



DECLARATION: SAWID 2008

We, the women of South Africa, convened by the SAWID National Steering Committee and supported by the Isigodlo Trust, held a dialogue under the theme “**Financing for Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality- Towards an inclusive macro-economic framework**”, at the OR Tambo Conference Centre, Birchwood Hotel, from the 28th September to the 3rd October 2008, representing all nine provinces and all sectors of our society, including older women, the young, women living with disabilities, women living in rural areas, development practitioners, researchers and academics, women in civil society and the private sector, women working on farms, faith based communities and youth structures, **to share** our experiences and celebrate our diversity and reflect on the continuing challenge of poverty and inequality,

Recognising and applauding the gains made by our democratic government over the past fourteen years in creating an enabling constitutional, legislative and institutional environment for women’s empowerment, such as a

- *Progressive Constitution* – Clause 9 of the Bill of Rights guarantees the promotion of equality
- *Strong Constitutional, Legislative and Political Quotas* –Up to 38% of the seats in Parliament are held by women, we have a women Speaker of Parliament, a woman Chairperson of the Independent Electoral Commission, and women councilors in local government and women leaders in some political parties.
- *An Institutional Gender Framework* – the Commission on Gender Equality (GCE), the Office on the Status of Women (OSW) and Gender Focal points; the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the improvement of the Quality of Life and Status of Women (JMC), who focus their efforts on either policy, the implementation or monitoring of gender mainstreaming.
- *Gender Instruments*- We have signed and ratified CEDAW, (15 December 1995) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (16 June 1995) ; adopted the Beijing Platform for Action (December 1995) ; the SADC Declaration on Gender and Equality (1997); we are party to Human Rights Conventions like the UN Convention against Trans-National Organised Crime (August 2003); and signed and ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (August 2003) and others.
- *Strong Women Representation in Both Business & Civil Society*: Through affirmative action and BBBEE women today serve in company boards, own companies, spearhead

entrepreneurial initiatives, are astronauts, and can both work and have a family. They are CEO's in both the civil and private sectors.

supported by the South African Women's movement to keep women's priorities on the agenda of the African Union and **recognising** the efforts and commitments of the SADC Heads of State with the recent signing of the Gender and Development Protocol (2008), the *AU Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa* (2003), The *Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa* (2004) UN, AU Heads of State and Government to gender equality and women's empowerment as stipulated in the *UN Security Council Resolution 1325 of 2000*,

We acknowledge the impact SAWID has made in the South African women's movement; national policy discourse and in the lives of women in South Africa and abroad and **treasure** the opportunity the SAWID platform provides for us to name and heal our pain whilst also defining our vision for a desired future. Since 2003, SAWID has become an effective platform which amplifies women's voices in shaping our democracy. **We celebrate** the five years since SAWID's formation as we affirm our commitment to the vision, mission and values of unity, integrity, sensitivity towards each other's difference, tolerance and empathy as espoused by SAWIDIANS since the first dialogue;

We further reaffirm our solidarity with the growing South African Women's movement and the women of our continent, particularly those who are emerging from and those who continue to live in conditions of war, conflict and dehumanising poverty. **We remain committed** to work with government and international partners and through NGO's CBOs and FBOs in our communities and provinces in order to avoid fragmentation and to strengthen mutual capacities in addressing local challenges.

WHAT WE CAME FOR

Since 2003 the Forum has **identified** development and in particular poverty eradication as our priority. Following extensive research, including study tours to Chile and Tunisia, SAWID has developed its own civil society-based poverty eradication programme, the Development Caravan, which targets indigent families in select nodal areas with a basket of services and physical infrastructure, in partnership with government, the private sector as well as research and training institutions. SAWID has also impacted profoundly on government's poverty eradication policy as evidenced by the 2007 State of the Nation pronouncement, as well as government's recently outlined poverty eradication strategy designed to reverse and reduce the incidence of poverty as well as prevent the recurrence of poverty.

We have since **ascertained** that

- Financing for women empowerment and gender equality is a critical part of the discussion on financing for development and that all national and international economic policies affect women, in ways that serve to advance or hinder their livelihoods;
- Economic growth and human development, to be sustainable, requires women's full participation in the economy, making it necessary to tailor development finance to the needs of women.
- To eradicate poverty, government has to be re-configured and work in an integrated manner. Working in silo's or in competitive ways by government departments and

different layers presents a problem to the major objective of lifting the most vulnerable from poverty.

- Ongoing discussions on financing for development emphasize that economic growth is essential for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including poverty reduction and gender equality; hence

At the 2008 Forum we aimed at raising the level of debate on financing for women empowerment and reiterated our call for effective institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women which would include a Minister Responsible for Women's empowerment, a Ministry for Planning and a special development/ solidarity fund for infrastructure amelioration.

We also sought to honour the contributions of older women in sustaining and nurturing our communities over the years by hosting a lunch celebration for them on the 1st October International day of the Older Person.

We had set the dialogue objectives as follows:

- To explore budgeting models for women's empowerment
- To strengthen national women's empowerment strategies that will lead to real gender equality and women's greater participation in our democracy
- To identify sources of funds to strengthen the South African Women's Movement
- To propose financing mechanisms for women's empowerment, including a Women's Research Facility and a Training centre
- To identify funding sources for women's grassroots socio-economic projects.

Challenges

We have **noted** with concern that despite government's comprehensive agenda and great strides in the implementation of pro-poor policies and initiatives, grave challenges remain that continue to limit women's ability to participate fully in the democratic spaces that have emerged:

- **Poverty** persists characterized by alienation from the community, increasing food insecurity, crowded homes, usage of unsafe and inefficient forms of energy, lack of jobs that are adequately paid and/or secure, and fragmentation of the family. Women especially those in farming communities and in informal settlements, as well as the children, older persons and those with disabilities bear the brunt of poverty.

The absence of a co-ordinated and integrated strategy for women's empowerment places a disproportionate burden on women in the protection and care of children, the youth, older persons, those infected and affected by diseases especially HIV and AIDS as well as other diseases;

- **Poor access to development resources**, including a dedicated fund for women's empowerment, limited access to land as well as sustainable agricultural practices/skills and limited access to income-generation projects as well as formal employment opportunities

The prevalence of food and resource insecurity that can potentially trigger war and instability and xenophobia in the country

- **Emerging trends** in the region with regard to respecting democratic processes and the rule of law in areas such as elections which increasingly result in and trigger violent conflict. These trends undermine social stability and exacerbate especially the marginal situation of women, and their limited participation in democratic processes by exposing them to intolerable levels of gender-based exploitation and lack of human security.
- There is a paucity of institutional arrangements for strengthening women's capacities, as well poor implementation and or monitoring of existing provisions, for example implementation of the 54% quota for women in the National Skills legislation and ;
- Lack of an integrated peace policy and strategy with adequate resources committed to partner with civil society in addressing domestic, regional and continental threats to survival and security of all citizens.

We therefore recommend the following:

1. Institutional and Funding Mechanisms

- An accountable **Planning Ministry** with executive authority to ensure integrated planning, monitoring and coordination of all poverty eradication activities, and also to maximize initiatives of business and civil society
- **A Ministry of Women** with a budget and executive authority, accountable to cabinet regarding women's advancement in all areas of human development.
- A **national centre for research and studies** on women to be established to feed into and support policy and programs.
- Structured and funded institutions with civil society partnerships charged with social mobilization and facilitation of all sectors of society to the goal of poverty reduction
- Creation of a special fund to support infrastructure in nodal areas, as well as to
- Support infrastructure linkage of poor communities to mainstream municipalities using government, private sector and citizen financial contributions.
- Government to honour the commitment made in the Beijing Platform of Action by reviewing the current macro-economic framework, taking into account the ways in which women continue to subsidise government through their unpaid care work

2. Proposals to Eradicate Poverty and Inequality

- Engaging with government, not only to mobilize grassroots communities to be involved in decision-making processes, but to also have effective collaboration with synergy in local, national and regional initiatives to eradicate poverty.
- Women's development to be a critical factor in addressing poverty
- Poverty Eradication as focus for all socio-economic interventions with targeting of the most vulnerable families
- **A common definition of poverty** and an integrated multi-dimensional approach to service delivery.
- A National Framework driving policy and coordinating programs in all departments, involving private sector and civil society

- Direct human interventions through psycho-social workers assigned to individual families

We commit to going back to our communities through our structures, including projects, NGO's and CBO's to contribute to the national project of eradicating poverty with government and the private sector as our partners.

Thank you

3rd October 2008

SAWID Forum