**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
MINI PLENARIES (HYBRID)**

**TUESDAY, 23 MAY**

**10:00 - 12:00**

1. **DEBATE ON VOTE 20: WOMEN, YOUTH AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (M46)**

**HON. MD HLENGWA MP**

Hon. Speaker,

According to Statistics South Africa, women make up 51.1% of South Africa’s population; youth aged 15 years and younger about 28.3%; youth aged 15 to 34 years account for 34%; and persons with disabilities, around 7.5% of our population.

This Department impacts the lives of more than half our population, and a vast majority of South Africa’s vulnerable persons.

The IFP agrees with the recent Portfolio Committee Report: the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities can – and must – do more. It must follow through on targets it has committed to, and not just drop them from their APP without explanation.

The IFP is deeply concerned that “targets related to monitoring and evaluation of police stations and Thuthuzela Care Centres as well as court monitoring were discontinued and no longer appeared as targets in the APP under review.”

According to the most recent Crime Statistics, of February 2023, sexual assaults increased by 9.6% to 15 545 reported cases for the period under review: this is an average of 169 sexual offences a day.

The women, children, and vulnerable persons who are victims of gender-based violence often report secondary victimisation by the authorities, or a lack of resources and support services.

How can monitoring and evaluation of police stations, Thuthuzela Care Centres and courts be discontinued?

Who will speak for the voiceless?

According to the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development’s website, we currently have 54 Thuthuzela Care Centres in South Africa.

Is this enough?

The Thuthuzela project is led by the NPA and a team from the Departments of Justice, Health, Education, Treasury, Correctional Services, Police, Social Development.

As the IFP, we believe the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities should also be involved.

The Department must ensure that existing Centres provide the best possible care to the vulnerable, but also, work to establish more Centres across South Africa.

The IFP echoes the Committee’s concern over money spent on consultants.

**R19.7 million of the Department’s R209 million Operating Budget was spent on consultants.**

The Commission for Gender Equality plans to spend approximately R5 million on Professional and Consulting Services.

This totals almost R25 million.

How can the Department spend more on consultants, than on the entire Advocacy & Mainstreaming for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities sub-programme, which only has a budget of R17.4 million.

As the IFP, we call on the Minister and on Treasury to prioritise the rights – and needs - of persons with disabilities. The average expenditure over the Medium Term only amounts to 2.9% of Programme 4: Mainstreaming Youth and Persons with Disabilities Rights and Advocacy.

This is not enough.

Further, we must raise the issue of underspending. According to the Department’s 2021/22 Annual Report, the Department underspent the Budget by R31 million.

This is unacceptable, particularly considering that there are women in need across our county. For example, in KZN, more than a year after the devastating floods, there are still women without proper shelter.

As the IFP, we plead with the Department to be good stewards of the resources they are given and provide support – and hope – to South Africa’s Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities.

The IFP supports the Budget.