



Debate on P20 Women's Parliament

August 2025

As a nation, we have made notable progress in various areas, including the development of legal frameworks to promote gender equality. However, one may argue that these frameworks have not been effective, and that is evident in the persistent challenges that continue to face South African women, especially black women in rural areas and informal settlements.

Despite being spatially excluded, these women are affected by the structural violence and inequalities inherited from apartheid. As a result, they face economic exclusion, which, according to research, is the most severe form of exclusion they experience.

Many of these women rely on street vending as their primary source of income, with some being the sole breadwinners for their households. Yet, their informal businesses continue to face hurdles such as a lack of funding, having to work in unsafe conditions, and having to pay extortion fees.

These issues show that departments such as the Local Economic Development, Department of Trade and Industry, and the Ministry of Small Business Development should do more to be accessible and visible to the women in the grassroots. It is impossible to assist people in the grassroots when there are no practical engagements and visibility from our departments.

The publication of South Africa's Gender Budget Statement (GBS) in the 2025 budget is a commendable step toward a gender-responsive budget. It reflects a growing awareness within our fiscal policy of the need to support women's economic empowerment through targeted allocations, including in higher education, vocational training, cultural industries, and informal business development.

Economic empowerment alone won't free women if gender-based violence (GBV) continues. GBV destroys lives and blocks women's contributions to development. South Africa has GBV interventions, but low conviction rates are troubling. Survivors often face a slow, inaccessible, and retraumatizing justice system, causing many to abandon cases. This fosters impunity, emboldening perpetrators and silencing victims.

For the GBS to be truly transformative, it must go beyond economic metrics and integrate dedicated funding for improving GBV case management, survivor support services, and reforms within the criminal justice system to ensure perpetrators are held accountable.

The UDM calls on all stakeholders in the P20 forum to confront gender-based violence and justice failures, as these are crucial for gender equality. When discussing inclusive development, it's vital to include marginalised women. The success of South Africa's pilot GBS depends on political will, coordination, and commitment to justice.