

We are sick of meaningless debates and empty promises

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Note to Editors: *The following speech was delivered in Parliament today during the debate on 16 Days of Activism of no violence against women and children.*

We live in a country where success is limited and difficult to come by. We live in a country where being harassed, sexually assaulted, raped or beaten is unlimited and easy to come by.

Let me make this clear, womxn are not asking for any favours and claiming our space to be here is non-negotiable.

I must admit, it's rather laughable that this government adopted the theme for this year's 16 Days of Activism as "moving from awareness to accountability". Like LOL *crying face emoji* what does this even mean though? Who in this government will come here today and take accountability for their failures? Please balance me real quick, what accountability are you talking about? If you are going to run with this theme, you must submit yourself to being held accountable here today without sounding defensive and pathetic. If you are going to sign off on this theme, you must be able to come here and admit your failures before we can take you seriously.

The kid gloves are off and they will remain off, the fight against gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) is stagnant. It took months of nagging, putting pressure and providing recommendations by the DA and civil organizations to establish the National Council on GBVF. It took protest action and petitions to get the legislation moving and finally we saw the Bill being gazetted. However, here we are, this bill is a good step, I will not deny you of one tiny little praise. Naturally, however, it was only a matter of time when balls will drop, public participation and getting buy-in from society was inadequate, it was rushed and it was selective. If you are going to do something, just do it properly.

We live in a country where our lives are taken lightly. If government cared about the lives of womxn and the LGBTQIA+ community, we will be able to see progress. The system perpetuated by this government is innately violent and it restricts progress and limits freedoms.

It's all good and well to have ideas in theory and to have a plan but if this is not implemented and actioned with precision, political will, efficient teams and strong leadership, it means NOTHING. Your theories, your plans, your repetitive speeches, mean nothing! And, for this, you must take accountability.

Stop with your rhetoric, no one believes you anymore. Stop playing Xs and Os with our money and emotions and start spending the budget on things that matter. Stop being annoying with your lies and attempts to make it sound like you're getting a grip around GBVF when it is womxn and the violence they face that have YOU gripped around the neck.

We must remove the red tape in government that holds our country hostage. Why must it be so difficult to get an efficient public service? When victims and survivors seek help from our public service, they must be able to get it without having to beg. Building trust within government institutions like SAPS and within the justice system must happen.

Building trust obviously doesn't happen in a day, it takes hard work and determination to accomplish. There must be more training for GBVF frontline workers, this training must be in-depth, it must happen continuously, it must challenge social norms and it must be uncomfortable.

There has to be processes in place that deal with incompetency and failure. This is not about taking one failed cadre and moving them elsewhere, this is about firing those who don't perform and hiring those who want to do the work.

Another suggestion I will give this government for free, is to priorities processes that monitor and evaluate all government work without fear or favour. How on earth, Minister Mashabane, do you measure yourself and your success rate when your targets are focused around report writing and attending meetings? I mean, you don't even attend our committee meetings, let's start there. It is only through monitoring and evaluation that you are able to see what works, change what doesn't and find new ways to deal with old problems. This is not rocket science Minister!

Next, budgets must be spent on things that matter and things that will have an impact. Minister Mashabane, you cannot be spending most of your budgets paying high salaries for officials that take a year to develop a framework, this is bad. But, using that budget for programmes that assist womxn, with legal assistance when they need help against their abusive husbands, for example, is good. Again, *vang* tips!

Honestly, you can have all the themes you want, you can have all the debates you want, it doesn't change the fact that we live in a country where I might leave Parliament right now, after this debate and I might be harassed, raped, assaulted or murdered.

This is the country we live in!