

Ending GBVF requires a whole government approach

by **Alexandra Abrahams MP** - DA Member of the Portfolio Committee on Social Development

South Africa's economy was already embattled before the pandemic and now with further downgrades deeper into Junk, thousands more will tip into extreme poverty this year. The economic reconstruction and recovery plan has taken another devastating blow.

In this plan, President Cyril Ramaphosa outlined mostly infrastructural measures and made, in my opinion, relatively small mention on the focus to end gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) fuelled by gender inequality, economic disparities between men and women and gender-non conforming persons.

What is scary, is that it, may now be just a footnote since there will be even less money for schools, clinics, social services and GBVF.

Abuse is not a Social Development only problem. It is not a Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities only problem. It is a systemic and societal problem. If government truly acknowledges GBVF as the second pandemic.

If it truly wants to strives to end the abuse of women and children, the 365-day campaign must be a whole of government approach. Every portfolio must work together.

The Economic Clusters must address financial independence and equal pay for women. Economic justice for women is fixing the fact that for every rand a man earns, a woman makes 69 cents in median hourly wages.

We need the Transport portfolio to support the young woman who started a female only taxi service in Khayelitsha because women were being raped and harassed in taxis. I would like to know from Minister Mbalula of the supposed R1.3 billion in relief to the taxi industry, how many of those owners and drivers are women?

Social housing for women exiting VEP shelters after 6 months. In many cases women and children a forced back to their abusers because they have nowhere else to go.

We need the Peace and Security Cluster to protect us and root out corruption in SAPS. We need a criminal justice system that will restore confidence not one that let communities down time after time like in the case of Lauren Braiden from Bonteheuwel.

Lauren a 31-year old mother who was brutally murdered while waiting for a lift after completing night shift last Friday morning.

Lauren's two toddlers, are forever robbed of their mother. Two more children who join the 12.7 million receiving a SASSA Child Support Grant because Lauren's income is no more.

I learnt at the bail hearing yesterday, the accused, known to the community, in and out of prison and Lauren is not the first women he is allegedly accused of murdering. Repeat offenders, repeat murderers cannot become the norm in our society!

I want to highlight the importance of building and strengthening the family unit, which is the most basic unit of society. A stable family unit equals a stable society. A thriving family unit equals a thriving South Africa.

We achieve this not only through DSD and NGOs running family strengthening programmes. But once again with the whole of government and society approach - with the help of educators in schools, employee support in the workplace and nurses and doctors in clinics to name a few.

We achieve this by employing the 9000+ unemployed and qualified social workers in **ALL** government portfolios as per the 2018 Cabinet resolution which DSD indicated is **not** taking place.

Lastly, the top 5 of the 17 Global Sustainable Development Goals are: No poverty; zero hunger; good health and well-being; quality education; and gender equality. If the world can understand that we need to prioritize people first, society first, then surely South Africa can as well.