

30 years OF WOMEN'S PROGRESS in South Africa



REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



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30 YEARS OF WOMEN'S PROGRESS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Before 1994, inequality shaped the lives of women in South Africa, with black women bearing the brunt of the injustices of apartheid. From economic participation to health care and educational access, barriers were deeply entrenched.

The transition to democracy marked a new beginning. Over the past 30 years, our nation has made significant strides towards gender equality. Women now play vital roles across society, benefitting from legislative reforms and targeted initiatives that have opened the doors of opportunity.

Access to education has broadened, health care services have become more inclusive and economic opportunities have been expanded.

Yet, challenges remain. Persistent inequalities and social ills like gender-based violence affect women's lives and undermine their dignity and safety.

This publication is both a reflection on our progress and a call to action for the work that lies ahead. It reminds us that while much has been achieved, the journey towards true gender equality continues.



SHAPING THE NATION

- *Political empowerment and decision-making*

WOMEN AT WORK

- *Economic empowerment to end poverty*

BUILDING THE FUTURE

- *Education and skills development*

WOMEN'S SAFETY

- *Ending gender-based violence*

WOMEN'S WELLBEING

- *Expanding health care access*

OWNERSHIP AND OPPORTUNITY

- *Securing women's land rights*

SHAPING THE NATION

South Africa stands out for its progress in women's political empowerment.

The country ranks among the top globally for female parliamentary representation, and women have held key political positions since the advent of democracy, including as ministers of defence, education, health and international relations, as well as the Deputy President. Women have also been prominent as Speakers of Parliament and as mayors and premiers in major cities and provinces.

Significant portfolios that have been led by women include the Commissioner of Police, Public Protector, head of the Independent Electoral Commission, Governor of the Reserve Bank, the current Auditor-General and the National Director of Public Prosecutions.

In the judiciary, efforts to enhance gender and racial diversity are ongoing. History was made this year with the appointment of a black woman as South Africa's Chief Justice. Women have also been a crucial force as voters, making up the majority of the electorate in national and provincial elections in 2019 and 2024.

Despite these advancements, there remains a need for further progress to ensure that women can ascend to the highest levels of political power and influence.

Political empowerment and decision-making

THE PILLARS OF EMPOWERMENT



- **The Constitution**, adopted in 1996, guarantees that all citizens have a right to be affirmed and enriched with the democratic values of human dignity and equality. It provides specifically for gender equality, affirmative action, freedom, security of the person and socioeconomic rights.



- **The Bill of Rights** prohibits any form of unfair discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation or disability.



- **The Commission for Gender Equality** promotes and protects gender equality through research, public education, policy development, legislative initiatives, effective monitoring and litigation.



- **The Office on the Status of Women (OSW)** was established in 1997 to champion women empowerment and gender equality.

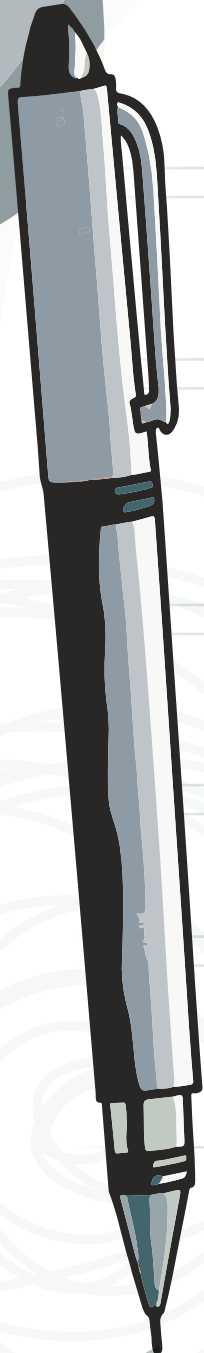


- **The Ministry of Women, Children and People with Disabilities** was established in 2009 to elevate women's issues, and later evolved to become a dedicated **Ministry for Women in the Presidency**.



Laws and policies

Female leaders and lawmakers have helped to usher in an array of laws and policies designed to empower women and safeguard their rights and wellbeing.



Domestic Violence Act

Criminalises violence in the home and allows women to obtain court orders against perpetrators

Maintenance Act

Enforces fathers' obligation to pay maintenance for their children

Recognition of Customary Marriages Act

Recognises marriages conducted under African customary law and makes the registration of marriages mandatory

Choice of Termination of Pregnancy Act

Allows women to make decisions concerning reproduction

Civil Union Act, 2006

Legalises same-sex marriages

Sexual Offences and Related Matters Act

Changes the definition of rape to be more encompassing and includes victim empowerment

PROGRESS BY NUMBERS



REPRESENTATIVES IN PARLIAMENT



43.5% of representatives in Parliament are women, up from 2.7% pre-1994



VOTERS



55% of voters in the 2024 national and provincial government elections were women



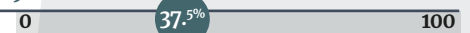
CABINET POSITIONS



14 out of 34 cabinet positions are held by women, up from 2 in 1994



JUDGES



37.5% of Constitutional Court judges are women



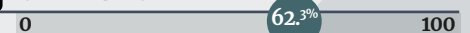
47.8% of Supreme Court of Appeal judges are women



43.6% of High Court judges are women



MANAGEMENT



62.3% of public-sector senior management posts are held by women

In democratic South Africa, women have been breaking barriers in fields once reserved for men.



From left to right: Adv. Shamila Batohi – National Director of Public Prosecutions, Tsakani Maluleke – Auditor-General of South Africa, Adv. Nompilo Kholeka Gcaleka – Public Protector of South Africa, Judge Mandisa Maya – Chief Justice of South Africa, Adv. Andrea Johnson – Head of the Investigating Directorate, Lieutenant-General Tebello Mosikili – Deputy National Commissioner, SAPS.

Advocate Shamila Batohi assumed the role of National Director of Public Prosecutions (NDPP) in 2019. She began her career as a junior prosecutor in 1986 at the Chatsworth Magistrate's Court and rose to become the Director of Public Prosecutions in KZN. Batohi also worked on the Investigation Task Unit created by President Nelson Mandela and was the first regional head of the Directorate of Special Operations based in KZN.

Auditor-General Tsakani Maluleke is the first woman to hold this position in South Africa in over 100 years. She previously served as the Deputy Auditor-General, and is also a seasoned business leader with extensive corporate governance expertise, having served on numerous boards and committees across the public and private sectors.

Advocate Nompilo Kholeka Gcaleka was appointed as the Public Protector of South Africa in 2023, having previously served as Deputy Public Protector. Her career began in 2004 with the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) as an aspirant prosecutor. Advocate Gcaleka is also the former first black female National Chairperson of the Society of State Advocates.

Judge Mandisa Maya began her term as the Chief Justice of South Africa at the start of September 2024. She previously served as the Deputy Chief Justice and the President of the Supreme Court of Appeal. Her legal career began in Mthatha and she has served as a member of the judiciary in various capacities since 1999.

Advocate Andrea Johnson took over the Investigating Directorate in the National Prosecuting Authority in 2022. The unit was established in 2019 to pursue various corruption cases, including those arising from the Zondo Commission. Advocate Johnson has also worked as a senior member of the Directorate of Special Operations (or Scorpions) and the Acting Special Director of the Priority Crimes Litigation Unit.

Lieutenant General Tebello Mosikili is the first woman to serve as Deputy National Commissioner of the South African Police Service. She has held several key positions throughout her career, including investigator, station commander and Provincial Head of Visible Policing in the Free State. She also served as Deputy Provincial Commissioner for Crime Detection in Gauteng.

WOMEN AT WORK

Under apartheid, South African women faced systemic barriers to economic participation.

The oppressive system not only excluded black people from skilled employment, but also disproportionately marginalised black women, severely restricting their economic opportunities and keeping many locked in poverty.

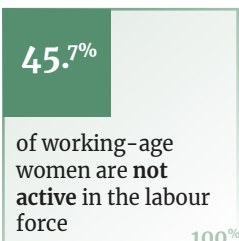
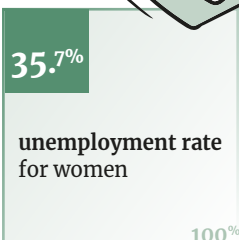
South Africa has made significant strides in promoting women's economic empowerment. Progressive legislation and labour reforms have been introduced to ensure equal rights and eliminate unfair discrimination in the workplace. Government initiatives have supported women's entrepreneurship and increased their participation in various sectors of the economy.

Government is also committed to using procurement as a driver of women's empowerment. Entities like the Public Investment Corporation and the National Empowerment Fund have committed to establish special-purpose vehicles to support women-owned businesses.

However, women continue to face substantial income inequality and are more likely to be concentrated in lower-paying jobs.

Addressing these disparities is crucial not only for reducing poverty but also for unlocking the country's full potential.

Economic empowerment to end poverty



STRENGTHENING LAWS AND POLICIES

Key legislative changes since 1994 have helped to entrench women's rights in the workplace.

The **Basic Conditions of Employment Act** guarantees paid maternity leave, including antenatal, postnatal and family leave.

The **Employment Equity Act** provides for women's equal access to the workplace and provides for affirmative action to ensure suitably qualified persons from designated groups, including women, have equal access to work opportunities.

The **Labour Relations Act** of 1995 prohibits both direct and indirect unfair discrimination, including discrimination based on family responsibility. It also requires workplaces to implement formal sexual harassment policies. This is reinforced by the **Protection from Harassment Act** of 2011.

The **Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act** of 2000 further reinforces these principles.

Domestic workers received protection through sectoral determinations under the **Basic Conditions of Employment Act** in 2002, and in 2020 the law was amended to enable domestic workers to claim from the Compensation Fund for work-related injuries or illnesses.

INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

To support women's economic empowerment, government has implemented a range of interventions and targeted programmes to foster entrepreneurship and increase women's participation in the workforce.



- Women Economic Assembly (WECONA)
- Presidential Employment Stimulus
- Women Empowerment Fund
- Black Industrialist Programme
- Social grants

Women Economic Assembly (WECONA)

In 2021, President Cyril Ramaphosa launched the Women's Economic Assembly, which aims to increase the participation of women-owned businesses in core areas of the economy.

- WECONA facilitated the establishment of the first 100% **women-owned car dealerships** in South Africa.
- Successful partnerships with various sectors have driven **gender transformation** in business ecosystems.
- The second Assembly showcased achievements and brought in new sectors to continue **advancing women's economic participation**.
- Women-owned **businesses have increased** from 18.9% in 2018 to 21.9% in 2021.

Presidential Employment Stimulus



PRESIDENTIAL
EMPLOYMENT
STIMULUS



PRESIDENTIAL
YOUTH
EMPLOYMENT
INTERVENTION

The **Presidential Employment Stimulus (PES)** and the **Presidential Youth Employment Intervention (PYEI)** have made a difference in the lives of many thousands of women around the country.

These initiatives have enabled the most rapid expansion of public employment in South Africa's history.

66%

of PES
beneficiaries
are women

70%

of PYEI
opportunities
secured by
young women

1.7

million
beneficiaries
reached

Women Empowerment Fund

The NEF Women Empowerment Fund aims to accelerate the provision of funding to businesses owned by black women using a range of funding instruments.



- **40% of NEF funding** approved for black women entrepreneurs over the past 12 years.



- **Over R4 billion** repaid by women investees.



- **3,600 jobs** created through NEF's investment of R900 million in 23 industrial projects.

 NATIONAL
EMPOWERMENT
FUND

Growing Black Economic Participation

Black Industrialist Programme

The Black Industrialist Programme creates an enabling environment for black industrialists and workers who were previously denied access to opportunities for economic ownership and participation.

Efforts are ongoing to bring more women into the programme.

800 black industrialists funded over the past 5 years

R18 billion value of investment in black industrialists

40% of government procurement spend to be allocated to women's businesses

R9 billion earmarked for women's businesses by the Industrial Development Corporation

Social grants

The state has an extensive social security net that provides social grants to mitigate the impact of poverty on society's most vulnerable. The **Child Support Grant** in particular has been instrumental in helping indigent and vulnerable women to support their families.

50%+ of those living below the poverty line are women

28 million South Africans receive social grants each month

9 million South Africans benefit from Social Relief of Distress Grant

80% of social grant recipients are women



sassa

SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIAL SECURITY AGENCY



STORIES OF IMPACT



FROM TOWNSHIP DREAMS TO INDUSTRIAL SUCCESS

Gwendolyn Mahuma-Madida

Remkor Manufacturing, a woman-owned enterprise in the heart of Johannesburg, is rewriting the narrative of success in the male-dominated world of manufacturing.

The story of Remkor begins with its founder Gwendolyn Mahuma, whose entrepreneurial spirit was ignited during her childhood in Ga-Rankuwa outside of Pretoria. Growing up in a family immersed in various township enterprises, she developed a keen business acumen from a young age.

In 2005, Mahuma launched her specialist investment company Mahuma Investment Holdings (MIH), which focuses on acquiring and building businesses that service the infrastructure sector. One of these enterprises, Remkor Manufacturing, crafts bespoke ferrous and nonferrous metal sheet products tailored for the rail, energy, transport and communications sectors.

Remkor's growth has been propelled by strategic partnerships and crucial government support, particularly from the government-owned Industrial Development Corporation (IDC).

"IDC provided Remkor Manufacturing with a loan to invest in much-needed equipment as well as working capital. This gave us an opportunity to increase our capacity in terms of offerings, as well as to reduce our dependence on other service providers," explains Mahuma.

The expansion has also allowed for an impressive surge in employment, with Remkor's workforce increasing from 25 to 104 employees. Beyond its commitment to quality fabrication, the company places a premium on skills development, offering a range of internships and learnerships.

Mahuma is keen to point out that the IDC funding provided much more than a financial boost. "Without the IDC loan, we would not have been in our current position," Mahuma reflects. "But I want to emphasise, it is not just about us, the owners, having grown our investment. Rather, it is about the wider ecosystem where jobs have been created, local skills have been expanded and the industry remains relevant in South Africa."

BUILDING THE FUTURE

Education and skills development

Since the end of apartheid, South Africa has made notable strides in ensuring educational access, with the Constitution guaranteeing every child the right to basic education without unfair discrimination.

Despite progress, stark inequalities and underperformance persist.

Poor classroom infrastructure and overcrowding have a negative impact on the

motivation and performance of both learners and teachers. Female learners in marginalised communities face additional challenges, including inadequate sanitation facilities and lack of sanitary products, both of which contribute to increased absenteeism. Female learners are also vulnerable to sexual violence and exploitation, including by teachers, further compromising their educational opportunities. Teen pregnancies in South Africa also remain high.



STRENGTHENING LAWS AND POLICIES

South African Schools Act, 1996

- Promotes access to education
- Promotes quality and democratic governance in the schooling system
- Makes schooling compulsory for children aged seven to 15
- Combats racism, sexism and all other forms of unfair discrimination



Children's Amendment Bill, 2023

- Recognises the importance of inclusive and holistic early childhood development (ECD)
- Aims to streamline the regulatory framework for ECD programmes for a more accessible and inclusive ECD sector

National Integrated Early Childhood Development (NIECD) Policy, 2015

- Establishes a comprehensive framework for providing quality ECD services to all children
- Sets out targets and commitments from the state

Skills Development Act, 1998

- Promotes workplace-based training and apprenticeships
- Enhances workforce skills to meet economic needs

Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges Act, 2006

- Governs vocational education and training colleges
- Supports skills development for employment and entrepreneurship



PROGRESS BY NUMBERS



BrandSouthAfrica

Since 2018, the female matriculation pass rate in South Africa has **exceeded that of males**.

Young women with degree equivalents or higher **outnumber their male counterparts by 50%**.

In 2022, **females comprised 67%** of all students meeting the academic and financial eligibility criteria for the **National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS)**.

In 2019, **NSFAS advanced women's rights** by introducing a **personal care allowance** for hygiene and sanitary products, benefitted 490,000 female university students by 2023.

The **Sanitary Dignity Programme** provides hygiene products to indigent women and girls in no-fee, special and farm schools. Between 2019 and 2023, the programme benefitted a total of 4.3 million learners.

In public higher education institutions in South Africa, **43% of permanent academic staff are women**, up from 13% since 1992.

At **Honours and Masters levels, 55% of female students** were consistently funded by the **National Research Council (NRF)**. At the PhD level, this target was achieved in the years 2020 and 2021.

WOMEN'S SAFETY

Ending gender-based violence

Gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) in South Africa is a deeply rooted issue, shaped by a history of colonialism, apartheid and inequality.

During the apartheid era, legal and social structures provided little to no protection for women, and the judicial system often failed to support victims, particularly black women.

Despite significant social progress since the end of apartheid, GBVF remains widespread, taking various forms such as intimate partner violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Addressing GBVF requires a multifaceted approach, including legislative reform, specialised support services and proactive prevention strategies.



<https://gbvf.org.za/>



35.5%

of women aged 18+ years have experienced **physical and/or sexual violence** in their lifetime



23.9%

of women aged 18+ have experienced **physical and/or sexual violence** by intimate partners in their lifetime

Source: Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) 2022 national GBV prevalence study





**STRENGTHENING
LAWS AND
POLICIES**

Government has introduced new laws to protect women and children in South Africa from abuse and violence.

National Council on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide Act, 2024

- Establishes the National Council on GBVF
- Provides for the objects and functions of the Council, including:
 - The appointment of the Board of the Council
 - The establishment of committees of the Board
 - The establishment of norms and standards for the provincial and local working groups
 - The making of regulations

Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Bill, 2022

- Expands the definition of incest
- Introduces a new offence of sexual intimidation
- Further regulates the National Register for Sex Offenders
- Regulates the reporting duties of people who are aware that sexual offences have been committed

Criminal Law (Forensic Procedures) Amendment Bill, 2022

- Introduces mandatory DNA collection for certain crimes
- DNA to be taken from people convicted for Schedule 8 offences - rape, murder, human trafficking, robbery and culpable homicide

Domestic Violence Amendment Bill, 2022

- Expands the definition of domestic violence to include actions such as controlling or bullying behaviour
- Makes provisions for protecting people in engagements, dating and in customary relationships
- Further regulates protection orders in response to domestic violence

Criminal and Related Matters Amendment Bill, 2022

- Amends various laws that address GBV and offences committed against vulnerable people
- Provides for additional procedures to reduce secondary victimisation of vulnerable people in court proceedings

PROGRESS BY NUMBERS



THUTHUZELA CENTRE | PIC: NEWS24. Samantha Lee-Jacobs

INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

The National Strategic Plan on GBVF is the government's comprehensive strategy for tackling all forms of violence and abuse against women and children. Since its launch in 2020, several new interventions have been implemented.

- Dedicated **Sexual Offences Courts** to bring relief and justice to survivors
- Support for survivors through the provision of **evidence kits** at police stations
- **Psychological and social services**
- **GBVF Response Fund** to support organisations engaged in the fight against GBVF
- Support for **Thuthuzela and Khuseleka Care Centres**, which provide vital services for GBV survivors
- Dedicated **GBVF desks** at police stations in hotspot areas, staffed by specially trained police officers



THUTHUZELA CARE CENTRES

65

65 Thuthuzela Care Centres nationwide provide support for GBV survivors



SEXUAL OFFENCES COURTS

115

115 Additional courts designated as Sexual Offences Courts



PROSECUTIONS

94%

0

100

94% conviction rate achieved in femicide prosecutions

75%

0

100

75% conviction rate achieved in sexual offences prosecutions



SURVIVOR SUPPORT

1,159

1,159 police stations now have victim-friendly rooms

134

134 GBVF desks in operation



EVIDENCE KITS

1.5

million

1.5 million DNA kits procured to reduce processing backlog

281

thousand

281,110 DNA reports processed between October 2022 and July 2023



FUNDING

R162

million

R162 million pledged to the GBVF Response Fund, benefitting 53 organisations

STORIES OF IMPACT



SOCA manager Advocate Nqwenelwa Mazwi

GBV SURVIVORS FIND SUPPORT AND JUSTICE AT THUTHUZELA CARE CENTRES

The Thuthuzela Care Centre (TCCs) project aligns directly with President Cyril Ramaphosa’s commitment to addressing GBV. With 65 centres across the country, TCCs play a critical role in offering support and justice for rape survivors.

The project is led by the National Prosecuting Authority’s Sexual Offences and Community Affairs Unit (SOCA). In the Free State, provincial SOCA manager Advocate Nqwenelwa Mazwi has seen its impact firsthand.

“We have four TCCs in the Free State and are currently building a TCC at the Elizabeth Ross Hospital in Phuthaditjhaba in QwaQwa,” Advocate Mazwi states. “There is always someone there to hold your hand, from the beginning to the end of the process. When people hear about this, it makes them more willing to come forward.”

Beyond their premises, TCCs lead campaigns to drive awareness and mitigate the root causes of GBV in communities. One example in the Free State is the ‘Tavern Project’, which targets taverns as problematic sites for incidents of GBV.

TCCs also actively distribute educational materials to hundreds of schools, covering crucial topics such as understanding sexual assault and the legal consequences of rape.

“We are having huge impacts in our community. This is also because of the GBV Summit which the President started in 2018, and also held in 2022, as well as the recent changes in GBV legislation,” notes Advocate Mazwi. “The entire country is becoming more passionate about fighting GBV and coming up with ways to report and prosecute these cases.”

Let’s end
gender-based
violence and
femicide in
South Africa.

Stand up.
Speak out.

Sign the pledge and
show your support
for the fight
against GBVF.

SIGN HERE

#endGBVF



WOMEN'S WELLBEING

During apartheid, South Africa's health care system was deeply fragmented and unequal, divided along racial and geographic lines.

The end of apartheid in 1994 marked the beginning of a monumental task: extending decent health care to *all* South Africans. The new Constitution enshrined the right of access to health care services, including reproductive health care. Government has also made strides in addressing the health needs of the most vulnerable in society, including women, who face unique challenges and barriers to care.

Progress has been made in reducing maternal and child mortality, largely through initiatives like free prenatal care at public clinics and the prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission. Women, who bear the brunt of the HIV pandemic, have also benefitted immensely from government's antiretroviral (ARV) treatment programme.

The next significant step in addressing health care inequities is the implementation of the National Health Insurance (NHI). The NHI represents a bold move towards ensuring that every South African, regardless of income, has access to quality health care.

Expanding health care access



STRENGTHENING LAWS AND POLICIES

National Strategic Plan on HIV/Aids/TB/STIs, 2023-2026

- Aims to accelerate prevention, reduce new HIV and TB infections and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and reduce morbidity and mortality by providing treatment, care and support for all

Free Health Care Policy, 1996

- Introduced by President Nelson Mandela, enables free access to health care for children under six years of age and pregnant women

Maternal, Perinatal and Neonatal Health Policy, 2001

- Focuses on the reproductive lifecycle, covering pre-conception, safe motherhood, antenatal care, foetal health, delivery, and neonatal and postnatal periods, including access to post-delivery contraception

Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1996

- Enables women to make decisions concerning reproduction

National Health Act, 2003

- Provides a framework for equitable health services in South Africa
- Ensures reproductive health care services are available at no cost to pregnant and lactating women at public health facilities
- Includes services such as contraception, antenatal care, abortion services, HIV management, STI treatment, reproductive cancer screening and treatment, and psycho-social support
- Prioritises maternal health by ensuring access to reproductive health care services, including antenatal and postnatal care
- Promotes the establishment of community health workers and clinics, improving health care access for women in rural and underserved areas

National Health Insurance Act, 2003

- Creates one public health fund with adequate resources to plan for and effectively meet the health care needs of the entire population and not a select few
- Aims to narrow the gap in health care standards for rich and poor
- Presents an innovative approach to funding universal health care based on social solidarity



INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

- HIV treatment
- Maternal wellbeing
- National Health Insurance



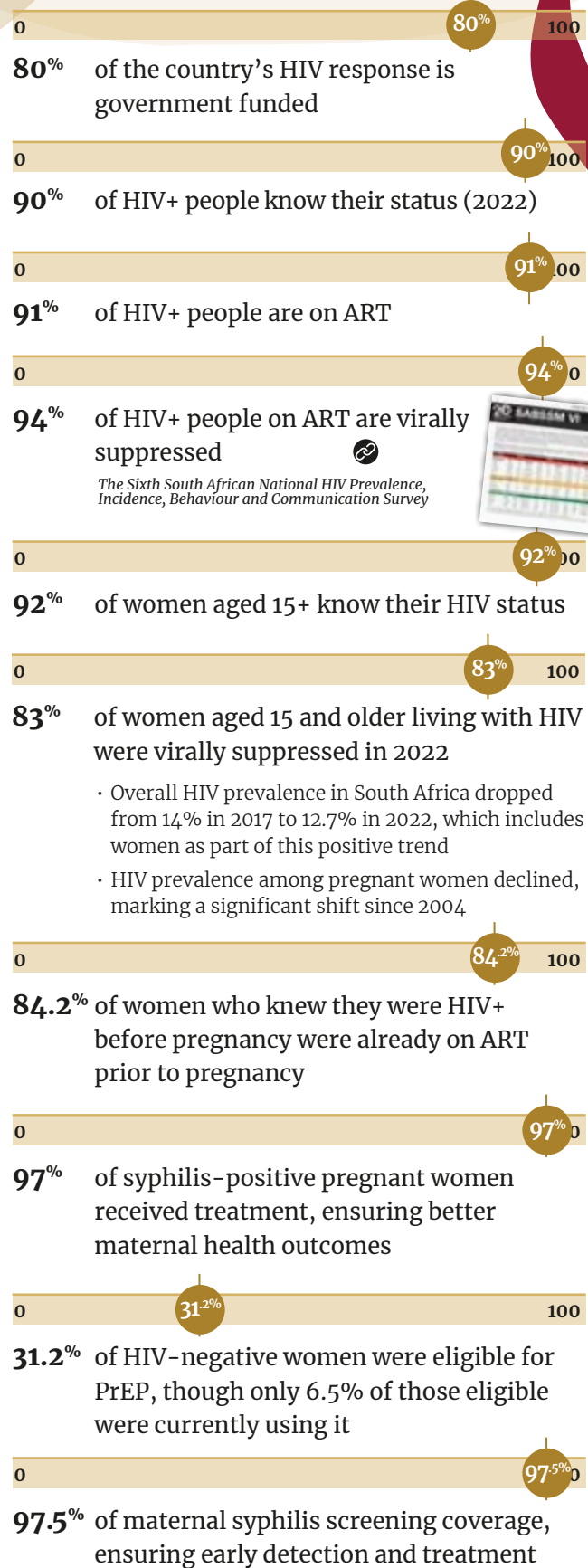
HIV treatment

One of the most pressing public health challenges in post-apartheid South Africa has been the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Since the first reported case in 1982, the country has made significant progress in reducing HIV deaths and infections.

In 2004, government rolled out free ARV therapy at public health care facilities nationwide, which has curbed the devastating impact of HIV on communities across the country.

Access to ARVs is crucial for women, who face a higher HIV prevalence than men. It also significantly lowers the risk of mother-to-child transmission.



Maternal wellbeing

Access to skilled care before, during and after childbirth can save the lives of both mothers and newborns. In South Africa, significant progress has been made in providing these essential services at free public health clinics, leading to better outcomes for women and their babies.

- The **maternal mortality** in facility ratio (MMFR) decreased from:
 - **114.9** deaths per 100,000 live births to
 - **88** deaths per 100,000 live births by 2020



23.4% reduction in MMFR

- The **neonatal death** in facility rate (iNMR) in facilities stabilised at:
 - **12.1** deaths per 1,000 live births between 2018 and 2020.



3.1% reduction in early neonatal death rates

- Early neonatal death rates decreased from:
 - **9.8** deaths per 1,000 live births to
 - **9.5** deaths per 1,000 live births during the same period.



National Health Insurance

The National Health Insurance (NHI) is a health financing system that aims to provide access to quality health care for all South Africans as enshrined in the Constitution – regardless of their ability to pay. President Cyril Ramaphosa signed the NHI Bill into law in May 2024, paving the way for the implementation of the NHI.

Universal health care is vital to addressing the needs of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of our society, including women.

Only 17% of women in South Africa have medical aid coverage, making NHI a crucial programme for improving access to quality health care.

Current progress

60 million user registrations on Health Patient Registration System



55,000+ public and private healthcare facilities verified on the Master Health Facilities List



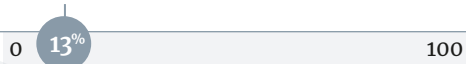
OWNERSHIP AND OPPORTUNITY

Ensuring equitable land access is crucial for advancing gender equality and economic empowerment in South Africa. Government has prioritised land access for women farmers, recognising their vital role in agricultural productivity and rural development.

Despite these efforts, challenges persist. The legacy of apartheid and discriminatory practices have created significant barriers. Cultural norms also continue to restrict progress, particularly in rural areas where patriarchal systems dominate.

Although women are active participants in agriculture, especially in subsistence farming, their access to land for homesteads and businesses remains limited. Only a fraction of government's land reform programme beneficiaries are women.

More work is needed to ensure women can fully benefit. Training in agricultural techniques is also essential for turning land ownership into sustainable economic empowerment. Partnerships with traditional leaders and investments in rural infrastructure are key.



13% of farms and agricultural land are owned by women



8,763 of 21,517 beneficiaries in the land redistribution programme were women between 2009 and 2017

Securing women's land rights

STRENGTHENING LAWS AND POLICIES

Various measures and programmes have been put in place to ensure more women become landowners in South Africa.

Extension of Security of Tenure Act

- Grants women equal land rights by including them in the definition of 'occupier'
- Ensures women have the same rights as men

Land Redistribution Programme

- Women are identified as a **special target group** for land allocation
- In 2021, 34,156 hectares (translating to **60% of total allocated land**) were allocated to **34 women** at an average of about 1,000 hectares per female
- Some farms being acquired under the Land Redistribution Programme are specifically **acquired for allocation to women** (advertises for allocation explicitly state that only women may apply)



Land Tenure Reform Programme

- Women made up 53% of the 450 beneficiaries of 7,127 hectares allocated for land tenure reform in 2020/21

White Paper on Land Reform

- Emphasises government's intention to target women in its land reform policy

Fortune 40 Youth Farmer Incubation Programme



The Mpumalanga Fortune 40 Youth Farmer Incubation Programme aims to foster and accelerate the growth of agriculture and agro-processing sectors and catalyse the participation of youth in the farming sector.

A fair and transparent recruitment and selection process was followed in choosing the beneficiaries, who are mainly youth and women.

The beneficiary youth were placed in a farm within a 50-kilometre radius from their homes. Eleven incubators were appointed based on their experience and capacity.

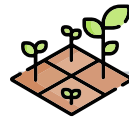
The Fortune 40 farms currently span a total of 1,600 hectares, with the potential for expansion as additional farms are secured.

INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP)

- Provides support to women farmers by improving access to land, agricultural training and resources

PROGRESS BY NUMBERS



2.3 million+ individuals have benefitted from land reform



177,504 female-headed households have benefitted from land reform



593,167 hectares of land transferred



83,056 land claims settled

STORIES OF IMPACT



CITRUS FARMER FINDS SUCCESS WITH GOVERNMENT BACKING

Once a trained social worker, Louisa Maloka-Mogotsi transformed her career path with the help of government support, opening the doors to the international citrus-farming market.

In 2016, Maloka-Mogotsi acquired a 66-hectare farm in Mooinooi, thanks to financial assistance from the North West Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. The funding not only enabled her to purchase the land but also provided the necessary equipment to expand production and improve the quality of her crops.

Today, she exports several orange varieties and Lisbon lemons to the Middle East and Russia. “I appreciate that with the intervention the government gave us, I can steer the business in the right direction,” she reflects.

Funding and upskilling female farmers is a key government priority, as highlighted by the MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, Desbo Mohono. “I am encouraging youth and female farmers to take heed of the opportunities presented to them by the government,” she notes. “They should not underestimate their potential with the belief that agriculture is a male-dominated industry. The department is committed to providing quality services and support to emerging farmers.”