



**MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY: WOMEN, YOUTH AND PERSONS WITH
DISABILITIES**

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**SPEAKING NOTES FOR THE MINISTER IN THE
PRESIDENCY FOR WOMEN YOUTH AND PERSONS WITH
DISABILITIES**

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THE LAUNCH OF WOMEN'S MONTH 2020

30 JULY 2020

GCIS, TSHEDIOMOSETSO HOUSE, PRETORIA

Programme Director,

Honourable Minister of Arts and Culture

Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Members of the media

I am honoured to be here with you this morning to officially launch Women's Month 2020.

The objective of this briefing is to launch the programme for Women's Month 2020 and issue a Call to Action to the nation to achieve gender equality in our lifetime.

We would like this launch to signal the start of a national conversation, programmes and actions targeted at ending gender-based violence and femicide; targeted at ending gender inequality and driving women's empowerment in our country.

I also want to use this platform to issue a Call to Action to the Nation towards the goal of gender equality in our lifetime.

Women's Month in South Africa provides an opportunity to pay tribute to the generations of women whose struggles laid the foundations for the progress made in empowering women and achieving gender equality to date. The struggles waged by women over centuries have resulted in important strides towards the national goal of a non-sexist society.

These struggles, led by heroines such as Charlotte Maxeke, Albertina Sisulu, Sophie de Bruyn, Mama Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, Helen Joseph, Rahima Moosa, Phila Ndwandwe, Dulcie September, Emma Mashinini and many others have ushered in the rights and freedoms of women which we can lay claim to today.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Women's Month in 2020 takes place in the context of the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF), which have underlined the urgent need to more decisively deal with the legacy of apartheid and structural oppression to accelerate the transformation of society.

The Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities plays an important role in the mainstreaming of gender, youth and issues affecting persons with disabilities. Our focus continues to be on inter-sectionality, because women, youth and persons with disabilities continue to face multiple forms of deprivation in our society.

We recognise that women, youth and persons with disabilities have been hardest hit by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Those in informal settlements and rural areas have been worst affected.

The latest National Income Dynamics Study (NIDS) Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey released on 15 July 2020 has unveiled the heightened levels of unemployment, especially by vulnerable sectors and mainly by women since the lockdown.

The study indicates that three million people had lost their jobs between February and April this year. Two million of these are

poor black women. The study highlighted that the worst affected have been women, self-employed and informal casual workers. We also know that young women aged 25-34 years are most affected by unemployment. This is having a devastating impact on the wellbeing and empowerment of South African women.

While government introduced a range of relief measures, it is critical that women's access to government social and economic relief measures is urgently addressed and that women are at the centre of government's economic recovery plan.

We must dismantle toxic masculinity and its impact on women and girls, which underpins gender based violence and the brutal killing of women and girls. As a country we must continue to strengthen the Men's Movement so that men can play a meaningful role in ending GBVF and contribute to behaviour change and the breaking of stereotypes towards the goal of gender equality.

The Women's Month Theme 2020

The Women's Month 2020 is launched under the theme: **"Generation Equality: Realizing Women's Rights for an Equal Future"**.

Generation Equality is a UN Women global campaign and links

South Africa to global efforts to achieve gender equality by 2030. It also highlights the global celebration of 25 years since the Fourth World Conference for Women held in Beijing, China, and the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action.

We want to join hands across spheres of government and with all sectors of society as part of a Decade of Action towards gender equality; we want to see sustainable programmes that are geared towards achieving this goal. Together with civil society we are establishing Action Coalitions which will work to drive visible change for women in our country.

Most importantly, we want to use this period of intensified action to elevate the voices of women on What Women Want. This will serve as the country's mandate and programme of priorities for the decade from 2020-2030. We want to hear the voices of women in rural areas, in informal settlements, young women and girls, elderly women, women with disabilities, women workers, the LGBTQIA+ community, women in faith-based communities, women traditional leaders, women professionals and across sectors.

Under the banner of Generation Equality, we will focus on how to further mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on women; we will focus on women's access to economic justice and rights; and will focus on the eradication of gender-based violence and femicide.

Among the objectives of Women's Month are the following:

- To contribute to ending gender discrimination and gender-based violence and femicide and advance the rights of women and girls in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres of life
- To mobilise women and strengthen their organized formations towards the development of sustainable Action Coalitions, which are collectives of change makers of all ages and genders to tackle the unfinished business of empowering women;
- To develop national consensus around gender policy priorities and programmes to advance the gender agenda by 2025 and by 2030
- To highlight and strengthen programmes to advance the rights of women to address national priorities including the eradication of gender-based violence and femicide and realising economic justice and women's rights.

Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me to unveil the look and feel for August 2020. The Logo:

The logo contains 4 elements: Women's Month 2020 in text; Profile of African Woman; Stylised South Africa Flag; Silhouette of women representing different generations and from diverse backgrounds.

The Main Graphic symbolises positivity, hope, freedom, strength, independence and grace.

The colours of Women's Month 2020, the doek and the woman's dress represent colours drawn from the Generation Equality Logo, which represents the link to the theme for the month. The use of the doek is not to be seen as a repressive symbol but one that shows women taking ownership of such symbols and projecting them differently – towards changing their meaning of a more liberated woman who chooses how and what she wears.

The stylised flag represents movement and flow which captures the idea of South Africa moving forward with women at the helm.

The silhouettes represent women from diverse backgrounds and socio-economic and age diversity, as well as women with disabilities.

Call to action to the nation:

Our call to action to the nation today is:

Be a part of the generation that ends gender inequality.

I am calling upon change makers of all ages and genders to tackle the unfinished business of empowering women through a multi-generational campaign, under the slogan: “Be a part of the generation that ends gender inequality” and to use the hashtag ***#IAmGenerationEquality***.

The ultimate goal of this campaign is to dismantle patriarchy in all its forms as an underlying cause of many of the injustices women face on a daily basis.

The emphasis is on elevating the voices of ordinary women across society under the banner of “What Women Want”.

We want to see every day thousands of women, organisations, formations, collectives, businesses, major companies and international development partners responding to gender inequality through programmes and projects, interventions, campaigns and mobilisation.

These programmes must make real impacts in the lives of women. We want these programmes to be showcased to show how we are responding to the problem in our own spaces, and to inspire others to do the same.

We want you to go to social media and share what you are doing because you are the change agents who will bring about this change. Your work will also inspire others to take on similar projects within their own spaces.

On Gender Based Violence and Femicide

The second pandemic confronting our country is gender-based violence and femicide. During recent months, our country has witnessed the brutal killing of innocent women and children.

I would like to express our sincere condolences and solidarity to all families who lost their loved ones in the hands of this pandemic, perpetrated by men.

The perpetrators of these horrific crimes are men, our brothers, our sons and our fathers. I wish to reiterate our condemnation of gender-based violence in our country as there no excuse to commit these heinous acts.

As we continue to fight this scourge of gender-based violence and femicide, we are aware that the fight is bigger than government. We are accelerating the implementation of the National Strategic Plan on GBVF in partnership with civil society and will further elaborate on this throughout Women's Month and beyond.

We need communities to join and help us eradicate this pandemic. We appeal to families and communities to come together against this scourge to expose perpetrators and not turn a blind eye. Anyone who harms someone else must face the full might of the law.

The National Women's Day Event

The National Women's Day Event, for the 9th August 2020 will take the form of a televised address by the President of the Republic. The programme will be pre-recorded and broadcast on the day.

In conclusion, as the country continues to battle the COVID-19 pandemic, we would like to encourage everyone in our country to wear their masks, sanitise regularly and wash their hands with soap and do their part to observe social distancing. Together we must overcome this pandemic.

Malibongwe !