**Vote 20: Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities**

**Hon. MD Hlengwa, MP**
Hon. Speaker,

Policy development and drafting of legislation mean very little, if there is no real ambition to finalise such statutory measures and above all, if there is no real enforcement of these tools, once adopted.

The Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities proudly stresses in its latest Annual Performance Plan that it has developed three key pieces of legislation. These relate to the *National Council on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide Bill*, the *National Youth Development Agency Amendment Bill*, and the *Promotion of Women’s Rights, Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill*. The Department, however, fails to provide any targets relating to these critical Bills. How is the Committee to monitor any progress or oversight over the finalisation of these Bills?

The Department also fails to recognise the delay in introducing these Bills. The *National Council of Gender Based Violence and Femicide Bill* provides for the establishment of the important multi-sectoral National Council on GBV and Femicide, which essentially provides for strategic leadership in the fight against GBV and Femicide. This critical Bill was only published in October 2021 by the Department, after years of protest and countless promises by the Government that it is serious about eliminating GBV and Femicide. One of the first steps promised by Government was the establishment of this Council - yet years later we still face empty promises.

The IFP strongly endorses the Portfolio Committee’s recommendation that the Department must urgently provide specific targets to the development of this Bill.

The Sanitary Dignity Policy Framework provides vital norms and standards for the provision of sanitary products to vulnerable girls and young women, especially in rural areas. The monitoring of this Framework should be a high priority for the Department. However, once again, we see little enforcement or proper oversight. The IFP agrees with the Portfolio Committee’s observation that there seems to be no uniformity in the rollout of this framework. This is simply unacceptable and should not be tolerated. The sanitary dignity of vulnerable girls and young women cannot be compromised by the failure of Government to ensure effective oversight.

Lastly, the IFP strongly agrees with the Portfolio Committee’s observations on the use of consultants by the Department. It is concerning that R2.3 million is budgeted for the use of consultants to effectively do the work of the Department. One of the main cost drivers under ‘Goods and Services’ is the use of consultants, which is incomprehensible, considering the fiscal constraints experienced by the Department. The IFP strongly agrees with the Portfolio Committee’s recommendation that there must be an effective transfer of skills from these consultants to Department officials, and the IFP will closely monitor compliance with this recommendation. We cannot continue to bear witness to such wastage.

The IFP accepts the Budget Vote.