

DEBATE ON BUDGET VOTE NO 7: WOMEN, CHILDREN AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

UCDP : DITSHETELO IC

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Gender equality and the well-being of children go hand in hand. Gender equality furthers the cause of child survival and development and produces a double dividend: It benefits both women and children. Healthy, educated and empowered women have healthy, educated and confident daughters and sons. Gender equality will not only empower women to overcome poverty and live full and productive lives, but will better the lives of children, families and countries as well.

Women's equal rights and influence in the key decisions that shape their lives and those of children must be enhanced in three distinct arenas: the household, the workplace and the political sphere. Former State President Thabo Mbeki said in 1998 " When we are measuring our progress, we must measure it against the progress we make among women, the majority of the poor are women, particularly rural women, particularly black women". Sadly, twelve years later, this is still the case.

Feminisation of poverty is a growing phenomenon and women are increasingly the ones who suffer most in poverty. Gender equality is not only morally right, it is pivotal to human progress and sustainable development. Achieving Millennium Development Goal Number 3: promoting gender equality and empowering women, will also contribute to achieving all the other goals, from reducing poverty and hunger to saving children's lives, improving maternal health, ensuring universal education, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, and ensuring environmental sustainability.

We now have a Ministry of Women, Children and People with disabilities and quite frankly one doesn't know whether this is to be celebrated or not. Looking at the budget that's been allocated to the Ministry is disheartening. UCDP believes that we must go back to drawing board and properly conceptualise this Ministry and what it is expected to do and how it should go about doing it.

The biggest obstacle to gender equality has not been lack of gender sensitive legislation, but implementation and the Ministry needs to be properly constituted, properly placed, properly mandated and capacitated in order to tackle issues of implementation. Notwithstanding, UCDP accepts the budget vote.