

## How responsive is this budget to gender? Reflections on the Budget Speech

Sam Waterhouse

Despite Government's long-standing commitment to addressing gender-inequality, the Budget Speech 2021 was completely silent on the issue of addressing discriminations and inequality of womxn. Overall, the decreases in social spending, will seriously deepen the reliance of our economy on womxn's unpaid labour. And so they worsen inequality, as these additional burdens practically discriminate against girls and womxn across all areas of life.

Mboweni's Budget was also mute on the presidential priority issue to fight the 'scourge' of GBVF. Fair enough – the speech cannot cover everything, but we'd expect that the President's political priority would show up in the talking points identified by the Minister of Finance as worth highlighting to the public.

Since early February, there's been much fanfare over the introduction of the "*private sector-led, multi-sectoral Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) Response Fund aimed at supporting implementation of the National Strategic Plan (NSP), and the wider GBVF response in the country.*"<sup>1</sup> The President's State of the Nation Address last week reported that this fund already has R128 million pledged to it. It's encouraging that the private sector are stepping in, but it's not public money, and so we await information on the 'democratic' mechanisms (if any) through which the public can monitor and make inputs into decisions relating to the Fund.

More importantly, last week, President Ramaphosa committed R12bn of government funds over the next three years to implement the NSP on GBVF. This expression of a financial commitment to address GBVF is unprecedented – so it's cause for optimism. But we can't easily find the detail – that's where the devil is. In a meeting on 15 February, Olive Shisana indicated that much of this would go to 'pillar 5' of the NSP – economic empowerment. This is also great, but it's not enough information to understand how this huge sum will be allocated.

As a national priority, you'd think these developments would merit clear and complete information to the public from our National Treasury.

### *Finding the allocations*

Reading the Budget Review document – doesn't lift much up. Here, we see mention of R5m per year to the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities (DWYPD) for the National Council on GBVF. And that's about it. Next stop is to dredge our way painstakingly through the Estimates of National Expenditure documents. At first glance, there are some new nods towards transformation. We see some small pieces of the R12bn promised, but it's difficult to identify even close to the full amount. We'll keep digging.

What's noticeable is that the direction provided by Treasury to departments to 'tag' expenditure that is linked to the *Framework on Gender-responsive Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring, Evaluation and Auditing*, seems to be starting to show up in the narratives, and even in some of the performance indicators or budget lines, of a few departments. This shows that the Presidency, and Treasury, have taken on board the challenge of CSOs, to provide disaggregated information at all levels of planning and reporting as the critical first step to developing transformative budgets to match South Africa's policy on this.

The Police and Justice departments usually include targets to address GBV and VAC - however for years now, civil society organisations have been calling on them to demonstrate the spending on those priorities in the budgets without success. This year, we see that a couple of other departments have

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.gov.za/speeches/president-cyril-ramaphosa-launches-gbvf-private-sector-response-fund-4-feb-3-feb-2021-0000?gclid=Cj0KCQiAj9iBBhCJARIsAE9qRtBI8EjLuyNPdyM3sBBiSILAyb-MB1MUHDik27kaQ53iRfIOiZ1NFg0aAjKIEALw\\_wcB](https://www.gov.za/speeches/president-cyril-ramaphosa-launches-gbvf-private-sector-response-fund-4-feb-3-feb-2021-0000?gclid=Cj0KCQiAj9iBBhCJARIsAE9qRtBI8EjLuyNPdyM3sBBiSILAyb-MB1MUHDik27kaQ53iRfIOiZ1NFg0aAjKIEALw_wcB)

added the words 'women', 'youth' and/or 'people with disabilities' to their narratives or their selected performance indicators. But, as is the norm they haven't 'tagged' the money in the budget. We still can't see how much of the allocations are targeted at these groups. It's worth highlighting that in the critical area of supporting employment, the Department of Labour tags spending allocated to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities, but is still silent on targets or tagged allocations relating to womxn or youth.

So the DWYPD has its work cut out. The allocations in the DWYPD budget of around R100m to improve gender responsive planning, budgeting and monitoring across government show a positive step to keep working on this. Just over R40m of which is allocated to capacity-building in departments, the rest – just shy of 60m is earmarked for 12 public participation and four community mobilisation events – this seems rather a lot to spend on events – especially with Government's history of public participation as a tick boxing exercise. Let's hope that this department, with its weak track record for implementation can get the job done and do it well.

As always, throughout the documents, we see the lumping of womenyouthpersonswithdisabilities – the lack of specifics regarding the budgets allocated to programmes for each, does not inspire confidence that programmes will be targeted towards addressing the different barriers and exclusions that these groups face. It can result in lack of investment into programmes for one group being hidden by investment into programmes targeting another.

#### *GBV and Access to Justice*

To address access to justice on GBV and violence against children (VAC), amongst the range of other measures identified in the NSP, we must improve police investigations and prosecutions. The cuts in compensation of employees budgets across government are also reflected in the NPA (JCD) and Police budgets and are alarming. These cases need more, skilled, and experienced detectives and prosecutors – the cuts pose a strong risk to any efforts aimed at improve detection and prosecution rates in GBV or VAC cases.

The Police focus on visible policing actions to address GBVF – the potential for visible policing to prevent this violence is very limited. What spending here could achieve, is an improvement on how police respond to incidents and initial reports of GBV and VAC. Given the low rate of reporting, this should increase the number of reported cases in the next few years. But the police insist on their targets to reduce the reporting rate of these crimes over the next few years. The investments in visible policing, but not in quality investigations are concerning.

The Department of Justice committment to establishing three more Thuthuzela centres is great. But, as ever, it's not clear how these will be funded, we'll need to dig further here too. The 99 designated sexual offences courts that are promised would be very expensive if the Blue Print for these courts is to be followed, we will need to monitor closely to see that these are not established only in name, without the investments into experienced prosecutor salaries or infrastructure that are critical to their success.

All in all, the small steps forward in this budget won't be enough - overall womxn will continue to bear the brunt of this budget.

Sam Waterhouse works with, and is influenced by Vivienne Mentor-Lalu and Motlatsi Komote, at the Womxn and Democracy Initiative at the Dullah Omar Institute, UWC.

The Dullah Omar Institute receives funding from the European Union (amongst others), however the views and opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect the views of our Donors.