Up Against Gender Based Violence
33. Rural Health Advocacy Project
34. South African Women in Dialogue
35. Section27
36. Shayisfuba
37. Sister Love International South Africa
38. Stop GBV NSP Campaign
39. Sonke Gender Justice
40. South African Youth Centre
41. Sex Workers Education and Advocacy Task Force (SWEAT)
42. Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute (SPII)
43. Teddy Bear Clinic
44. #TheTotalShutdown
45. The Archive: Amabali Wethu Organisation
46. The Social Justice Foundation
47. The Wise Collective
48. Treatment Action Campaign (TAC)
49. Tosunga Banninga
50. Tshwaranang Legal Advocacy Centre
51. Women and Girls Leadership Foundation
52. Women Leadership Social Empowerment
53. Women and Democracy Initiative, Dullah Omar Institute