THE SOUTH AFRICAN YOUTH GENDER ACTION PLAN

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PREAMBLE

We, the youth of South Africa, guided by the principles of the South African Constitution and the Sustainable Development Goals, are driven by the need for a South Africa that is safe and inclusive for all its citizens, especially women, girls, youth, and all marginalised genders.[1] This is rooted in our visions, hopes, and aspirations for a gender-inclusive and equitable future. We highlight the role that youth play in leading and catalysing transformation and call on all other relevant stakeholders to join us in the dismantling of a heteronormative, patriarchal, racist, and misogynistic society that excludes women and members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual (LGBTQIA+) community.

In recognition of the gender policies created, we acknowledge the efforts of the South African government in the strides it has taken towards creating a gender-inclusive society. However, we demand an increase in these strides, supported by all stakeholders and led by those that are most affected, such as women, youth, and marginalised genders. Furthermore, we urge for the sustainable, affordable, and widely-accessible implementation of these policies, and call for the involvement of all marginalised genders in decision-making, research, and advocacy efforts.

Young people from all over South Africa, representing various organisations, schools, university groups and communities, have developed this South African Youth Gender Action Plan (SA YGAP). Our goal is that the SA YGAP will serve as a living, gender-comprehensive framework to inspire youth-led action and further serve as a guide for youth, decision-makers, civil society organisations, academia, and the private sector to help reshape our country into a gender-inclusive society.

This SA YGAP incorporates existing national, local, and global policies, and details the actions that need to be undertaken to realise this vision. Having scrutinised numerous policy documents and international frameworks, such as the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide, the National Gender Policy Framework, and the Beijing Declaration on and Platform for Action, we identified gaps that highlight the need to include youth-led, intersectional voices. Furthermore, we felt the need to create a singular gender document that incorporates the extensive policy frameworks that exist both nationally and globally.

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[1] Sections 9 (Equality), 10 (Human Dignity), 12 (Freedom and Security of Persons), 22 (Freedom of trade, occupation and profession), 28(d) (To be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse, and degradation),

DEFINITIONS

AFAB: Assigned Female at Birth.

AMAB: Assigned Male at Birth.

Catcalling: The act of making unwanted, often sexually suggestive, comments, whistles, or gestures toward someone in a public space, usually a stranger, with the intent to objectify or harass them.

Criminal Law: South African criminal law is the body of national law relating to crime in South Africa. A crime is behaviour that common or statute law prohibits and is subject to punishment by the state, which the offender cannot avoid once he has been convicted.

De-gendering: The process of removing or reducing the influence of gender distinctions in various contexts, such as language, products, or societal norms. It aims to promote inclusivity and challenge traditional gender norms and stereotypes.

Department of Social Development (DSD): The DSD aims to support the poor, vulnerable, and excluded within South African society to improve their well-being and standard of living. The DSD works in collaboration with all those who are committed to creating a caring society.

Digital divide: Refers to the gap between demographics and regions that have access to modern information and communications technology and those that don't. It encompasses the technical and financial ability to utilise available technology, along with access (or lack of access) to the internet. The digital divide creates division and inequality around access to information and resources.

Domestic Violence (DV): The pattern of abusive behaviour in a domestic setting, typically involving violence or coercion, exerted by one family or household member against another. It can occur between spouses, partners, parents, children, or other family members.

Domestic Violence Amendment Act 14 of 2021 (DVAA): The DVAA aims to address the practical challenges and gaps that victims have experienced, and were not addressed in the Domestic Violence Act of 1998. The DVAA aims to ensure that the law is more accessible, protects victims and guarantees them the services they need.

Education: Refers to the process or act of imparting or acquiring general knowledge, developing the ability to reason, critically think or impart intellectual judgement. The process of giving or receiving systematic instructions especially at a primary, secondary and tertiary institution of learning.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV): Any form of violence that occurs primarily because of a person's gender. It includes physical, sexual, psychological, or economic harm inflicted on individuals based on their gender identity or expression.

Gender equality: The belief that all individuals, regardless of their sex or gender identity, should have the freedom to develop their abilities and make choices without being limited by stereotypes, rigid gender roles, or discrimination.

Gender equity: The process of ensuring fairness for women, men, boys, and girls by addressing cumulative economic, social, and political disadvantages that prevent them from operating on an equal level.

Gender expression: How an individual outwardly expresses their sense of being masculine, feminine, both, or neither through clothing, mannerisms, and behaviours. Gender expression is separate from sexual orientation.

Gender identity: A person's internal sense of being male, female, a blend of both, or neither. It may or may not align with the sex assigned at birth.

Gender norms: Unspoken social rules that dictate acceptable behaviours and attributes for males and females in a particular culture or social group. These norms are learned/enforced and reinforced from childhood through various means like observation, instruction, media, and religion.

Gender roles: Social structures, relations, and processes that define and differentiate males and females in significant ways, often leading to the justification of gender-based inequalities. Different tasks, roles, and social positions are assigned to men and women in each society.

Harassment: The Code of Good Practice on the Prevention and Elimination of Harassment defines harassment as any unwarranted conduct that impairs a worker's dignity or creates a hostile or intimidating working environment.

Heteronormativity: The societal belief that heterosexuality is the default or "normal" sexual orientation, and that relationships and behaviours should conform to traditional binary gender roles (i.e., men and women being attracted to each other).

Inclusivity: The practice of creating environments, policies, and systems that are welcoming and accommodating to all individuals, regardless of their background, identity, or abilities. It seeks to embrace diversity and promote equal opportunities for everyone.

Intersex: Refers to individuals born with variations in their sex characteristics that do not fit typical binary notions of male or female. These variations may be chromosomal, hormonal, or anatomical and are distinct from a person's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Intimate Partner Violence: A specific form of domestic violence that occurs between current or former romantic partners. It encompasses physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, as well as controlling and manipulative behaviours.

Just Transition: The concept of transitioning from fossil fuel-based industries and practices to sustainable and renewable alternatives while ensuring the rights and livelihoods of affected workers and communities are protected and improved.

Marginalised People: Refers to women, children, youth, persons with disabilities, and members of the LGTBQIA+ community.

Menstruation: The monthly biological process in people with female reproductive systems, where the lining of the uterus is shed through the vagina. It is a natural part of the menstrual cycle and is often associated with the ability to conceive and bear children.

Multiform: refers to a school uniform that is gender neutral.

Non-binary: An umbrella term for gender identities that do not exclusively align with the categories of "man" or "woman." Non-binary individuals may identify as both genders, neither gender, a combination of genders, or a gender that is entirely different.

Obstetric Violence: refers to violence against women during pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum. Obstetric violence occurs both in public and private medical practice.

Patriarchy: A social system in which men hold primary power and dominance, both socially and politically, and women are often subordinated. It perpetuates traditional gender roles, reinforcing male authority and control over societal structures.

PCOS: Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome is a medical condition in which fluid filled sacs (cysts) form on the ovaries due to abnormal amounts of the androgens hormone.

Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act, 2013: The Act describes the minimum standards regarding the accessing, collecting, receiving, recoding, organising, retrieving, making use of or disseminating of any personal information that belongs to another person.

Queer: An umbrella term used to describe diverse sexual orientations and gender identities that do not conform to heterosexual and cisgender norms. It is often used by individuals to identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Sexual harassment: Sexual harassment is any unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature, such as comments, advances, or requests for sexual favours, which create a hostile or uncomfortable environment for the recipient. It can occur in various settings, including workplaces, educational institutions, and public spaces.

Sexual orientation: A lasting pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction to adult men, women, or both sexes. It is distinct from gender identity or how a person chooses to present their gender through appearance and actions.

Unisex: Refers to things, spaces, or clothing that are not specifically designed for or targeted at any particular gender.

THE SA YGAP EXPLAINED

This document is divided into seven pillars, each of which is integral to the development of the country and tackled through a gender lens, to serve as a guidance to ensure an equitable, gender-inclusive South Africa. We recognise there is no one-size fits all approach to the implementation of these recommendations and thus invite stakeholders to use this guide to inform and support decision-making and implementation on matters related to gender. Our recommendations are guided by the vision of what a reshaped, youth-led and gender-inclusive present and future will be, along with the clear actions required to ensure that vision becomes a reality.

The seven pillars in this guide are as follows:

1. Gender, Education and Capacity Building

2. Gender and Health

3. Gender, Safety, and Security

4. Gender-Based Violence

5. Gender, Identity, and Sexuality

6. Gender and the Public/Private Sector
7. Gender and Sustainable Transformation

PILLAR 1: GENDER, EDUCATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING

In 2023, the South African education system remains a heteronormative space that enforces patriarchal and misogynistic norms for a large portion of its child population.[2] Understanding and providing quality education is predicated on students being able to participate in education safely, confidently, and without fear, and teachers being able to teach free of menace and harassment. In acknowledgement of and guided by the 2016 protests of students from Pretoria Girls High School[3] who fought against their school's racist and patriarchal policy, we see a need to change school policies and incorporate a gender-inclusive and sensitive approach to learning and teaching that is free of all forms of discrimination. We recognise the role that special schools play in providing educational services to people with disabilities and we remain adamant in re-structuring the South African educational space for children of all classes, race, genders, and sexualities. We note the need for inclusive education with specific emphasis on sexual and reproductive hygiene for all sexualities and emphasise the importance that awareness programmes play in sexual and reproductive education within communities. Thus, we call for the following:

Gender & School Policies

Many South African school policies continue to propagate a gender divide between "girls" and "boys". This heteronormative gender divide means that school-going children have different lived experiences which play out in the education system, both within the school classroom and later in higher education institutions. Addressing this divide by removing the historical binary lines can allow for equal access to education that does not predispose young people into societal boxes and stereotypes. Thus, we draw attention to the importance of all stakeholders and their role in creating an inclusive education system, and insist upon consistent open dialogues amongst educators, parents, school governing bodies, and learners on the following:

- Gender inclusivity in school policies with an emphasis on terminology that includes gender non-conforming language;
- The adoption of a gender-neutral uniform (multiform) school policy that respects identity and religious and traditional attire; and
- Eradicating school policies that govern elements of identity that have no impact on educational outcome and instead reinforce racism, colonialism and sexism, including hairstyles, uniform, and jewellery.

Further, the Western Cape Education Department has made extensive strides in this area through the creation of a first-of-its-kind, progressive and inclusive provincial Gender Policy Draft in 2020.[4] We see

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[2] Francis, D. et al., "A Five Country Study of Gender and Sexuality Diversity and Schooling in Southern Africa," *Africa Education Review* 16, no. 1 (May 17, 2018): 19–39, https://doi.org/10.1080/18146627.2017.1359637.

[3] Ngoepe, K. (2016). "Black Girls in Tears at Pretoria School Hair Protest," *News24*, August 29, 2016, https://www.news24.com/News24/black-girls-in-tears-at-pretoria-school-hair-protest-20160829.

[4] Western Cape Education Department (2020). "Western Cape Education Department's Gender Policy", https://wcedonline.westerncape.gov.za/labour/about/gender_policy.pdf.

the need for the adoption of the Western Cape provincial draft bill as a national policy to be implemented by all educational departments across the country.

Capacity Building

We are inspired by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) comprehensive guidelines for sex and gender equality training in schools, which can be used to align global shifts for a more gender-inclusive and equitable society.[5] To initiate structural societal change towards achieving gender equality, awareness, and knowledge of gender inequality is extremely vital. This is done through capacity building, which we envision through the following action points:

- Call for the standardisation and implementation of a training programme on gender inclusivity (trauma-informed practices, conflict resolution skills, and cultural and diversity awareness) for student-teachers and educators in foundational, secondary, and post-secondary educational institutions;
- Call for the implementation of comprehensive menstrual health education, starting in the upper-primary Life Orientation curriculum through to grade 9, in collaboration with government and civil society organisations, with emphasis on including the boy-child, and all marginalised genders in the process;
- Call for the restructuring of the high school Life Orientation curriculum to include lessons of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) in discussions on STI/STDs;
- Promote equitable and inclusive gender representation during school outreach assemblies and career guidance activities;
- Emphasise the need for better accessibility at a grassroots level to mentorships, scholarships, or grants for young girls to encourage their upliftment and financial independence;
- Demand for an increase in affordable, accessible, and quality educational institutions for individuals who are living with disabilities and are from underprivileged communities; and
- Demand for more comprehensive and realistic educational programmes to be rolled out by the national government in schools addressing pregnancies and the biological impact on the body.

PILLAR 2: GENDER AND HEALTH

The current South African healthcare system predominately caters to cisgender, heterosexual males due to the systematic effects of patriarchy and misogyny. As a result, the health issues and concerns of women and marginalised genders is oftentimes overlooked, under-developed, and lacks research. Furthermore, noting with deep concern the socio-economic conditions that contribute to the inability of women, youth, children, and marginalised genders to access quality healthcare. We recognise the dedicated efforts and research of civil society organisations and academia in closing the socio-economic divide. However, we

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[5] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) et al. (2018). *International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education: An Evidence-Informed Approach* (UNESCO, 2018), https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000260770.

are deeply concerned with the deep-rooted disparities that disproportionately hinder healthcare access across South Africa.

Keeping in mind the invaluable contribution of indigenous and traditional knowledge in healthcare, we emphasise the need for a comprehensive approach to address these challenges collaboratively and holistically, working towards dismantling barriers, eradicating inequalities, and fostering an inclusive and informed environment for all. This can be achieved through the following:

Access to Quality Healthcare

We demand for an increase in investment towards the creation and collection of data and research on gender and health in efforts to address the racist, patriarchal, sexist, and other socio-economic disparities in the healthcare system. Further involving marginalised genders in the design and implementations of healthcare programmes developed through the support of the collected data and research.

Additionally, we urge for the upscaling of gender-sensitive and youth-friendly healthcare services that will provide a range of quality resources and equipment in remote areas. These services should be sustainable, affordable, and widely accessible.

Sexual & Reproductive Healthcare

Noting with dissatisfaction the lack of quality sexual and reproductive healthcare for women, youth and children. Calls upon the national government to increase the number and quality of state-funded programmes around sexual and reproductive health to be rolled out at a district level. These sexual and reproductive health programmes need to encompass the following:

- Public information and education on women's health issues, including conditions and diseases, especially for young women and children, to improve the diagnosis of disorders such as polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), fibroids, and endometriosis;
- Public awareness of healthcare services for reproductive choices, including the availability, cost and effects of the Plan B (morning-after) pill, abortions, female condoms, contraceptives, and STD tests and treatments in public clinics;
- De-stigmatisation training for healthcare providers; and
- The improvement and sufficient provision of women's reproductive healthcare facilities in correctional facilities.

Menstrual Healthcare

There is a pressing need for concerted action on the persistent and concerning stigma surrounding menstrual health education, and the lack of accessible and sustainable sanitary products for individuals who menstruate. We acknowledge the positive impact of initiatives like sanitary product donations in educational institutions, striving to enhance menstrual hygiene accessibility. These actions, however, need to be multiplied to cater to the larger population of South Africa who do not have access to sanitary menstrual products. In South Africa, gender inequality, discriminatory social norms, cultural taboos, and

lack of basic services like toilets and sanitary products can all cause menstrual health and hygiene needs to go unmet; approximately seven million menstruators do not have access to sanitary products and are forced to miss school or work.[6] It is important that the needs of all menstruators in South Africa are met and accommodated in schools and workplaces. We therefore insist on:

- Provision of free menstrual products in public spaces, schools, and community centres;
- Improvement of existing tertiary educational subsidy allocations to include a monthly allowance for the purchase of menstrual products; and
- Greater accommodation in the workplace around menstruators during their menstrual cycle, including but not limited to paid-time off and work-from-home options.

Maternity Healthcare

Taking into consideration the need for the improvement of public access to quality pre- and post-natal care, we emphasise the role that public-private partnerships have to play in bridging this gap. Further highlighting the importance of providing education to partners of pregnant people on how to best provide support before, during and after childbirth. Thus, calls upon the Department of Health to improve access to and awareness of pre- and postnatal care at a local, provincial and national level, with focus on:

- Improving pre- and postnatal care in rural communities;
- Basic prenatal medications and health-care services;
- Educating pregnant people and their partners on nutritional diets for pregnant people and the child;
- De-stigmatisation and the de-sexualisation of breastfeeding;
- Creating better resources and accessibility to tools that aid mothers facing postpartum depression and prioritising the education of fathers/partners on how to support their partners who suffer from postpartum depression;
- Creating better resources and accessibility to tools to aid partners in providing pre- and postnatal support;
- Eliminate the passive discrimination of pregnant women in the workplace by:
    o Improving education and awareness of postpartum changes in the mother/parent;
    o Accommodating mothers' needs to express breast milk; and
    o Acknowledging the role of fathers/parent post-pregnancy, thus calling for the extension of paid paternal leave to one month.

Further call for the improved collaboration between the Department of Social Services and civil society organisations to implement a sustainable, affordable and widely-accessible programme that provides child care essentials for parents who require support.

Deeply disturbed by the lack of knowledge and information on obstetric violence in the country. We demand for the Department of Health to hold its healthcare professionals accountable for acts of obstetric

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[6] Reilly, G (2023). "South Africa Period Poverty: 'I Don't Want Anyone Else to Use Rags for Sanitary Pads,'" *BBC News*, May 28, 2023, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-65624739.

violence. Furthermore, we implore the Department of Justice and Correctional Service and the Department of Police to enforce stronger implementation of policies against this form of structural violence.[7] In addition to obstetric violence being recognised as a form of gender-based violence (GBV), we further call for the recognition of obstetric violence as a form of homicide in South African criminal law.[8]

Mental Healthcare

Building on the National Mental Health Framework[9] and the National Strategic Plan for Non-Communicable Diseases[10], we call on the Department of Health, the Department of Women, Youth and People with Disabilities (DWYPD), and mental health practitioners to collaborate in creating accessible educational resources that address the intersectional nature of gender, sexual identity and mental health. Recognising the role this can play in increasing representation and visibility of vulnerable individuals across gender, racial, language and socio-economic divides, we thus urge for:

- Better accessibility to mental health services in post-secondary educational institutions acknowledging the increase of mental health issues amongst youth in these spaces;
- Mainstreaming of mental healthcare in all public health policies; and
- Upskilling of teachers, social workers, and healthcare practitioners to enable them to better understand and assist those struggling with mental health issues, especially youth, children, and marginalised genders.

Gender & Disability

Women living with physical disabilities often suffer the double discrimination of both their gender and disability. In addition, society's inability to transform and accommodate people with impairments can contribute to continuous risk of discrimination. Therefore, we demand that government provide affordable and accessible solutions that address the disparity between gender and disability and caters to individuals with disabilities, specifically those of marginalised genders.

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[7] Ledwaba, K (2022). "Obstetric Violence Is a Growing Concern as Pregnant Women Continue to Suffer," *City Press*, May 24, 2022, https://www.news24.com/citypress/news/obstetric-violence-is-a-growing-concern-as-pregnant-women-continue-to-suffer-20220524.

[8] Swemmer, S (2023). "Obstetric Violence: The Case of Rahima Moosa Hospital," Daily Maverick, March 23, 2023, https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2023-03-23-obstetric-violence-the-case-of-rahima-moosa-hospital/.

[9] National Department of Health (2023). "National Mental Health Policy Framework and Strategic Plan 2023 – 2030 ", https://www.spotlightnsp.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/NMHP-FINAL-APPROVED-ON-30.04.2023.pdf.

[10] National Department of Health (2022), "National Strategic Plan for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases 2020-2025," https://bhekisisa.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/NCDs-NSP-SA-2022-2027-1.pdf.

PILLAR 3: GENDER, SAFETY AND SECURITY

In recognition of the vital connection between gender equality, sustainable peace, and enhanced security, we highlight the importance of protection and security for marginalised genders both physically and digitally. Guided by the National Strategic Plan on Women, Peace, and Security, we further emphasise the need for youth and marginalised genders to be at the forefront of the construction of a safer digital and physical landscape.[11]

Fuelled by the imperatives of social justice, we reiterate the critical need to dismantle systemic gender-based discrimination, violence, and exclusion, while fostering an environment where all individuals can equally contribute to and benefit from the nation's prosperity and security. By aligning with the Beijing Declaration[12] and the Convention of the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)[13], and drawing from the rich diversity of voices and experiences of youth and marginalised genders, we are committed to creating a more peaceful and secure South Africa, where the potential of every individual is realised and the bonds of unity are fortified.

Cyber Safety

Acknowledging section 10 of the South African Constitution, we are deeply concerned by the lack of legislation that protects victims of deepfake and malicious artificially created content.[14] Further considering the influence social media has in distributing such harmful content that can negatively impact marginalised genders. We thus call for the inclusion of regulation on the creation and publication of malicious deepfake and artificially created content in the POPI[15] and the Cybercrimes Act.[16] Furthermore, we call for the expansion of education and awareness campaigns on cyber safety to include the dangers of generative content and sharing biometric data.

Protection, Safety, and Security for Women, Youth, Children, & the LGBTQIA+ Community

Guided by the vision for a South African society where all women, youth, children, and members of the LGBTQIA+ community are safe and free from social persecution, we call upon the collaboration between

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[11] National Department of International Relations and Co-operations and National Department of Military Veterans (2020), "South African National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security 2020-2025,"
https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/202103/south-african-national-action-plan-women-peace-and-security.pdf.
[12] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (1995), "Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action," September 1995, https://archive.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/u1281/bdpfa_e.pdf.
[13] United Nations General Assembly (1996). "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)," December 18, 1979, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/cedaw.pdf.
[14] Parliament of the Republic of South Africa (1996). "'Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996', Substituted by S. 1 (1) of the Citation of Constitutional Laws, 2005 (Act No. 5 of 2005),"
https://www.justice.gov.za/legislation/constitution/saconstitution-web-eng.pdf.
[15] Parliament of the Republic of South Africa (2013). "Protection of Personal Information Act No.4 of 2013," Pub. L. No. 37067, https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/3706726-11act4of2013protectionofpersonalinforcorrect.pdf.
[16] Parliament of the Republic of South Africa (2021). "Cybercrimes Act No. 19 of 2020," Pub. L. No. 44651,"
https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/202106/44651gon324.pdf.

relevant government departments and civil society to ensure this vision becomes a lived experience, through the following:

- Stronger implementation of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 32 of 2007[17] and making the sexual offender's registry public to civil society;
- The creation of a public registry for all domestic violence perpetrators;
- A re-evaluation of the foster-care system, by reviewing:
    - Resource allocation (adequate funding and support to be given to social workers);
    - Proper screening of foster parents;
    - Consistent monitoring of the quality of care of children in the foster-care system; and
- Increased participation of the community in neighbourhood watches to assist security forces in the provision of safety and protection.

PILLAR 4: GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)

The South African Constitution states that no one may be unfairly discriminated against directly or indirectly on any grounds including but not limited to race, gender, sex, or sexual orientation. However, as noted in the background of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP on GBV), a large number of individuals are still subject to discrimination when reporting GBV cases, thus stressing Section 9(3)[18], Section 10, and the NSP on GBVF.[19]

Appalled by the language used in conversations on GBV that minimise the severity of the issue, we stress how this language propagates the amount of harassment faced by women and young girls. We thus reaffirm the need for dialogue around GBV, prioritising the implementation of the NSP on GBVF at a local level. Moreover, there is a social stigma attached to women who are victims of GBVF and a normalisation of domestic abuse and intimate partner violence, which must be destigmatised.

Police & Security Services

Aware of the important role that police and security services play in ensuring the safety of all South Africans is maintained, we highlight the deeply disturbing high rates of GBVF in the country. Furthermore, the current South African police service's (SAPS), is a hostile and unsafe space that lacks the skills to address cases on GBVF in an unbiased manner. The reporting process is an integral part of

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[17] Parliament of the Republic of South Africa (2007). "The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act, No. 32, 2007," Pub. L. No. 305999 (2007), https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/a32-070.pdf.
[18] Section 9 (3) of the South African Constitution states the following: "The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth." Section 10 of the South African Constitution states the following: "Everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected."
[19] The Interim Steering Committee on GBVF (2022). "National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide, https://www.justice.gov.za/vg/gbv/nsp-gbvf-final-doc-04-05.pdf.

the justice process and thus a more sustainable, affordable and widely-accessible system is needed. We thus demand the following:

- State-owned cybersecurity units to optimally utilise navigation systems in tracking the most efficient route to GBV victim's residence;
- The re-evaluation of the Integrated Case Docket Management System (ICDMS), also known as eDocket, with a focus on improving the accuracy of the cases reported and the protection of the cases; and
- The establishment of a generalised comprehensive trauma-support programme for police officers, so that they can better support trauma victims. Further recommending the Remote Offered Skill Building Application (ROSA) tool to better support the police with sensitivity training and victim support.

GBV & Capacity Building

Inspired by the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS), the only globally endorsed interagency[20] GBV digital information management system that ensures the safe and ethical documentation of both the process and data management of GBV cases, we:

- Insist that national government create a safer, more efficient, and widely accessible process to streamline the reporting of GBV cases at a local and provincial level, integrated into SAPS;
- Recommend teaching males the importance of consent, communication, and accountability for their actions through community workshops that are accurate, relevant, and inclusive;
- Encourage greater research into understanding and developing restorative justice approaches when dealing with GBV cases;
- Endorse the role that advocacy organisations play in holding government accountable for their policy objectives;
- Recognising the impact of unemployment and substance abuse among men, and the role this plays in increasing the risk of GBV for women;
- Noting with deep concern the lack of public shelters for GBV survivors, we urge for the following:
    - Collaboration between the private sector, DWYPD and the Department of Social Development in the creation of accessible public shelters for victims of GBV; and
    - Further requests all public spaces, such as religious institutions, community halls/centres, public hospitals, to be utilised as interim shelters to aid victims of GBV;
    - Deplores the weak justice system, which is further undermined by the insufficiently equipped police system, we thus:
    - Call for the review of the Domestic Violence Act (DVA Act 116 of 1996) with a focus on customary and civil child marriages, ensuring that policies eradicate child marriages completely; and
    - Call upon local leaders and religious institutions to actively combat against acts of GBV and shift social norms to a new lens.

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[20] Agencies involved: UNHCR, UNICEF, UNFP, IRC, and INC.

GBV in Educational Institutions and the Workplace

It is noted that educational institutions and workplaces are prime areas for GBV cases, with 20 to 25 percent of reports being made by young women in these spaces. The disproportionate availability of resources and infrastructure to support survivors of GBV is evident. We are deeply concerned by the discrimination that continues to draw gender disparities in spaces intended to be socio-economic equalisers.

Furthermore, Statistics South Africa's Labour Force Survey for Quarter 1 of 2023 revealed that young people aged between 15-34 are the most vulnerable in the South African labour market, with the unemployment rate in these age groups reaching 61 percent and 39.9 percent, respectively.[21] This study further illustrated the unemployment rate to be 4,7 percent higher among females than males with young, black women being the most vulnerable demographic.

Whilst acknowledging the progressive strides attained through affirmative action measures, we note that economic access and power remain unequally distributed along the lines of gender, with men still occupying more senior positions than women, making young women more vulnerable to sexual solicitation/GBV in the workplace. We further acknowledge section 60 of the Employment Equity Act which holds employers vicariously liable for the conduct of perpetrators of harassment, therefore call for:

- Urgent implementation of the NSP on GBVF in all educational institutions;
- All forms of harassment, catcalling, jokes, and language rooted with patriarchal and misogynistic undertones be stopped and insist that these transgressions be dealt with effectively within educational institutions;
- The increase of partnerships between NGOs and schools to develop extra-mural activities such as workshops, self-defence classes, safe spaces for dialogue, and nationally approved activities to address GBV in schools;
- Academia to prioritise and fund research into GBV, to further support the allocation of resources towards reducing the level of concealable abuse in higher education institutions;
- Greater research into understanding and developing restorative justice approaches when dealing with GBV cases;
- Government to mandate final-year/graduate social workers and psychologists to conduct a minimum 6-month mandatory practical in local public schools to address GBV cases among students;
- Strengthening the level of anonymity when reporting GBV incidents through the establishment of confidential platforms; and
- All trade unions to strengthen their advocacy against GBV in the workspace.

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[21] Maluleke, R. (2023). "Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) Q1:2023," *https://Www.statssa.gov.za/Publications/P0211/Presentation%20QLFS%20Q1%202023.Pdf* (Stats SA, March 2023).

PILLAR 5: GENDER, IDENTITY, AND SEXUALITY

Education and awareness are crucial in destigmatizing the heteronormative prejudices prevalent in South African society. We acknowledge the commendable role that CSOs have in facilitating inclusive dialogues on matters of gender, sexuality, and identity within various communities. We are deeply concerned by the culture of homophobia that exists within South African society and the lack of access to unisex spaces that accommodates all gender identities. This homophobic culture is notably present in schools, communities, and in the way that health care is provided to members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Thus, in our efforts to destigmatize, inform and eradicate the culture of homophobia and other discriminatory by-products of a patriarchal, heteronormative, and misogynistic society, we call for the following:

Policies & the LGBTQIA+ Community

Acknowledging the efforts of the South African government to ensure members of the LGBTQIA+ community are represented in policies such as the NSP on GBVF[22], National Strategic Plan on Women Peace and Security[23], and the Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill.[24] Deeply disturbed, however, by the poor implementation of the aforementioned policies, it is essential that collaboration between government and society is improved. We thus:

- Insist on a collaboration between communities and religious institutions to share inclusive rules and practices around gender;
- Further recommend the dissemination of information regarding crisis intervention services for queer individuals;
- Emphasise the importance of supporting programmes that implement gender-affirmative actions and support services;
- Call for the expansion of unisex facilities on a larger scale, such as public toilets in clinics and hospitals, in addition to the existing binary facilities; and
- Encourage broader public outreach to continue hosting dialogues pertaining to gender, sexuality, and identity and further calls on organisations to expand their educational reach.

LGBTQIA+ Individuals & Educational Institutions

LGBTQIA+ youth and children often face an immense amount of bullying, isolation and confusion in educational institutions, especially at a secondary level. Young individuals battle with internalised homophobia and confusing ideas, and educational spaces can provide a safe or unsafe space for

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[22] The Interim Steering Committee (ISC) on GBVF, https://www.justice.gov.za/vg/gbv/nsp-gbvf-final-doc-04-05.pdf
[23] National Department of International Relations and Co-operations and National Department of Military Veterans (2021), https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/202103/south-african-national-action-plan-women-peace-and-security.pdf
[24] National Department of Justice and Correctional Service (2018), "Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill," Pub. L. No. 41543, https://www.justice.gov.za/legislation/hcbill/B9-2018-HateCrimesBill.pdf.

LGBTQIA+ individuals. Thus, we encourage efforts to foster gender-inclusive spaces within educational institutions through the following:

- Advocates for the revision of the history curriculum, from Grade 7 to Grade 9, to include the role and impact of women and the LGBTQIA+ community in South African history, with further emphasis on engagement and conversation around cultural history and the role gender has played within this;
- Insist on public schools and their governing bodies to be more thorough in screening individuals that would be addressing students in any capacity, to ensure that they do not practise or deliver a hateful speech or cause discomfort against students of the LGBTQIA+ community; and
- Calls upon universities to ensure that university residences are more gender-inclusive and that residences accommodating for gender non-conforming individuals and individuals that identify with a gender they were not assigned at birth.

LGBTQIA+ Individuals & Healthcare

Alarmed by the inadequate education and awareness among healthcare professionals regarding the nuanced upbringing of LGBTQIA+ children. Recognising that many LGBTQIA+ individuals still experience various hardships in healthcare facilities that deters them from returning. We thus we call for:

- Accessible, gender-inclusive/sensitive administration in healthcare institutions, accommodating patients who are uncomfortable using gender-segregated facilities;
- Addressing the colonial, patriarchal, and misogynistic historical by-products that enforce gender binaries and contribute to the lack of proper mental health care for LGBTQIA+ individuals; and
- Improved resources focusing on the needs and experiences of the intersex child, and the consequent lack of information provided to parents and families when assigning gender to newborns.

Appalled by the lack of access to gender-affirming care in South Africa and the extreme unaffordability of this care for LGBTQIA+ individuals needing gender-reaffirming surgery and treatment. It is therefore imperative that gender-reaffirming care becomes an essential healthcare service in public healthcare institutions.

LGBTQIA+ Individuals & GBV

The impact of GBV also affects the LBGTQIA+ community, where individuals face sexually suggestive harassment, bullying, and suppression in society at large. Further, LGBTQIA+ individuals face different forms of violence, with additional fears of physical and sexual abuse that manifest through phenomena such as 'corrective rape' and 'conversion therapies.' LGBTQIA+ individuals are often not taken seriously, increasing their apprehension to reporting hate crimes. We thus:

- Demand the elimination of stigmas, stereotypes, and harassment in reporting and receiving support in cases of GBV against members of the LGBTQIA+ community;

- Deplore the ways in which harassing and publicly shouting sexually suggestive comments at members of the LGBTQIA+ community could contribute to their apprehension to report hate crimes;
- Draw attention to the process and affordability of pressing GBV charges and how that process may be prolonged or made tedious because of bias in the policing system;
- Take note of the prosecution process and sentencing criteria for perpetrators of GBVF and the discrepancies between heteronormative cases and cases affecting members of the LGBTQIA+ community;
- Call for government and other stakeholders to prioritise funding to existing NGOs and other organisations that advocate for the legal rights and legal representation of the LGBTQIA+ community; and
- Recommend a set number of state-sponsored counselling sessions and check-ups for individuals who report abuse.

PILLAR 6: GENDER AND THE PUBLIC/PRIVATE SECTOR

Within the framework of public and private sector cooperation in the creation of a gender-inclusive society, we are deeply disturbed by performative gestures in the private sector which tokenise women and the LGBTQIA+ community. While celebrating the accomplishments of marginalised genders in these spaces, we are still concerned with the inadequate implementation of affirmative action measures aimed at propelling gender equality. Deeply concerned by the disproportionate ratio of socio-economically marginalised groups of learners that are represented in STEM-based careers and highlighting that only 13% of those in STEM are women.[25] By addressing societal stigma surrounding marginalised genders' capacity to lead within the public and private sector, we stress for the eradication of harmful heteronormative stereotypes created around the labour force that propagate the idea that certain jobs are created for certain genders. Thus, under the following thematic areas, we advocate for the following:

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) & Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG)

- Call upon the public and private sectors to increase their physical community engagement throughout South Africa, especially in vulnerable and rural communities where information is inaccessible and not disseminated:
- Further invite the information technology (IT) sector to develop an outreach programme that allows for graduates to give digital training to marginalised genders in disadvantaged communities to promote digital literacy;

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[25] South African Government News (2022). "More Women Needed in STEM Related Fields." *SA News*, June 22, 2022, https://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/more-women-needed-stem-related-fields.

- Encourage the private sector to better monitor the usage of their corporate social investments and to collaborate with and provide training to community-based organisations with a focus on empowering women and members of the LGBTQIA+ community; and
- Calls upon government and the private sector to fund youth advisory or policy committees where young people can provide their inputs and perspectives, and ensure improved youth representatives in government and other decision-making bodies.

Religious Spaces

Religious/traditional/cultural spaces play an intrinsic role in an individuals' life, whether through a direct or indirect manner. However, we note how these spaces have the ability to uphold outdated and harmful views and it is important that religious, public, and private spaces are urged to look at more gender-inclusive approaches. This can be encouraged through improved coordination between government and communities with individuals/faith-based organisations to incorporate informed faith references, in faith-based spaces, that can assist in addressing harmful gender roles, out-dated cultural practices, and negative stereotypes.

Business & Entrepreneurship

Whilst we reaffirm the importance of incorporating entrepreneurship educational programmes in South African local communities, we encourage more events such as career exhibitions that are directly aimed towards marginalised genders in rural and/or disadvantaged communities.

Further, we recognise the value of unpaid care work, which primarily falls on females in a household. Thus, we call on businesses to provide and cater for inclusive and supportive systems, such as flexible work arrangements, to accommodate for a care-giving responsibility.

PILLAR 7: GENDER AND SUSTAINABLE TRANSFORMATION

Noting with deep concern the disruptive consequences of climate change, natural disasters, and migration on marginalised genders. We stand in solidarity with those affected by events such as the 2022 KZN floods[26] and other instances of hardship in marginalised communities, who continually bear the brunt of the ongoing climate emergency. Thus highlighting the need for support and capacity building to marginalised groups in their engagement with climate change awareness, just transition initiatives,

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[26] Tandon, A. (2022). "Climate Change Made Extreme Rains in 2022 South Africa Floods 'Twice as Likely,'" *Carbon Brief*, May 13, 2022, https://www.carbonbrief.org/climate-change-made-extreme-rains-in-2022-south-africa-floods-twice-as-likely/.

agriculture, food security, and nutrition. Further noting the need for an equitable allocation of resources for research, education, and representation of marginalised genders and communities.

Urging for the expansion in the dissemination of knowledge, research, and policy decisions, as mandated by all consulted stakeholders in the climate change sector, especially regarding processes within the framework of the Just Transition.[27] Guided by the principles of the Just Transition Framework, Sustainable Development Goal 12, and the South African Youth Climate Action Plan[28], we insist that all Just Transition policies and their implementation prioritise substantive equality, thus redressing historical imbalances that marginalised populations have endured due to climate change. Recognising the severe socio-economic impacts caused by climate change, we express our profound concern about the repercussions of food and water scarcity and job loss, with special consideration for individuals in marginalised circumstances, including single female-headed households and their dependents. Further, it is important to acknowledge how women and girls are disproportionately affected by climate change due to factors such as unequal access to resources, societal roles, and limited decision-making power. This limits their ability to attend school or receive quality healthcare. Attention thus needs to be paid to the following areas:

Agriculture, Nutrition & Water

Agriculture and water play a vital role in the everyday lives of every person. However, marginalised genders are often erased from the experiences and nuances that come with access to natural resources such as land and water, which in turn affects their access to nutrition. Women are seen to be the main actors when leading agricultural and water-related chores and activities, yet their voices are not heard as loudly as men. Thus, we call for the following;

- Emphasise agricultural education for women smallholders in farming communities with an emphasis on training and capacity building for innovation and climate-smart agriculture;
- Gender mainstreaming in policy planning and implementation for agricultural processes;
- Addressing gender-specific issues such as women's access to land and clean water;
- Nutritional education and awareness, particularly for mothers; and
- Micro-financing for women-led farming groups and associations.

Digital Divide

Calls for better implementation of various technological resources as complementary educational tools to help equip marginalised genders with relevant digital data and skills. We thus promote the responsible use of technology that advances the development of marginalised genders in digital skills training.

Calls upon the government to create sustainable, affordable and widely accessible technological resources, with emphasis on access to the internet, digital devices, and digital learning. These resources

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[27] Presidential Climate Commission (2022). "Just Transition Framework," *https://Pccommissionflo.imgix.net/Uploads/Images/A-Just-Transition-Framework-For-South-Africa-2022.Pdf*, August 31, 2022.
[28] Global Change Youth Policy Committee (2021). "The South African Youth Climate Action Plan," https://www.saycap.org/_files/ugd/c9ca7e_b676add1d0894bae82eda1f93b0e598f.pdf?index=true.

should be provided to communities through workshops and training programmes as complimentary educational tools to better equip marginalised genders with relevant digital data and skills.

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This document was created with inputs from young people between the ages of 13-30, from across South Africa, and representing the following organisations, schools, universities and clubs:

#YouBeforeMe	**Izimbali Zakusasa Youth Development NPO**	**Sekgalabjana Secondary School**
African Climate Alliance	**Jakes Gerwel Fellowship**	**Sol Plaatje University**
African Leadership Academy	**Kamiesberg Resource Youth Hub**	**Soul City Institute for Social Justice**
Afrika Tikkun	**Keurhof School**	**South African BRICS Youth Association**
Ahmed Kathrada Foundation	**Kgaphamadi Secondary School**	**South African Institute of International Affairs Interns**
Amberfield College	**Kgorogo Social Investments Youth Networks**	**Springs Boys' High School**
Amnesty International South Africa Student Chapters	**Kiriyatswane Secondary School**	**St Benedict's College**
Ashbury College	**Langenhoven High School**	**St Stithians Boys' College**
Aurora Girls' High School	**Lebone II College of the Royal Bafokeng**	**St Stithians Girls' College**
Beacon College Malelane	**LGBTQIA+ Community Movement**	**STEAM Ambassador's Club**
Blue Hills College	**Lugobe High School**	**Stellenbosch University**
Borakanelo Secondary School	**Mafikeng High School**	**Studios@Burnet House Committee**
Boston College	**Malibu High School**	**Sundial Movement**
Brescia House School	**Mamodikeleng Secondary School**	**TEARS Foundation**
Cape Climate Collective	**Manzini Energy**	**The Conscious Campaign**
Cape Peninsula University of Technology	**Masimanyane Women's Rights International**	**The Dignity Campaign**
Capricorn High School	**ME Makgato Secondary School**	**The Participation Project**
Christ Church Preparatory School and College	**Menzi High School**	**The Umkhumbane Schools Project**
Climate Action Group Gauteng	**Midrand High School**	**Tsholofelo Foundation**
Climate Justice Charter Movement	**Mindful(l) Organisation**	**Tshwane University of Technology**
Commonwealth Youth Health Network	**Moletsane High School**	**Tsolo Secondary School**
COSATU Young Workers	**MyVision Youth Development NPC**	**UCT Online High School**
Danville Park Girls' High School	**Mzuvele Secondary School**	**UNICEF Clubs**
Durban High School	**National School of the Arts**	**Uniqueer Students Solidarity (NMU)**

Durban University of Technology	Nelson Mandela Children's parliament	University of Cape Town
Edenvale High School	Nelson Mandela Foundation	University of Fort Hare
Elite Sporting and Cultural Academy Wanderers	Nelson Mandela University	University of Free State
Enactus	Northlink College	University of Johannesburg
ENGAGE SA	North-West University	University of KwaZulu-Natal
Esqiwini Student Legal Advice Club	Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls	University of Pretoria
Evoke Research Primary Cooperative	Parktown High School for Girls	University of South Africa
Extinction Rebellion SA	Penryn College	University of the Free State
Federation of Unions of South Africa (FEDUSA)	Post to Parliament	University of the Western Cape
Fidha Africa	QRATE	University of the Witwatersrand
For The Youth By The Youth	Reddam House Bedfordview	University of Venda
Free State Centre of Human Rights	Reddam House Umhlanga	Walter Sisulu University
Gender DynamiX	Regaugetswe Information Centre	Westville Girls' High School
Gert Sibande FET College	Residensia Secondary School	Women Helping Women
Get Out Alive Movement	Rethinking Economies of Africa	Women in Leadership
Girls Against Oppression	Rhenish Girls' High School	Words In Town Youth Movement
Grace Trinity School for Girls	Rhodes University	Wynberg Girls' High School
Gratiari	Risinga Secondary School	YFU South Africa
Greenside High School	Roedean School (SA)	Young Creative Minds
Groutville Youth Organization	Rosebank College Polokwane	Youth Climate Champions
Hanyani Thomo High School	Rosebank College Sunnyside	Youth Empowerment Emporium
Hector Peterson Senior Secondary school	Rotary International	Youth Inter-Active
Herzlia High School	SADC Youth (SAYof)	Youth Policy Committee (YPC)
Highveld Secondary School	Saheti School	Youth@SAIIA
His/Her Pledge Against Gender Based Violence	Sandringham High School	Zibongeleni Creche
Hoërskool Jan de Klerk	SARH Social Enterprise (NPC)	Zikhali Zamantungwa Foundation
Idwalalethu Foundation	Seed Ecology	

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