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CGE MEDIA LAUNCH: 22 APRIL 2021

CGE Media Statement on the launch of

CGE's Review and Assessment of implementation of the Emergency Response Action Plan (ERAP) on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF)

Greetings to all our Commissioners, staff, and members of the Media. Welcome to the official launch of our report on the CGE's Review and Assessment of the Implementation of the Government's Emergency Action Response Plan (ERAP) on Gender Based Violence and Femicide.

All protocols observed.

On 18 September 2019, amidst heightened public concerns and widespread media reporting of escalating incidents of violence against women in the country, and mounting pressure from civil society and women's organisations for urgent action, President Cyril Ramaphosa unveiled an Emergency Response Action Plan (ERAP) to fast-track a programme of action to address gender-based violence and femicide in the country. This announcement was accompanied by a public pledge to make available R1.1 billion in funds, later increased to R1.6 billion.

These government interventions were published in an official document labelled "Emergency Response Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide in South Africa, October 2019" which identified five (5) key areas of intervention, namely:

1. Access to justice for victims of crime and survivors



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2. Change norms and behaviours through high-level prevention efforts.
3. Urgently respond to victims and survivors of GBV
4. Strengthen accountability and architecture to adequately respond to the scourge of gender-based violence.
5. Prioritise interventions that facilitate economic opportunities for addressing women's economic vulnerability.

All these five thematic areas are critical in terms of effective interventions by government with the potential to transform the circumstances and conditions of lives of victims/survivors of violence and abuse.

The ERAP initiative was a six-months emergency initiative consisting of specified interventions, indicators, and targets, with lead departments assigned specific responsibilities under the 5 thematic areas outlined above. The responsibility for the coordination and oversight of this initiative were assigned to the Interim Steering Committee on GBVF. The ERAP initiative was rolled out from October 2019 to March 2020. On completion of the six months of implementation, the Interim Steering Committee on GBVF compiled and released a progress report labelled "Gender-Based Violence and Femicide Consolidated ERAP report – Update", outlining progress and achievements made by the various implementing agencies during those six months.

It was important for the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) to conduct its independent review and assessment of the implementation of the ERAP given our Constitutional mandate, powers and functions as outlined in the Commission for Gender Equality Act 39 of 1996. These include "monitoring and evaluation of policies and practices of state organs, state agencies, public bodies and the private sector in order to promote gender equality and the rights of women", and to prepare and submit reports to Parliament containing



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recommendations on the protection, development, attainment, and promotion of gender equality. In addition, the CGE further has a long-standing strategic focus on monitoring and assessing government's responses and interventions to address gender-based violence in the country.

The aim of the review was to assess the extent of progress in the implementation of ERAP interventions and targets. This assessment was carried out after completion of implementation of these interventions. The work was based on assessment of performance information provided by implementing agencies such as government departments, related agencies, and other state institutions.

The Emergency Response Action Plan identified a total of 39 interventions and 80 specified targets to be achieved by over 22 government departments and related entities.

In our view, the ERAP initiative was a timely, necessary, and crucial national response to an urgent national crisis. It served an important purpose of placing on the nation's agenda an important set of urgent priorities and interventions to address the plight of women and girls facing the scourge of gender-based violence. We are pleased to see that our government listened to urgent public demands and calls for urgent action not only by allocating resources but also assigning important operational responsibilities to relevant state institutions to deal with gender-based violence.

The Commission was also aware of the enormity of the responsibility for coordinating and overseeing the implementation of such a major national initiative at very short notice, and for putting in place a structure for holding implementing agencies accountable. This responsibility was placed in the



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hands of the Interim Steering Committee (ISC) on Gender Based Violence and Femicide, within the Presidency. This shows the extent to which the government took this initiative seriously. The Interim Steering Committee was responsible for crucial decision-making pertaining to implementation, such as setting goals and priorities, determining strategic direction and focus as well as funding for programme interventions/activities.

The findings of our review are contained in a report that we are launching today. This report is intended to make public the Commission's assessment of the implementation of the ERAP initiative, including some of the challenges that we identified, and how these could be addressed going forward.

Our review does highlight a number of positive achievements of several targets within the six months life span of the ERAP initiative as set out in the base document. Among these achievements are the following:

- The training of 2,238 SAPS Officers in pro-active interventions
- The establishment of 2 new Shelters/White Doors of hope for victims of GBV
- 50 audits carried out on Courts building and SAPS Police Stations to facilitate victim centric buildings.
- The establishment of 11 Sexual Offences Courts
- Availability of evidence collection kits at all designated health facilities daily
- The submission of the Victims Support Service Bill and Policy to Cabinet in March 2020.



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However, while the Commission's review report highlighted some of these positive interventions and achievements under the ERAP initiative, overall the report notes that many of the interventions were not achieved as intended. As indicated earlier, the ERAP base planning document had set out a total of 80 targets to be achieved within the six months period. Our assessment revealed that out of this total of 80 targets,

- **Only 17 targets (or 21.25%) were fully achieved.**
- **12 targets (or 15.0%) were partially achieved.**
- **Most of the targets (51 or 63.75%) were not achieved.**

Our review has identified several key operational challenges that we believe served to undermine the implementation of the ERAP initiative, and ultimately led to many important targets not being achieved. Among these challenges are the following:

- Challenges relating to the effective coordination of departmental activities across the thematic areas mentioned above;
- Greater emphasis on quantitative/observable outputs without clear linkages to the longer-term qualitative outcomes in terms of combating gender-based violence as anticipated in the five thematic areas of the ERAP initiative.
- Specified targets not based on clear and rigorous assessments of current institutional capacity needs of responsible government departments and related entities.



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- Inadequate provision for systematic, on-going monitoring and evaluation of progress in the implementation of interventions and targets;
- Weak mechanisms for post-implementation impact assessment in relation to the specified interventions and targets under the five thematic areas.

Therefore, the findings contained in the report that we are launching today led us to put forward the following recommendations that we believe will assist government in addressing some of the challenges identified in the report:

- It is recommended that government undertakes a thorough review and evaluation of the implementation of the ERAP to assess the achievement of the various targets as well as the challenges encountered. The findings of such a review and evaluation should be made public to inform citizens and stakeholders of some of the key challenges and lessons emerging out of the ERAP initiative.
- This review and evaluation of the ERAP should be carried out by a competent and independent service provider. It should identify key challenges, lessons learned and prospects for the continued implementation of some of the main interventions and critical targets including long-term time frames and the intended positive consequences in the fight against gender-based violence.



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- Given that the Interim Steering Committee on GBVF was abolished in April 2020, it is recommended that in the short to medium-term, the overall responsibility to drive government's intervention programmes to deal with GBV be placed under a competent institutional structure or department. This entity will oversee such national programmes including the process of establishing the national multi-stakeholder body on gender-based violence.
- It is recommended that priority and the necessary resources be given to establishing the national multi-stakeholder coordinating body on gender-based violence. It is further recommended that the necessary legislative process be initiated to ensure that such a multi-stakeholder body has the requisite legal standing and access to regular funding. The Commission for Gender Equality (CGE), as a critical stakeholder, should engage with the Ministry for Women in the Presidency and other relevant stakeholders regarding planning processes and timeframes for the establishment of the multi-stakeholder body.
- The National Strategic Plan (NSP) has been approved by Cabinet. Implementation of the NSP should be the responsibility of the national multi-stakeholder coordinating body on GBV that is still being established. Therefore, while the process of establishing the multi-stakeholder body is still under way, it is recommended that the responsibility for the implementation of the NSP be placed under the Ministry for Women in the Presidency.
- It is recommended that the Ministry for Women in the Presidency should initiate a consultative process for planning, costing, and budgeting, implementation, and the monitoring and evaluation of the NSP and report



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- progress to Parliament. This responsibility should reside with the Ministry for Women in the Presidency until such time as the national multi-stakeholder coordinating body on GBV is ready to assume the role and execute these functions. It is further recommended that the Commission for Gender Equality engages with the Ministry for Women in the Presidency regarding planning processes and timeframes for implementation of the NSP.
- One of the key interventions identified in the ERAP was the implementation of the Gender Responsive Budget Framework introduced by the Ministry for Women in the Presidency and approved by Cabinet in 2019. It is recommended that this framework be widely disseminated and popularised across government (at national, provincial, and local government levels). It is further recommended that the National Treasury plays a leading role in ensuring that the framework is adopted and implemented.
- As part of its constitutional and legislative mandate, the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) should utilise the powers provided under the CGE Act number 39 of 1996 as well as other appropriate national legislations to hold government in general and specific departments accountable for the ongoing implementation of national policy and legislative frameworks. This includes national strategies (such as the NSP) and programmes of action (for example the Presidential Summit Declarations and the ERAP) to combat gender-based violence. This should be accompanied by, among others, direct and regular engagements between the leadership of the Commission, the Presidency, and relevant government departments and portfolio committees of the National Assembly.



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CONCLUDING REMARKS

With the launch of this report, the CGE hopes to share the findings of our assessment with policy makers, the stakeholders within the gender sector and the general public, thereby further contributing to current public debates regarding best ways of ensuring effective and impactful government responses and interventions to combat gender-based violence in the country.

I thank you!