



**DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY FOR WOMEN, YOUTH
AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

BUDGET VOTE SPEECH

BY

MMAPASEKA STEVE LETSIKE, MP

ON

3 JULY 2025 | CAPE TOWN | 16:30

NB: EMBARGOED UNTIL 3 JULY 2025 18:00

[CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY]

Honourable House Chair and all Members present;
Colleagues in the National Executive;
Minister in the Presidency, Honourable Sindisiwe Chikunga
Fellow South Africans,

I rise to join Minister Sindisiwe Chikunga to table Budget Vote 20 for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities – a radical and combative plan to “**break the wheel**” by dismantling the entrenched patterns of patriarchy, youth marginalisation and ableism, and to reimagine women, youth, and persons with disabilities in their diversity as active contributors shaping the lived reality of our nation.

This budget appropriates resources and power behind those whom the apartheid regime kept at the periphery, so they can move to the centre of our economy and society.

As President Ramaphosa reminded us at the 2024 ANC manifesto launch, and I quote:

“Our economy has tripled in size since 1994 and the rate of poverty has reduced. While unemployment has remained high, the number of people in employment has more than doubled from 8 million in 1994 to 16.7 million today.”

These are real gains – millions more South Africans, particularly those who had been previously marginalised, have jobs and sustainable

livelihoods, access to water, primary healthcare, social grants, and other services today than under apartheid. We are also etching closer to gender parity across all sectors. The achievements of the past 30 years have laid the foundation on which we continue to build.

Honourable Members, allow me to take you on a journey to our near future.

We are in the year 2030, and I receive an iMessage from Tintswalo, a young female adult from rural Limpopo with a disability.

She recounts her formative years, a time when she and her peers were beneficiaries of programmes implemented by the ANC-led government.

On 3 July 2030, she texts proudly about her cohort of peers who are now active participants in the mainstream economy as contributors beyond mere beneficiaries of government's extensive social protection basket of services.

Tintswalo lauds the effective measures we took against GBVF and how South Africa finally turned the tide on the 2nd pandemic after COVID-19.

The NSP on GBVF is no longer a frontline policy framework, as all its objectives have been met. The criminal justice system, all social formations, and every individual in South Africa rallied behind the NSP pillars, and through the National Council, our coordinated response has ensured that she is assured of her safety because our nation became one where all persons in their diversity are no longer objectified and violated, but are protected, respected, and affirmed in every space. South Africa

spearheads a global model for what is possible when a nation refuses to look away and chooses to act together.

Tintswalo also acknowledges the pivotal role of the CGE, a critical Chapter 9 institution whose steadfast oversight, advocacy, and monitoring have been instrumental in promoting gender justice. Tintswalo can now enlist the support of the CGE before the Equality Court on gender equality matters. We reaffirm unwavering support for the CGE's mandate and remain committed to upholding and protecting its independence.

Reflecting on her formative years as an adolescent, Tintswalo recounts how she and her peers did not experience statutory rape, teenage pregnancy and HIV infection, as all-of-society united around interventions and tailored services that cater for the protection of children's youth, their innocence and future.

Through these multi-sectoral approaches, all stakeholders in government, civil society and private sector, among others, homogenised around such interventions, including **Operation #BophaZonke**, as they ensured that all children's rights are protected as enshrined by section 28 in the Bill of Rights. She is thankful that through our interventions, children in her generation remained children.

Tintswalo acknowledges the impact of the Sanitary Dignity Programme that ensured that she did not miss out on her education due to period poverty, an experience shared by countless young girls. I share in Tintswalo's wish that sanitary products are made available to every woman and girl in their diversity. The end of period poverty in our lifetime is possible.

Tintswalo was proud to reflect on South Africa's G20 Presidency and how we mainstreamed disability inclusion into the agenda of this platform which is the world's largest economic bloc. The G20 Disability Inclusion Initiative Meetings actioned three priority areas in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as common areas of interest, on promotion of new technologies and access to AI, universal accessibility and independent living, and ensuring dignity of life and dimension of services.

Tintswalo boasts that her quality of life as a person with disability is among the best in the world, as the “**Protection and Promotion of Persons with Disabilities Act**” has been woven into our legislative framework, and has ensured the mainstreaming of awareness raising, self-representation, reasonable accommodation, and universal design and access into all facets of society to realise “**full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms**” in tandem with section 9(2) of our Constitution.

Tintswalo is aware that the challenges along the road to 2030 were immense, as youth unemployment in 2025 stood alarmingly high at 62.4%. In the same message, Tintswalo celebrates how institutions such as the NYDA helped eradicate the scourge of youth unemployment. She writes with pride about how every young person, regardless of background, has access to meaningful opportunities to participate in the mainstream economy.

Skills development, entrepreneurship support, youth employment programmes, and expanded access to funding and mentorship are now a norm. The once chronic NEET challenge, young people not in education,

employment, or training, no longer defines our national character having reimagined our approach to youth development through fast-tracking the relentless investment, innovative policy, and a strong partnership with all social formations to rewrite the narrative of South Africa's youth, turning despair into prosperity.

In illustrating the state of young people in 2030, Tintswalo shares success stories of South Africa's young people who have taken up space in disruptive industries driving the economy such as green and renewable energy; the digital economy and blockchain; autonomous and electric vehicles; creative and cultural industries, among many others. As government, we will continue to invest in South Africa's youth.

She remembers where the opposition grandstanding charged to our President that ***"Your presidency does nothing for us"***, we countered with facts. Where they alleged ***"Mr President, you are being bullied"*** into inaction, we stood firm and said **NO** – our President led a government that chose carefully considered Constitutional action over soliloquist theatrics.

Where the opposition benches highlighted real problems through passionate critiques and rightly called attention to these crises, she reminds me how we chose collaborative action over political theatrics, stability over ultimatums, and practical delivery over populist rhetoric.

In Tintswalo's account, the aspirations of the Freedom Charter have been realised through collaborative action from all-of-society. The doors of learning and culture have been opened to all. All citizens enjoy equal human rights. The land is shared among all who work it. Peace and friendship reign supreme. Work and security are universal. Social

justice, economic transformation, and inclusive development are the fibre of our moral character and lived experience as a nation.

We are working tirelessly to build genuine partnerships, dismissing threats and instability. South Africans demanded that we lead with integrity, prioritising their needs over political drama, and we continue to rise resolutely to meet that expectation.

Fellow South Africans, today, in 2025, we hold in our hands the opportunity to make Tintswalo's optimistic 2030 vision a reality. Our decisions must echo the resolve of our forebears who dismantled apartheid. Now it is our turn to dismantle economic exclusion, gender inequality, youth unemployment, and discrimination against the most vulnerable.

The story of Tintswalo tells us as much – she is encouraged, optimistic and assured by the gains of democracy. Our job in this House is to give Tintswalo and those like her the tools to thrive – to break every barrier in their path.

This budget, albeit modest in Rand terms, will deliver impact when executed with passion and partnership across all social formations.

I urge all of us, including opposition members, to throw our weight behind this budget. Let us agree, for instance, that youth unemployment is enemy number one and unite to fight it with the same vigour we fought apartheid. Let us concur that no woman in South Africa should live in fear and mobilise communities to root out GBV. Let us affirm that persons with disabilities and LGBTI persons will not face exclusion as they belong in

mainstream society, and open every door from our schools to our boardrooms to make that a reality.

Let us unite passionately, with determination and courage, ensuring that future generations, like Tintswalo, will look back proudly and say, “***They kept their promises, and because of their resolve, we built a South Africa truly inclusive, dignified, and prosperous for all.***”

With unwavering optimism, resolute determination, and collective action, I proudly join Minister Chikunga in presenting Budget Vote 20 for adoption.

Kea leboga.