

Media Statement

Attention Journalists and News Editors

Pretoria, 19 January 2019

## **NSFAS PERSONAL CARE ALLOCATION HAILED AS A VICTORY FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS**

The National Student Financial Aid Scheme's (NSFAS) decision to allocate R275 per month to students for personal care must be hailed as a victory for Women's Rights in South Africa.

The allowance, disbursed to nearly 800 000 students, for incidental or personal care needs will most certainly be used for personal hygiene as well as sanitary products. This allocation takes into account the whole life of the student, who comes from an economically poor background, and offers support to both young men and women to take care of their personal hygiene requirements.

Globally, girls and young women are forced to miss school and classes at tertiary institutions due to a lack of sanitary towels. This monthly pattern of missing out on education has devastating long term effects, not only in terms of educational development, but also on the psyche of young women.

"One must remember that a young woman from a poor home at a tertiary institution faces segregation on many fronts. This young woman is often ostracized from groups who are better off financially. She is also excluded from social activities and is unable to participate in the full social life of the tertiary institution as she is unable to afford club fees, or equipment to participate fully in sports. For these young women to also miss out on classes due to their inability to afford sanitary towels is an indignity that must be corrected," said Minister in the Presidency Responsible for Women Bathabile Dlamini.

The Department of Women wishes to congratulate NSFAS on recognizing the needs of young women, who make up the majority of NSFAS beneficiaries (over 56%). As a policy development and coordination department The Department of Women will in 2019/20 lead the nationwide rollout of the sanitary dignity programme in selected

quintile 1-3 schools. Execution of the programme will be guided by the sanitary dignity implementation framework spearheaded by the Department of Women. It is also important to note the victory of zero-tax rating on sanitary dignity products.

The department also wishes to acknowledge the guidance of The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) to ensure that women empowerment is a central pillar in the higher education sector. This milestone is commendable during the 25 Year Review on gender empowerment and gender equality (1994-2019) in South Africa, and also comes at a time when South Africa's commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, to which South Africa is a signatory, is being measured.

This achievement will be documented at the UN Commission on the Status of Women as part of the country's efforts to ensure gender responsive budgeting is implemented. The Department of Women calls on all government departments to play their part in ensuring that programmes focussing on gender equality and the empowerment of women continue to be designed and implemented.

**Important numbers to note:**

Police: 10111

Stop Gender Violence: 0800 150 150

Gender Based Violence Command Centre: 0800 428 428

Childline: 0800 055 555

**ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN**

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