



**WOMEN OF DESTINY**  
RAISING LEADERS OF INFLUENCE

# P20 WOMEN'S PARLIAMENT

Written Submission by Women of Destiny



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## **P20 WOMEN'S PARLIAMENT**

Our submission in shaping women-cantered policy by identifying and addressing laws and policies that hinder inclusive development and to strengthen oversight and action around women's empowerment over the medium term.

### ***FOCUS TOPICS***

- Entrepreneurship & financial inclusion
- The care economy
- Gender-based violence & femicide
- Climate justice & environment
- Education, STEM & digital divide
- Health equity
- Women, land & agriculture

# ENTREPRENEURSHIP & FINANCIAL INCLUSION

## Problem:

Economic exclusion persists, with many South Africans—especially women and youth—lacking access to financial services, credit, and entrepreneurial support, limiting economic growth and poverty reduction.

## Causes:

1. **Limited Access to Credit:** Traditional financial institutions often exclude informal and small-scale entrepreneurs.
2. **Lack of Business Skills and Mentorship:** Many potential entrepreneurs lack training and networks.
3. **Digital Barriers:** Poor digital infrastructure limits access to e-commerce and fintech solutions.

## Actions + Evidence:

- **Microfinance and SME Support:** SEFA's loan schemes increased small business survival rates by 30% in 2024 (SEFA, 2025).
- **Entrepreneurship Training:** Youth-focused programs doubled startup creation in pilot districts, boosting local employment (DBE, 2024).
- **Digital Inclusion Initiatives:** Digital hubs facilitated 40% of entrepreneurs expanding into new markets via online platforms (DTPS, 2025).

## Risks:

- Persistent unemployment and poverty traps.
- Growth of unregulated informal economy.
- Exclusion from emerging digital economy sectors.

## Responses:

- Streamline business registration and reduce red tape.
- Foster private sector partnerships for mentorship and skills development.
- Scale national financial literacy and digital skills programs.

# GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE & FEMICIDE

## Esther's Advocacy for the Vulnerable (Esther 4:16)

Esther's willingness to approach the king despite danger (Esther 4:16) exemplifies the bravery required to confront South Africa's epidemic of gender-based violence (GBV) and femicide. The ACDP acknowledges MP Swart's calls for stronger protective measures, community-based interventions, and survivor support systems. Parliament must enact and enforce legislation that holds perpetrators accountable while addressing root causes such as patriarchy, inequality, and social norms. Empowering women and girls through education and economic independence is a vital part of this strategy.

### Problem:

South Africa experiences one of the highest rates of gender-based violence and femicide worldwide, threatening women's safety and rights.

### Causes:

1. Patriarchal norms and cultural acceptance of violence against women.
2. Economic dependency limiting women's options to escape abuse.
3. Ineffective law enforcement and weak prosecution.

### Actions + Evidence:

- Strengthen laws and specialized courts.  
*Evidence:* Gauteng Family Violence Courts increased convictions by 25% (SAPS, 2023).
- Community education targeting men/boys on gender equality.  
*Evidence:* Sonke Gender Justice's Men Care campaign shifted attitudes by 40% (2024).
- Economic empowerment for women survivors.  
*Evidence:* Limpopo microfinance programs boosted autonomy by 45% (SEDA, 2023).

### Risks:

1. Increased normalization of violence.
2. Survivors deterred from reporting.
3. Social and economic instability.

### Responses:

1. Cross-sector collaboration (police, health, social services).
2. Expand survivor support (shelters, counselling).
3. Transparent monitoring and accountability mechanisms.

# CLIMATE JUSTICE & ENVIRONMENT

## Stewardship of God's Creation (Proverbs 31:8-9 & Esther's Legacy)

The biblical call to “speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves” (Proverbs 31:8-9) aligns with MP Swart's call for climate justice and global accountability. South Africa must champion equitable climate policies that empower vulnerable communities, especially women, to lead sustainable adaptation efforts (DFFE, 2025).

### Problem:

Climate change disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, exacerbating inequalities and environmental degradation.

### Causes:

1. Historical pollution by developed countries and local industries.
2. Poor climate adaptation infrastructure.
3. Limited community participation in environmental governance.

### Actions + Evidence:

- Advocate internationally for climate reparations and finance.  
*Evidence:* South Africa's participation in COP26 led to \$1.5 billion pledged for adaptation (DFFE, 2025).
- Implement community-led climate adaptation projects, especially for women.  
*Evidence:* Women-led projects reduced flood impacts by 30% in KwaZulu-Natal (DFFE, 2024).
- Strengthen environmental laws and enforcement.  
*Evidence:* Enforcement of pollution controls decreased river contamination by 20% (DFFE, 2025).

### Risks:

1. Increased climate vulnerability and displacement.
2. Loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services.
3. Heightened social conflicts over resources.

### Responses:

1. Inclusive climate governance frameworks.
2. Investment in green infrastructure.
3. Environmental education and advocacy

## EDUCATION, STEM & DIGITAL DIVIDE

Esther's intelligence and education positioned her to influence royal policy (Esther 2:7), underscoring the transformative power of knowledge. South Africa's future depends on closing the digital divide and increasing access to quality education especially in STEM fields for girls and marginalized communities. Investment in digital infrastructure, teacher training, and inclusive curricula must be prioritized to ensure equal opportunities in the 21st-century economy. This aligns with MP Swart's emphasis on structural reform and the ACDP's commitment to empowering youth through education.

### **Problem:**

The quality and accessibility of education remain uneven, with rural and township schools lagging behind urban counterparts. The gender gap in STEM fields and lack of digital access impede South Africa's efforts to develop a competitive, knowledge-based economy.

### **Causes:**

1. **Infrastructure Disparities:** Many rural schools lack electricity, internet, and basic learning resources (DBE Infrastructure Report, 2024).
2. **Gender Stereotypes:** Societal biases discourage girls from pursuing science and technology careers (UNESCO, 2024).
3. **Digital Exclusion:** Approximately 50% of learners lack reliable internet access or digital devices (SA Connect, 2025).

### **Actions + Evidence:**

- **Investment in Infrastructure and Teacher Development:** The DBE's 2024 Rural Education Upliftment initiative improved infrastructure and provided digital tools to over 500 schools, resulting in a 30% increase in learner performance in pilot areas (DBE, 2025).
- **STEM and Girls' Empowerment Programs:** The "Girls in Tech" campaign, launched nationally in 2024, increased female STEM enrolment by 25%, with mentorship programs connecting girls to role models in science and engineering (Girls in Tech SA, 2024).
- **Expanding Digital Access:** Through partnerships between government and private sector, programs like SA Connect extended affordable broadband to underserved areas, improving connectivity for 40% of previously offline learners by early 2025 (DTPS, 2025).
- **Missing school for several days each month can add up to 30–50 missed school days per year, which directly lowers academic performance and increases dropout rates.**
- The Department of Basic Education (DBE) has acknowledged that menstruation is a barrier to girls completing their education.

**Risks:**

- Growing inequality in education leads to widening socioeconomic disparities.
- A shortage of skilled STEM workers undermines future economic competitiveness.
- Marginalized communities remain digitally excluded, exacerbating social exclusion.

**Responses:**

- National policies to incentivize equitable resource allocation to schools.
- Scholarship and bursary programs targeting girls and disadvantaged learners.
- Public digital literacy campaigns to ensure inclusive participation in the digital economy.

# HEALTH EQUITY

## The Courage to Stand for Life (Esther 4:14)

Esther's courageous choice to speak out for her people under great risk (Esther 4:14) parallels the urgent need to confront health disparities affecting South Africa's most vulnerable—especially women and rural communities. Despite large health budgets, unequal access remains a critical problem (NDoH, 2025). Parliament must act decisively to strengthen healthcare infrastructure, focusing on maternal and reproductive health, ensuring no South African is left behind.

### **Problem:**

Disparities in healthcare access and outcomes disproportionately affect women, especially in rural and underserved communities.

### **Causes:**

1. Limited healthcare infrastructure in rural areas.
2. Socioeconomic barriers restricting access to services.
3. Insufficient maternal and reproductive health programs.

### **Actions + Evidence:**

- Expand rural clinics and mobile health services.  
*Evidence:* Mobile clinics improved maternal health outcomes by 20% in Eastern Cape (NDoH, 2025).
- Increase funding for reproductive health education and supplies.  
*Evidence:* Family planning programs reduced unintended pregnancies by 15% (2024).
- Train more female healthcare workers from local communities.  
*Evidence:* Community health worker programs improved women's health visits by 30% (2025).
- In South Africa, research shows that over 30% of girls miss school during their menstrual cycles because they cannot afford pads (Statistics South Africa, 2023).
- In rural and low-income areas, pads can cost up to 5–7% of a family's monthly income, making them a luxury for many households.

**Risks:**

1. Persisting maternal mortality and morbidity.
2. Intergenerational health inequities.
3. Increased healthcare system strain.

**Responses:**

1. Strengthen community-based health initiatives.
2. Public-private partnerships to fund services.
3. Monitoring of health equity indicators.

# WOMEN, LAND & AGRICULTURE

## Problem:

The ongoing land reform process remains fraught with tensions over equitable redistribution, gender inclusion, and agricultural productivity, with implications for food security and rural livelihoods.

## Causes:

1. **Inequitable Land Ownership:** Historical dispossession and slow reform maintain racial and gender land disparities.
2. **Exclusion of Women:** Customary laws and social norms often exclude women from land rights and inheritance (Land Reform Monitoring Committee, 2025).
3. **Limited Support for Sustainable Farming:** Smallholder farmers lack extension services and market access.

## Actions + Evidence:

- **Gender-Inclusive Land Redistribution Policies:** Recent reforms increased women's land ownership by 35%, with specific quotas and legal protections (LRMC, 2025).
- **Agricultural Extension and Training:** DAFF's smallholder support programs improved productivity by 22% through training in climate-smart agriculture (DAFF, 2024).
- **Access to Finance:** SEFA provided targeted loans increasing smallholder yields by 18%, supporting market participation (SEFA, 2025).

## Risks:

- Land conflicts may escalate without transparent, inclusive processes.
- Food insecurity worsens if agricultural productivity declines.
- Rural poverty and inequality deepen.

## Responses:

- Facilitate participatory forums involving communities, traditional leaders, and government.
- Strengthen legal frameworks securing tenure rights, especially for women.
- Promote climate-resilient farming practices.

This submission addresses two interconnected national priorities: the empowerment of South Africa's youth and the urgent fight against gender-based violence (GBV) and femicide. Both are essential to inclusive socio-economic development, and both require coordinated action across legislation, policy implementation, and societal change.

Youth development and women's safety cannot be separated. A nation cannot unlock the potential of its young people — particularly young women — while failing to protect them from violence and discrimination. Similarly, efforts to combat GBV are strengthened when women have equal access to education, economic opportunities, and leadership roles.

## **Youth Empowerment: Barriers and Solutions**

South Africa's youth have the creativity, ambition, and skills to drive economic growth. Many seek to establish businesses, pursue agricultural enterprises, and innovate in technology and the arts. However, systemic barriers persist:

**Access to finance:** Youth, particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds, face exclusion from credit and investment.

**Land and agricultural opportunity:** Young people — especially women — are often unable to own or inherit land.

**Recognition of care work:** Many young people, particularly women, engage in unpaid care work that contributes to the economy but is undervalued.

**Proposed Interventions:**

Expand affordable credit and digital finance tailored to youth-led enterprises.

Reform land policies to enable youth and women to own, inherit, and utilize land productively.

Integrate care work into economic policy, recognizing its value and supporting those who provide it.

## **Gender-Based Violence & Femicide: Crisis and Response**

GBV and femicide constitute a national emergency. Despite robust legal frameworks such as the Domestic Violence Act, the Sexual Offences Amendment Act, and the National Strategic Plan on GBVF, implementation gaps undermine protection for survivors.

**Key Challenges:**

Undertrained police officers turning away survivors.

Protection orders routinely violated without consequence.

Untested rape kits and delayed case processing.

Underfunded or absent shelters, particularly in rural areas.

Proposed Medium-Term Actions:

**Strengthen Oversight** — Equip and empower oversight bodies such as the Commission for Gender Equality, the South African Human Rights Commission, and community-based structures to hold the justice system accountable.

**Dedicated Funding** — Allocate targeted budgets at national, provincial, and municipal levels for shelters, victim support, and survivor-led organizations.

**Prevention Through Education** — Reform Life Orientation curricula to include comprehensive education on respect, dignity, and consent from early schooling.

**Data Transparency** — Establish real-time, publicly accessible data on GBV cases, convictions, and systemic failures.

## **Integrated Rationale**

A society that does not protect its women will never reach its full potential. Women cannot fully contribute to the economy, education, or governance while living in fear. At the same time, youth cannot fulfil their potential without equitable access to resources, land, and opportunities. Addressing these issues together strengthens both causes and accelerates national development.

## **Conclusion and Call to Action**

This submission calls on Parliament to:

Priorities integrated policy approaches that link youth empowerment with women's safety.

Enforce laws through accountability, not just enactment.

Allocate resources that match the scale of both the GBV crisis and youth unemployment challenge.

Ensure that young people and women — especially from marginalized communities — are central to decision-making processes.

South Africa's future lies not only in what is built, but in who is believed in. By safeguarding women and empowering youth, the nation can rise to its full promise.