



EUROPEAN UNION

Delegation of the European Commission to South Africa

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Press Release

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EU Commitment to South African Women

On the occasion of National Women's Day, the European Union congratulates South African women on their significant achievements since the dawn of democracy in South Africa fifteen years ago. EU Ambassador Lodewijk Briët declares: "National Women's Day provides the opportunity for me to restate the European Union's commitment to mainstreaming gender issues in all its external actions. Annually almost 35% of the European Commission's development aid is spent on projects that have a significant gender dimension. In South Africa our programme of Official Development Assistance underscores this commitment - we view women empowerment and gender equality as important elements that cut across all of our interventions."

"Sadly, and despite the remarkable advancement of South African women since 1994, abuse and violence against women and children reportedly remain widespread. Similarly, the upliftment of women, particularly from marginalised and rural communities often living in intolerable deprivation, remains a serious challenge that needs to be overcome."

The eradication of gender-based violence is a specific priority of the EU's human rights policy in 3rd countries ([EU Guidelines on Violence against Women and Girls and combating all forms of discrimination against them](#), Dec 2008). In South Africa, the EU provides support to a wide range of initiatives that tackle abuse and violence against women and children, including:

- the South African Police Service's **Support to the policing of Crimes against Women and Children in the Eastern Cape Programme** (€7.2 mil or R80 mil);
- the **Fight against Human Trafficking Programme**¹ overseen by the National Prosecuting Authority (€6.3 mil or R70 mil);
- the National Department of Social Development's **Victim Empowerment Programme**², focusing particularly on women and vulnerable children (€18.6 mil or R205mil).

Economic empowerment of women is extensively supported through numerous programmes that include:

- The **Risk Capital Facility**, managed by the Industrial Development Corporation, is a €105 mil (R1.15 bn) commitment that has to date created an estimated 3,000 job opportunities for women;
- Three **Local Economic Development Programmes** housed at provincial government level in the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu Natal and Limpopo; with a collective commitment of some €85 mil (R935 mil) and having created well over 10,000 job opportunities for women;
- The €26 mil (R286 mil) **Sector-wide Enterprise, Employment and Equity Programme** of the Department of Trade and Industry (dti) with its focus on BEE and SME development.

Many of the initiatives funded through these grant-making facilities, as well as others such as the **Northern Cape Land and Agrarian Project**, have made a remarkable difference to women throughout South Africa in their endeavours as diverse as livestock production and organic farming, tourism, mining and the production of arts and crafts.

Amb Briët concludes: "I am particularly proud that the EU, through the Commission and its Member States, has been able to partner the South African Government in a wide range of initiatives to help South African women overcome grinding poverty, work towards achieving their potential, and access their civil rights."

For more information please contact Frank Oberholzer at 012-452-5200 or 083-637-8106.

¹ The **Fight against Human Trafficking Programme** is a partnership between the European Commission, the South African Government, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

² The **Victim Empowerment Programme** is a partnership between the European Commission, the South African Government, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

(All South African Rand figures at current exchange rates)