



South Africa's Women's Day - 9 August 2021

9 August is a National Women's Day in South Africa which leads to commemoration of the Women's Month. The day is dedicated to honor the #1956 Women for partaking in a peaceful protest organized by the brave legendary women: Lilian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Rahima Moosa, and Sophia Williams. The protest denounced the extension of the pass laws to women in South Africa. The pass laws subjected black people entering the white suburbs to torture, cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment. The protest brought together over 20 000 women from diverse races that marched at the Union Buildings in Pretoria.

This Women's Month provides the opportunity to reflect on women's achievements, their struggles, and the important role they play in the society.

South Africa is also paying a special tribute to 150 years of Charlotte Maxeke for her heroic roles as the first Black Woman Human Rights Defender (WHRDs) in South Africa. She fought the injustice of apartheid characterized by discrimination, inequality, and violence. Her legacy laid a good foundation for women's rights to assembly, association, expression, as safeguarded in the Constitution. These rights are entrenched in international and regional human rights treatise promoting women's rights binding South Africa. Since 2019, the government has made great strides in adopting several National Action Plans. These include, NAP Women Peace and Security, NAP on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and NSP on Gender Based Violence – Femicide, which is a comprehensive framework supporting South Africa achieve ``a violent free society protecting women and girls.

Just recently, Human Rights Institute of South Africa (HURISA) and Inequality Movement (IM) jointly documented the deep-seated challenges facing women impedes their full enjoyment of guaranteed rights. In 27 years of consolidated democracy and 25 years of constitutional dispensation, women and girls continue to live in environment below the minimum standards required for their safety, peace and security. Gender based violence is confirmed secondary pandemic in the country

- About 10 000 sexual offence cases, including rape, The SAPS fourth quarter crime statistics 2020/2021 reported
- Every 3 hours a woman is murdered in South Africa and 2 695 women were murdered between 2019-2020 reported by the World Health
- The LGBTIQ+ community fears that KwaZulu-Natal is becoming a hotspot for hate crime following the brutal death of Anele Bhengu (21) in June. These include Sphamandla Khoza, Nonhlahla Hunene, Lindokuhle Mapu and Khulekani Gomazi who were all murdered in KZN this year
- 56% of positive COVID-19 cases are women according to Gauteng Department of Health's Mpilo database (dated 6 March - 27 November 2020) published on 1 December 2020.
- 53.5% female headed household are in rural areas according to the CGE 2020 Report. This means women continue to bear major responsibilities for unpaid household and care work, and so the time and labor burdens associated with lack of infrastructure fall heavily on them.
- Lack of accessible service delivery sites in rural areas and the cost of transportation to obtain documentation and apply for social grant remain a huge challenge. This includes the under-staffing and insufficient community facilities often located too far from communities. This is evident by the long queues at service points, backlog of clients and a slow grant disbursement process.
- The latest version of Traditional Courts Bill encroaches upon access to justice rights of women living in rural areas by denying them the option to choose besides the traditional courts adjudication with.
- Communication infrastructure and internet access can be delayed by the *gender stereotypical comment you received by women community activists from the community complaints that wives can't use smartphones or use a community network because WhatsApp is not good, they will cheat on them, and their families will be destroyed what did you do about it?* According APCNew page 06 August 2020

Recommendations to the government and institutions responsible for enforcing women and girls' rights:

- Accelerate efforts from policy to practical implementation of NSP on Gender Based Violence & Femicide. Including fast tracking the signing off the three GBV legislation for comprehensive implementation in communities to eliminate violent scourge directed at women and girls
- Adopt legislation protecting women living in rural areas enjoy their fundamental rights to access justice, health, information, internet. These should be aligned with international and regional human rights instruments ratified by South Africa
- Protect women and girls to live in safe and violent free environments regardless of their background, status, orientation, ensuring all vulnerable groups including LGBTIQ, migrants and not subjected to xenophobia and hate crimes.
- Implement all national action plans to address Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance launched in 2019 for transformation.
- Develop a law for protection of CSOs and community-based activists functioning as women human rights defenders to perform their roles without prejudice, stereotypes, and fear of reprisal, in the country especially in rural areas.

In conclusion, as we commemorate National Women's Month, we encourage women to emulate the spirit of the 1956 legends Lilian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Rahima Moosa, Sophia Williams and Charlotte Maxeke for setting a good foundation for protection of women and respecting their voices.

HURISA is launching the CSO CEDAW Shadow Report on 19 August 2021. Save the date for this launch which will be conducted virtually.

For More Information, contact us;

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