

Government has made no strides to protect womxn, youth and persons with disabilities

By **Nazley Sharif MP** – DA Shadow Deputy Minister of Woman, Youth and People with Disabilities

Thank you Chairperson,

When looking at the APPs for both the Commission for Gender Equality and the Department of Womxn, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, there is a stark contrast between the two. What is absolutely shocking is that the CGE is able to do 10 times more of the work with half of the budget when compared to the Department.

The lack of accountability to the CGE is unacceptable. The CGE must look at ways to ensure their reports, findings and recommendations are taken seriously. Spending money by doing numerous investigations must yield results, especially as a Chapter 9 institution that has its mandate given directly by the Constitution. The lack of accountability is one of the reasons we keep moving backwards thank to this failing ANC government.

The CGE has released reports around the failure of government departments to implement strategies to fight against the oppression of womxn. The recommendations of reports are collecting dust and being put aside. A simple request for information is even too difficult for the ANC government.

The CGE has to ensure that they use all the budget allocated in reaching targets. The return of R19 million to National Treasury is extremely concerning especially when they argue a lack of an adequate budget is constraining the important work of the CGE.

The Department of Womxn, Youth and Persons with Disabilities has been going through an identity crisis for the last few years since the proclamation by the President in 2019 to merge Womxn, Youth and Persons with Disabilities into one department. We have seen the mandate, the vision and the actual work that needs to get done change year-on-year. The impact of this means that policies and programs of the Department do not get implemented and get pushed to the side because they need to re-evaluate what they are actually doing. We can see a clear example of this with the Emergency Response Action Plan on GBVF that has been reported by the Department as being scrapped, noting they were the worst performing department in reaching their ERAP targets.

The continuous redesign of the Department's organizational structure and the continuous delays in implementation of targets impacts South Africans in the most severe ways. The National Council on GBVF has not been established. Treasury had allocated R15 million for the establishment of the NCGVF over a three-year period with R5 million being paid in each financial year starting in 2020 and yet, in 2022, there is no movement on the NCGVF and this has a massive impact on the implementation of the National Strategic Plan to combat GBVF. With these delays, we are seeing womxn and girls continue to suffer from violence every single day. It is this Department's responsibility to ensure the NSP is implemented, monitored and budgeted for – this is not happening.

When looking at the Department's APP for 2022/23 it is evident that the targets are not SMART, they are not well verified nor well defined and it does not reflect on the mandate of the Department as a regulator and are difficult to monitor and evaluate by the Committee in terms of targets being implemented and oversight is therefore hindered. The Department is not convincing in terms of their capacity to do more and is not fit enough to make changes in the lives of womxn, youth and persons with disabilities.

South Africa deserves better.