

We must empower rural women

Madame Speaker,

Last week's ruling by the Supreme Court of Appeal against the Ingonyama Trust and its Board, although significant is but one lone victory for rural women against a plethora of injustices. There is no certainty that the IT has been keeping proper records to refund all the residential leases that were paid as per the courts ruling.

Thoko Didiza in her capacity as Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development was found to have failed to respect, protect, promote and fulfil the existing property rights and security of tenure of trust- held land as required by the Constitution. This makes her complicit, together with the Ingonyama Trust and Board, in withholding the socio-economic rights and empowerment of rural women living on the trust land.

Nombonisa Gasa, an independent researcher and analyst in gender politics and cultures, writes of one unconstitutional injustice; the oft ignored practice of ukuthwala, where girls as young as 13 are abducted and forced into marriage, usually with much older men, which she says is still rife in certain areas of our country. When they object to sex and other wifely duties they are sometimes beaten and raped into submission.

The perceived shame prevents parents from initiating efforts to have the girl returned and the lobola that is subsequently paid can be a lifeline to deeply impoverished families making them accept the inhumane and totally illegal transaction.

These poor girls are destined to a life of no further education and hardly any means of sustainable livelihoods.

For example, it has recently been reported by News24 that the South African Human Rights Commission is holding an enquiry into childhood malnutrition in the Eastern Cape after submissions stated that climate change, poverty and the Covid 19 pandemic were some of the leading factors for childhood starvation in that Province.

Siyi Democratic Alliance sinendlela elula yokuphuhlisa ooMama sigwebe nendlala.

We believe we need to go back to the basics where every home had a food garden for subsistence purposes whether in the townships or in the rural areas. Both my grandmothers, one in a Pretoria township and the other in rural Eastern Cape boasted a family garden which also had fruit trees and vegetables as did every other home. Over and above this each rural homestead had two to four hectares of land for maize and other tradeable foodstuffs. Under the present government middle-class people are allowed to build homes on these fields, avoiding paying much needed rates on municipal land and depleting arable agricultural land.

The Democratic Alliance has supplied vegetable seedlings to women in Ward 24 in Mdantsane as a pilot project which will be rolled out to other wards in the future. Noluthando Joel does not have much land for a garden on her plot, but this did not deter her from accepting the seedlings and planting them in old tyres and wooden boxes. The women have also expressed a desire to be supplied with day old broiler and layer chickens to provide much needed protein for their families.

Urhulumente okhoyo makaqhube norhwaphilizo lwemali yenkonzo ebekufanele iye ebantwini. Thina siyi Democratic Alliance siphindela kundalashé, sigwebá indlala ephethe abantu baseMzantsi Afrika.

ENKOSI