

90% of domestic workers fit into this income category. The unemployment problem is therefore coupled with the fact that amongst the ranks of those who are employed, there is great disparity and inequity in how people are remunerated. This problem has gendered dimensions to it in that it is often women who are located in low-paying jobs. This is largely because the gendered roles traditionally ascribed to women by society, are not socially valued and rewarded in monetary terms. In terms of the triple role theory, women play an instrumental role in reproductive work, i.e. in nurturing and caring for children and the aged, in community work i.e. dealing with social issues that impact upon the collective well-being such as initiatives to raise funds for schools, churches etc and in productive work where they play an instrumental role in contributing towards the growth of the economy through formal/ informal employment. The workload of many women is therefore very intense and many studies have found that on average, women work longer hours than men and often get up earlier in the morning and go to bed later at night.²⁹ Within this context, it is important that the gendered disparities of remuneration and the social values ascribed to the roles that women play, are subverted.

In a context where an analysis of poverty in South Africa reveals that 45% of the population (an estimated 18 million people) live on less than \$2 per day³⁰ and where the feminisation of poverty is such that the majority of the poor are women, the scope of the challenges that lie ahead in dealing with this problem is vast. Unemployment has devastating effects on the individuals concerned and their dependents, which transcends the loss of income and permeates into issues of social participation and personal identity. The life trajectories of those who are impacted upon by poverty are therefore cause for great social concern. Sustainable growth at a rate of 6% would require that these imbalances be effectively countered.

Historically, men dominate the more profitable economic sectors of finance, construction, manufacturing and value added service sectors.³¹ Women are generally found at the lower, subordinate end of the economy.³² This structural impediment acts as a barrier to women's entry into the economy. Women tend to be concentrated in home crafts, trade, hawking, personal services and the retail sector.³³ In the manufacturing sector, women are concentrated in the 'soft goods sector' with a strong presence in the textile and clothing sector and the food and beverage sectors.³⁴ Women have a small presence in the construction, metal products and machinery sectors. Within the small medium and micro enterprise spectrum, women are concentrated in the survivalist sectors.

²⁹ Moser, C (1994).

³⁰ Report of the Committee of Inquiry into a Comprehensive System of Social Security for South Africa, March 2002.

³¹ Statistics South Africa (2002) Women and Men in South Africa: Five Years On.

³² Statistics South Africa (2002) Women and Men in South Africa: Five Years On.

³³ Statistics South Africa (2002) Women and Men in South Africa: Five Years On.

³⁴ Statistics South Africa (2002) Women and Men in South Africa: Five Years On.

Women lack mobility in the economy as a result of no access to capital, technical and managerial skills, access to credit, markets, raw materials and services necessary to grow and expand.³⁵ Male owned and controlled enterprises outnumber those owned and controlled by women³⁶. The fact that many women have great difficulty in accessing finance is a major impediment to women's economic empowerment.

The lower average income of women in South Africa is the result of a range of inter-linked forces. Firstly, women employees congregate in certain sectors of the economy, for example in services rather than production.³⁷ Secondly, women congregate in certain jobs within each sector.³⁸ With both the sectors and occupations, the positions in which women find themselves are accorded less value, lower pay and fewer benefits. The concentration of women in the least skilled and lowest paid jobs limits their access to management technical training and denies them management experience that would enable them to successfully manage an enterprise.³⁹ Recent labour legislation i.e. Labour Relations Act (Act 66 of 1995), Basic Conditions of Employment Act (Act 75 of 1997), Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998) and the Skills Development Act (Act 97 of 1998) begins to address issues around job security, protection against discrimination, workplace mobility, maternity pay, sexual harassment, family responsibility and parental rights.

It is important to understand the economic context in which women operate, including the challenges they face. The many economic challenges faced by women include the regulatory environment, lack of educational opportunities, culture, societal perceptions, lack of access to management training and job opportunities, household division of labour, risk profiling, lack of access to finance and a lack of access to insurance coverage.⁴⁰ These economic challenges create particular gender inequalities in the South African economy including unemployment, sectoral division of labour, lack of control responsibilities, ownership patterns, disparity in earnings and involvement in entrepreneurial activities. Women's discrimination and exclusion have hampered the growth of the South African economy and women's contribution to the economy. Economic studies focusing on women's contribution, position and participation in the economy have generally focused on the macro picture of the landscape neglecting the experiences of individual women.

6.2 The Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (ASGISA)

The Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (ASGISA) consists of a limited set of interventions that are intended to serve as catalysts to accelerated and shared growth and development. The core objective of

³⁵ Department of Trade and Industry (2003) Women in Business. A DTI Special Report

³⁶ Statistics South Africa (2002) Women and Men in South Africa: Five Years On.

³⁷ Statistics South Africa (2002) Women and Men in South Africa: Five Years On

³⁸ Statistics South Africa (2002) Women and Men in South Africa: Five Years On

³⁹ Department of Trade and Industry (2001) Women in the Economy in Sisebenza Sonke (Policy Journal of the Department) Issue 2

⁴⁰ Department of Trade and Industry (2005) Draft Strategic framework on Gender and Women's Economic Empowerment

ASGISA is to halve poverty and unemployment by 2014, which is mostly to be facilitated by rigorous economic growth. South Africa as enjoyed steady economic growth in the last few years, which rose to approximately 5% in 2005. This is the result of good economic policies, a positive domestic and international environment. The Government has set out a two-phase target for growth rates of 4.5% between 2005 and 2009 and 6% between 2010 and 2014.

Economic growth is presently imbalanced, due to the fact that it is based on a combination of strong commodity prices, strong capital inflows and strong domestic consumer demand, rooted in anti-poverty measures, growing employment, and rising asset prices. The effect of this combination has been to strengthen the currency, making it difficult for exporters outside the commodity sector or those who compete with imports to remain competitive. This led to a trade deficit of nearly 4.5% of GDP in 2005, demonstrating South Africa's challenge to compete effectively outside of the commodity sector. This has led the government to the conclusion that present economic growth rates are imbalanced. In addition, a third of South African households do not yet benefit directly from the country's economic growth. Unemployment still persists and growth has not been adequately shared. The divide between the first and second economy has meant that those who live in the second economy have benefited less from economic growth.

ASGISA is not intended to cover all elements of a comprehensive development plan. Rather, it consists of a limited set of interventions that are intended to serve as catalysts to Accelerated and Shared Growth Development⁴¹. Furthermore, ASGISA does not replace GEAR as a macroeconomic policy. Rather, most of the interventions are built on the micro-economic reforms and agreements reached at the Growth and Development Summit. Several binding constraints have been identified in implementing ASGISA. These are:

- **The volatility and level of the currency** - currency volatility deters investors in tradable goods and services outside of the commodity sector.
- **The cost, efficiency and capacity of the national logistics system** - Because of backlogs in infrastructure, investment, inadequate planning, and in some cases market structures that do not encourage competition, the price of moving goods and conveying services over distance is higher than it should be.
- **Shortage of suitably skilled labour amplified by the cost effects on labour of apartheid spatial patterns** – South Africa lacks sufficient skilled professionals, managers and artisans, and the uneven quality of education remains a contributory factor. In addition the price of labour of the poor is pushed up by the fact that many live far from their places

⁴¹ President Thabo Mbekhi; State of the Nation Address 2006.

of work. Women, in particular, are located in unskilled and low-paying sectors of the economy.

- **Barriers to entry, limits to competition and limited new investment opportunities** - The South African economy remains relatively concentrated, and in some cases market structure negatively influences the possibilities of downstream production or service industry development. Competition law and industrial policies need to be strengthened to counteract these factors.
- **Regulatory environment and the burden on small and medium businesses** - The mediocre performance of the small, medium and micro business sector in terms of contribution to GDP and employment partly arises from the sub-optimal regulatory environment. The administration of tax, the planning system, municipal regulation, the administration of labour law, and in specific sectoral regulatory environments hampers the development of businesses. Because many women are located in the informal economy, particular as informal traders, the regulatory environment on SMMEs has significant gendered dimensions.
- **Deficiencies in state organisation, capacity and leadership** - Weaknesses in government organisation, in the capacity of key institutions (including some of those providing economic services), and insufficiently decisive leadership in policy development and implementation all negatively impact on the country's growth potential.

6.2.1 Infrastructure investment

In order to eradicate the backlog that has emerged in the public infrastructure sector, public sector investment should rise to approximately 8% of GDP. In this regard, Government and public enterprise investment expenditure of R372 billion is planned over the MTEF⁴². The three spheres of Government will be responsible for about half of the total public sector capital investment over the period through a range of programmes at national department level.

Key areas of expenditure, incorporating all spheres of Government are provincial and local roads, bulk water infrastructure and water supply networks, energy distribution, housing, schools and clinics, business centres, sports facilities, and multipurpose government service centres, including police stations, courts and correctional facilities. Electronic communications is also a key commercial and social infrastructure.

Public sector infrastructure spending has significant potential spin-offs in terms of the generation or regeneration of domestic supply industries, small business development and empowerment. Government seeks to maximise

⁴² Approximately 40% of these funds will be spent by public enterprises, mostly Eskom (R84 billion) and Transnet (R47 billion). The main areas of expenditure will be power generation, power distribution, rail transport, harbours and an oil pipeline, with the aim of improving the availability and reliability of infrastructure services in response to rapidly growing demand.

the positive impact of these spin-offs on the domestic economy. One of the intentions of the Infrastructure Investment Programme is to address the maintenance backlog out of which skills will be needed and sustainable new jobs could be created for artisans.

6.2.2. Sector Strategies

Several competitive sectors have been targeted for focus, the most important of which are tourism, Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), and Biofuels, all of which are labour intensive, rapidly growing sectors world wide, suited to South African circumstances, and open to opportunities for Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) and small business development. South Africa has already attracted about 5 000 BPO jobs, and the sector has the potential for 100 000 additional direct and indirect jobs by 2009. It is important to monitor the ways in which women benefit from these opportunities. Challenges in expanding this sector include marketing, skills/training, telecoms costs and regulatory challenges. In this regard, a tailor-made incentive environment for BPO is being finalised.

The Tourism sector has already grown rapidly, and is ready for a second phase of growth that could increase its contribution to GDP from 8% to 12%, and increase employment by up to 400 000 by 2014. Key issues to be addressed in this sector are marketing, air access, safety, and skills development. This industry also requires a strong Government/private sector partnership. There are several cross cutting industrial policy challenges being addressed as well, including:

- Inadequate competition and import parity pricing.
- Capacity for trade negotiations.
- A more co-ordinated Africa development strategy.
- Better incentives for private R&D investment.
- Better use of BBBEE to encourage industry transformation, beyond the transfer of equity.

Other high priority industries, though less advanced, are agriculture and agro-processing (including Biofuels), chemicals, metals beneficiation, creative industries, clothing and textiles, durable consumer goods, wood, pulp and paper.

6.2.3. Education And Skills Development

For both public infrastructure and the private investment programmes, the biggest impediment is the shortage of professional, technical and specialised skills, resulting from the policies of the apartheid era and the slowness of South Africa's education and skills development institutions to catch up with the current acceleration of economic growth. Key measures to address the skills challenge in the educational sphere are to focus on the quality of education. The Department of Labour has also launched a new skills development strategy in the 2005-2009 period. This strategy seeks to address current weaknesses and bottlenecks. Areas of focus include, inter alia, the

creation of a policy framework within which grants can be made to enhance the capacity and responsiveness of public providers to sectoral and national needs, the review of funding regulations for Small Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) and large firms, the setting and monitoring of standards for Sector Education Training Authority (SETA) performance, and the creation of employment skills development agencies in order to lessen the administrative burden of employers who seek to register learners into learnerships. The following key outputs have been identified by the Department in this regard:⁴³

- The Human Resource Development Strategy will be revised and implemented.
- A report on the achievement of targets in relation to the National Skills Development Strategy (2001 – 2005) will be produced.
- The National Skills Development Strategy (2005 – 20010) must be implemented.
- The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) review must be completed and implemented.
- The restructuring of the NQF must be finalised and new legislation passed and implementation commenced.

It is imperative that the gendered implications of these initiatives and the ways in which they impact on enhancing the quality of women's lives are monitored. Among the key interventions in the skills sphere are the development of an Employment Services System, and the second phase of the National Skills Development Strategy. A short-term project is the development of a scarce skills database based directly on the expected needs of the over 100 individual projects included in ASGISA.

Other key skills projects include the deployment of experienced professionals and managers to local government to improve project development implementation and maintenance capabilities. A new institution is the Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA), whose purpose is to identify urgent skills needs and provide quick and effective solutions. Solutions may include special training programmes, bringing back retirees or South Africans and Africans working out of the continent, and drawing in new immigrants where necessary. It may also include mentoring and overseas placement of trainees to fast track their development. JIPSA will have an initial timetable of 18 months placement of skills.

6.2.4. Eliminating The Second Economy

Without interventions directly addressed at reducing South Africa's historical inequalities, growth is unsustainable. Interventions to address deep-seated inequalities and that target the marginalised poor are critical to bridge the gap with the second economy, ultimately eliminating the second economy.

⁴³ Strategic Plan, Department of Labour, 2006-2009.

The Government indicated that in order to achieve ASGISA's goal of halving unemployment and poverty by 2014, it will have to work more closely with women and the youth. With regard to women the focus will be on:

- Human Resource training.
- Ensuring they have access to finance.
- Fast-tracking them out of the second economy.
- Ensure their significant participation in agriculture and creative industries.
- Improve their access to basic services.
- Increase their participation in the expanded public works programme.

All the sector strategies, such as the strategies for tourism or BPO, will have elements addressing development goals in the second economy, with the targeted beneficiaries mostly being youth and women. There are several other components of BBBEE, which will be leveraged to support shared growth. These include:

- Provisions for access to finance for women and youth.
- Funding commitments for housing and small business loans.
- Skills development commitments.
- Social responsibility commitments.
- Other commitments to enterprise development. In addition, BBBEE charters will be assessed from time to time to establish how broad based their impact has been.

Notwithstanding these objectives, there are still significant challenges in giving effect to BBBEE, particularly in enhancing the quality of women's lives. Southall (2005) reports that black control on the Johannesburg Securities Exchange (JSE) amounts to approximately 6% at the end of 2004, even though the stock market had boomed with a 50% increase in market capitalisation to 2.500 billion. MTN accounts for approximately 70% of black-controlled market capitalisation on the stock market.

The structure of capitalism in South Africa remains heavily monopolised and dominated by a small group of banks, financial institutions, mining houses and holding groups which are able to exert significant market influence. The top 8 South African corporations control approximately 61.7% of the total assets of non-state corporations. The following table reflects share ownership on the JSE by percentage of market capitalisation of the JSE:

Table 1: Share ownership on the JSE by percentage of market capitalisation⁴⁴

Group and Type	2000	2004
Conglomerate		
Anglo American	23.6	18.7
Rembrandt	11	7.9

⁴⁴ Sourced from Southall, 2005

Sasol	2.2	4.2
SAB Miller (foreign)	2.8	5.1
Subtotal	39.6	35.9
Institutional		
Sanlam	13.2	2.7
Old Mutual	11	4.5
Standard/ Liberty	5.2	4.7
Absa	-	2.2
Other	6.7	10.3
RMB Firstrand	2.9	4.9
Investec/ Fedsure	1.9	0.8
Bidvest	1	1.2
Subtotal	41.9	31.3
Other		
Foreign groups	3.9	18.5
Black groups (includes all companies that have a significant black influence)	5.7	6.3
Company Directors	8.9	5.8
State	-	2.2
Subtotal	18.5	32.8

Within this context, the economic empowerment of black women is still a significant challenge.

As regards the growth of small businesses, several interventions have been designed to provide support to them. Several large interventions will be supported by the development of the Small Enterprise Development Agency based at the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), which is making a stronger operational distinction between small and medium business and micro businesses, and adding to its capacity to take small businesses into manufacturing. In respect of municipalities, there is an urgent need to improve the capacity of local government to support local economic development. Another key Second Economy intervention is the Expanded Public Works Programme, which will be expanded beyond its original targets in terms of ASGISA.

The mandate of the EPWP has been extended to a larger number of roads and some larger road projects. This will entail about R4.5 billion additional funds over the MTEF, about 63 000 more people maintaining roads, and about 100 000 additional people in jobs averaging 6 months in roads building and training. In addition, 1 000 more small black contractors will be developed. New access roads will have a significant impact on conditions and opportunities in some poor and rural areas. It is critical that women benefit from these opportunities in substantive ways.

Other new elements of the EPWP will be a concerted roll-out of its Early Childhood Development component, home-based care and the finalisation of

a process to support local governments in developing larger EPWP projects. A final set of second economy interventions is centred on the challenge of realising the value of dead assets—land, houses, livestock, skills, indigenous knowledge and other assets that have intrinsic value not currently realised. The objective is to create sustainable bridges between the first and second economy to enable growth and graduation to a sustainable economy; unlock dead assets/asset poverty in poor people's hands e.g. livestock, housing, land, etc; to promote local economic development.

In relation to the second economy, much focus is on women and youth in the rural and urban areas and on programme interventions that can be up-scaled to achieve mass impact. Cooperatives, land reform and productive use of land, and housing stock problems of the range between R50 000 and R150 000 will receive special attention. Follow-up on already agreed initiatives that are meant to benefit the second economy will also be prioritised.

6.3 The role of the Department of Trade and Industry

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has a crucial role to play so as to ensure the inclusion of women in the economy.⁴⁵ The 2005 Gender Policy and Strategy guide the policies and programmes of the Department so as to mainstream the economic empowerment of women. The DTI Gender Policy and Strategy acknowledges that current economic policies and strategies of government do not have a gender focus.⁴⁶ Some policies are gender neutral.⁴⁷ The task of the strategy is to ensure that gender is integrated into the different components of the Department's activities. The underpinnings of the Department's strategy include the promotion of equality, recognition that women are not a homogenous group, need for corrective action, economic empowerment of women, importance of participation, representation, the need for greater partnerships and a gender target of 30% in terms of representation and budget allocation – five percent will be reserved for rural and disabled women.⁴⁸ The DTI is currently developing gender specific economic performance indicators and institutional performance indicators in the following areas:

- Gross domestic product (GDP)
- Employment
- Investment
- Exports
- SMMEs
- BEE
- Empowerment
- Future competitiveness

⁴⁵ Thabethe E (2006). Advancing Women's Economic Empowerment Through Entrepreneurship by Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry

⁴⁶ Department of Trade and Industry (2005) Draft Strategic framework on Gender and Women's Economic Empowerment

⁴⁷ Rustin C (2004) Gender Sensitive Budget Analysis. Parliament. Information Services: Research

⁴⁸ Department of Trade and Industry (2005) Draft Strategic framework on Gender and Women's Economic Empowerment

- Geographical spread of social and productive investment.

The gender focal point in the DTI is the Gender and Women's Empowerment (GWE) Unit whose task it is to mainstream gender activities. So as to ensure that gender is placed on the national developmental agenda the GWE Unit has established the Women's Economic Empowerment Advisory Committee that provides support to the Women Ministers Forum. The DTI gender strategy proposes the establishment of the following structures:

- Inter-departmental Task Team on Gender and the Economy
- National Committee for Business Women
- Ministerial Special Task Force on Women's Economic Empowerment
- South African National Council on Gender and Women's Economic Empowerment

Current anchor programmes of the Department include the South African Women Entrepreneurs Network (SAWEN), targeted financial schemes (offered by Khula Finance, Development Bank of Southern Africa and the Industrial Development Corporation) and the Technology for Women in Business (TWIB). As part of ASGISA and the 2005 Gender Strategy, the Department is to launch a number of programmes including a targeted women's economic fund, a procurement directory for women entrepreneurs, skills training programmes for women through the Women Empowerment programme and a retail facility for products produced by women.⁴⁹

The DTI's focus areas for the 2002/03 to 2008/ 09 period, as contained in the Strategic Plan, centres on raising investment, broadening economic participation and increasing competitiveness.⁵⁰ The focus areas guide the five medium term strategic areas of the department, namely enhancing greater economic coordination in the economy, promoting exports, raising investment, improving economic growth, promoting regional integration and promoting greater participation, equity and redress. The gender targeted objectives of the Department include increasing access to finance, improving access to both domestic and international markets, ensure that the budget is sensitive to the economic experiences of women and increase women's access, control, management and ownership of economic resources.⁵¹ A gendered approach to the Department's Strategic Plan must be seen in the context of ASGISA. The DTI gender strategy focuses on three main pillars namely

- Policies and programmes that target poor women
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Institutional management and oversight

The primary target of the Department includes women involved in small, micro and medium enterprises. Secondary targets for support will include women

⁴⁹ Department of Trade and Industry (2005) Draft Strategic framework on Gender and Women's Economic Empowerment

⁵⁰ Parliament of South Africa (2006) Budget Report of Trade and Industry Portfolio Committee

⁵¹ Department of Trade and Industry (2005) Draft Strategic framework on Gender and Women's Economic Empowerment

involved in the following organisations: chambers of business, public institutions, business support agencies, business advisors, community based enterprise development initiatives and academic institutions.

Since 1994, the government has attempted to steer the South African economy away from inequality, oppression and exploitation. It is generally accepted that women, especially black women, carried the burden of economic oppression during apartheid⁵². Since 1994, the government has worked very hard to change the gendered dimensions of the economy. While the South African economy continues to undergo fundamental transformation, features of the apartheid economy continue to hamper the transformation process⁵³. The Department has acknowledged that it can improve upon the gendered implications of its key policies including the small enterprise development strategy, black economic empowerment strategy, cooperatives development strategy, preferential procurement and industrial policy. The Department has identified the following growth sectors that can be prioritised so as to maximise women's full economic participation and potential namely: services, agriculture, arts, crafts, tourism, clothing, textiles, minerals and energy.

Gender empowerment in South Africa means that equality and non-sexism are now the responsibility of the country, its government and its people. The introduction of democracy in South Africa has presented new opportunities and challenges for the goal of women's empowerment and emancipation.⁵⁴ The task for government is to move away from gender neutral to gender aware policies and programmes that are inclusive and targeted.

In relation to the 2005 Gender Strategy, the Department should set targets and clear implementation timeframes. Despite the policy interventions and monetary commitments by government, women continue to experience difficult and different circumstances when participating in the economy compared to their male counterparts.

7. Significant achievements at a social level

The following constitutes a short synopsis of significant achievements at a social level.⁵⁵

- **Promotion of a human rights culture:** South Africa has sought to promote gender equity within a human rights framework. In partnership with the South African Human Rights Commission and the Commission for Gender Equality, the South African government has embarked upon a process to develop a National Plan on the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights (NAP). This entails research on the human rights

⁵² ANC (1994) Reconstruction and Development Programme. Umanyano Publications

⁵³ Department of Finance 1996. Growth, Employment and Redistribution: A Macroeconomic Strategy Government Printers.

⁵⁴ University of the Western Cape: Gender Equity Unit and Southern African Research and Documentation Centre (1997) Beyond Inequalities: Women in South Africa.

⁵⁵ The following is sourced primarily from the Beijing +10 Report, OSW, 2005.

situation in South Africa that will direct the protection, promotion and equal enjoyment of human rights by all. The advancement of women and the achievement of gender equality feature centrally in NAP.⁵⁶

- **Social grants:** Since the transition to democracy in 1994, the government has focused on addressing racial inequalities in the administering of social grants and on extending the scope of their coverage. Because women constitute the majority of the poor in South Africa, the creation of an adequate social welfare net is important from a gender perspective. Social grants include the Old-Age Grant, Disability Grant, Child Support Grant, War Veterans' Grant, Grant-In-Aid, Foster Child Grant and Care Dependency Grant and Social Relief of Distress. The number of grant beneficiaries increased from 2.5 million in 1997 to about 7.7 million in 2004.⁵⁷ This increase is attributed to the fact that the grants now reach people previously excluded. The grants have benefited a large number of women and children.
- **Education:** Much resource have been devoted to restructuring the education system in the post-1994 period. The life-long education of women from the stage of girl-child to adulthood has been factored into the restructuring process.
- **Health:** Some of the measures to address basic health needs have included free health services for children under the age of 6, pregnant women and unemployed people.
- **Water:** In 2000, the government introduced policy measures that allowed for the provision of free basic services to poor households. Water, sanitation and energy were identified as basic services. Because women and girl-children tend to shoulder the burden emanating from poor access to water and sanitation, this problem has gendered dimensions to it. Over the course of the past few years, there has been a significant increase in the number of people with access to water, sanitation and energy.
- **Housing:** The government's housing programme is important because it is one of a few interventions aimed at placing a physical asset directly in the hands of a household living in poverty. Through the House-Building and Subsidy Programme, the government provides subsidies to people with incomes up to R3 500 per month and to the aged, disabled and indigent. In the 1994-2003 period, 1985 545 subsidies were approved, amounting to a total expenditure of about R 22 22 billion. Forty-nine per cent of all subsidies approved were granted to women.
- **Land:** The government has sought to integrate gender considerations in its restitution, tenure reform and land redistribution policy

⁵⁶ Beijing +10 Report, 2005 2005.

⁵⁷ Annual Report of the Department of Social Development, 2003-2004.

instruments, which have been implemented to alleviate poverty. The restitution of land rights entails restoration of ownership of land or compensating victims of forced removal. The White Paper on Land Reform makes provision for the removal of laws that continue to discriminate against women. It provides for the removal of all legislative restrictions on women's access to land use, compels government to implement procedures that promote women's participation in decision-making and emphasises that the purpose of land reform is to bring about equitable opportunities for both men and women. It also indicates that priority must be given to women. Because of this, the Sectoral Land Reform Gender Policy was introduced to create an enabling environment for women to access, own, control, use and manage land, as well as access credit for productive use of land.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, South Africa has made great strides in enhancing the quality of women's lives and in putting in place the policy, legislative and institutional frameworks within gender equity can begin to be addressed. Notwithstanding this, there are still significant challenges in eradicating gender inequity at a systemic level. The national gender machinery has a critical role to play in monitoring the extent to which this is being done and the extent to which the lives of ordinary women are being improved upon.

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