



Social Equity Cluster

2023 State of the Nation Address (SONA)

February 2023

Highlights of the SONA: Social Equity Cluster

President Ramaphosa delivered his seventh State of the Nation Address (SONA) during a Joint Sitting of the National Assembly (NA) and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) on 10 February 2023.

BACKGROUND

Women and young people constitute the majority of the poor and there is a critical need to absorb them into the formal economy and promote their ability to start small, medium and micro enterprises. This is critical to addressing structural inequality. To achieve this, investment in education, training, and scaling up skills development is crucial.

South Africa has high levels of gender-based violence. This significant obstacle negatively affects women’s lives and exacerbates their economic disempowerment. Violence against women is so pronounced that it can be described as being a physical and psychological warfare waged on women. The National Strategic Plan on Gender-based Violence and Femicide is the policy framework for addressing this. The policy is underpinned by six areas of work: accountability, coordination and leadership; prevention, rebuilding and social cohesion; justice, safety and protection; response, care, healing and support; economic power; and research and information. The implementation of this policy is crucial to addressing the structural drivers of social inequity.

This Bulletin provides an overview of issues affecting the social equity sector as highlighted during the SONA for consideration by the relevant committees.

The key focus areas in the sector identified by the President are:

- The implementation of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-based Violence and Femicide.
- Supporting small-scale women farmers to drive agricultural reform.
- Ensuring that 40 percent of public procurement supports women-owned businesses.
- Providing support to businesses owned by women and young people by providing financial services through PostBank.
- Scaling up jobs for young people through the Presidential Employment Stimulus initiative.
- Revitalising the National Youth Service.
- Creating 50 000 work opportunities through the Social Employment Fund.



Issues that concern South Africans the most – SONA 2023:

- Load shedding
- Unemployment
- Poverty and the rising cost of living
- Crime and corruption

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Women

HIGHLIGHTS FROM SONA 2022:

- Government aimed to intensify the fight against GBVF through the implementation of the National Strategic Plan on GBVF and other measures to promote the empowerment of women (signing into law of three new pieces of legislation, which has strengthened the criminal justice system).
- *“However, the fight against GBV will never be won unless, as society, we mobilise all formations and all citizens behind a sustained programme of social action.”* – President Cyril Ramaphosa, SONA, 10 February 2022, Cape Town City Hall.

SONA PRIORITY AREAS IMPACTING ON WOMEN (2023)

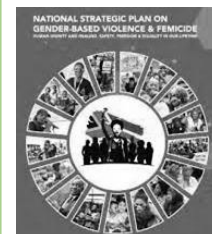
The President highlighted the following priority areas and commitments for women:

• Economic Empowerment

- Through the Presidential Employment Stimulus more than 90 000 (68 percent) of small-scale women farmers have received input vouchers to buy seeds, fertiliser and equipment – this boosts food security and agricultural reform.
- Establishing an enabling environment to support women entrepreneurs to allow women-owned business to access the 40 per cent of public procurement “set-aside” determination.
- Approximately R9 billion has been earmarked by the Industrial Development Corporation to invest in women-led businesses.
- Commitments by the Public Investment Corporation and National Empowerment Fund to establish special purpose vehicles to support women-owned businesses.
- Licencing of the PostBank to lay the foundation for a bank that will provide financial services to SMMEs, youth- and women-owned businesses and under-served communities

• Addressing Gender-Based Violence

- Mention was made of the second Presidential Summit on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide held in November 2022, as well as the adoption and implementation of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-based Violence and Femicide.
- Also, the commitment to improved accessibility and functioning of sexual offences courts and expanding the network of Thuthuzela Care Centres was noted.



Alignment to the MTBPS

- The 2022 MTBPS did not result in increased funding allocated to the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities (DWYPD) or its related entities.
- In Programme 2 (Mainstreaming Women’s Rights and Advocacy) funds were vired to the compensation of employees for the National Council on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide interim secretariat.
- Given the mandate and responsibilities of the DWYPD to oversee activities related to GBVF, limited funding and internal funding shifts to the Administration Programme is an area of concern.

OTHER ISSUES RELEVANT TO WOMEN

- The continuation of the Social Relief of Distress grant will have a positive impact on unemployed women and women-headed households.
- The fact that existing social grants will be increased will be of benefit to women who constitute the largest proportion of social security beneficiaries.
- Increased police personnel, functioning community policing forums and an effective and independent prosecution authority and courts should result in improved safety and security.
- Ensuring the functioning of the 10111 help line is of paramount importance for victims of gender-based violence.
- Improvements to the electricity supply and the reduction/elimination of load shedding ensures better access to basic services, food provision, jobs, and overall safety and security.

Key areas for oversight

- ✓ Monitoring the implementation of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-based Violence and Femicide and its related outputs.
- ✓ Monitoring the budgets and spending on GBVF activities and initiatives, as well as related targets.
- ✓ Ensuring regular engagement with departments and entities responsible for improving the safety and security of women.
- ✓ Receiving regular updates/reports on the economic empowerment commitments.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM SONA 2022:

The following key initiatives were highlighted in relation to the upliftment and development of young people:

- **Presidential Employment Stimulus (PES):** This initiative uses public funding to create jobs and support livelihoods while the labour market recovers. The PES has enabled the most rapid expansion of public employment in South Africa's history by supporting programmes that could scale up within a matter of months to provide work to those who need it. It has created 1 098 304 work and livelihood opportunities for unemployed South Africans. Of the participants, 84 percent are youth and 62 percent are women.
- **The SAYouth.mobi platform:** This is a platform for young people trying to access opportunities and support in finding employment. At present, more than 2.3 million young South Africans are registered. Of these, over 600 000 have been placed in employment opportunities.
- **A revitalised National Youth Service:** SONA 2023 noted that this service will recruit its first cohort of 50 000 young people, creating opportunities for them to contribute to their communities, develop their skills and grow their employability.
- **The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET):** SONA 2023 highlighted that DHET will place 10 000 unemployed Technical and Vocational Education and Training graduates in workplaces from April 2023.
- **The Social Employment Fund:** The fund focuses on creating 50 000 work opportunities, using the capability of organisations outside of government, in areas such as urban agriculture; early childhood development; public art and tackling gender-based violence. In addition to expanding public employment, Government is providing support to young people to prepare them for work and link them to opportunities.

SONA PRIORITY AREAS FOR YOUTH (2023)

The President highlighted the following general priority areas:



- **Employment Tax Incentive:** To address the challenge of youth unemployment, the President noted that the Employment Tax Incentive has been expanded to encourage businesses to hire more young people in large numbers.
- **Licensing of the PostBank:** SONA 2023 highlighted the establishment of a state bank that will provide financial services to SMMEs (Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises) targeting youth, women-owned businesses, and underserved communities.

Alignment to the MTBPS

- The 2022 MTBPS did not see additional funds for the Department for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities.
- A large proportion of virements were made from key programmes (including youth) to administration. This must be closely monitored to ensure that programmes targeted at young people are not disadvantaged by the shifting of funds.

OTHER ISSUES RELEVANT TO YOUTH

SONA 2023 raised the following points relevant to youth:

- The number of students entering artisan training in TVET colleges will be increased from 17,000 to 30,000 in the 2023 academic year.
- The Social Employment Fund is recruiting 50 000 participants in its next phase to do community work and the revitalised National Youth Service will create a further 36 000 opportunities through non-profit and community-based organisations.
- The Department of Home Affairs has appointed the first cohort of 10 000 unemployed young people to digitise more than 340 million paper-based civic records.
- There are now more than 3 million users registered on SAYouth.mobi.
- The Presidential Employment Stimulus has created over 1 million opportunities, reaching every province and district in South Africa.



Key areas for oversight

- ✓ Ongoing monitoring and engagement with the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), a key role player in ensuring the development of youth in South Africa.
- ✓ Monitor the distribution of the R 800 million provided by the National Skills Fund aimed at developing skills in the digital and technology sector.
- ✓ Monitor the impact of the Presidential Employment Stimulus (PES) specifically in relation to the creation of sustainable jobs for young people.

Social Equity Cluster 2023 SONA BULLETIN

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SONA 2023

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