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MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Gender Series Volume IX: Women Empowerment, 2017–2022

The Gender Series IX report on women empowerment released by Statistics South Africa today indicates a steady increase in women's share in the working-age population over the last 5 years. Despite more females in the labour force, males have higher employment rates than their female counterparts. The gender gap of 0,778 in monthly median earnings between male and female shows that there are inequalities in monthly median earnings. Parity in earnings was only reached with tertiary education. Furthermore, women continued to be more likely than men to be unemployed.

According to the report, in the public sector males hold the majority of senior management posts (SMS) and middle management positions (MMS). Females who were younger (≤ 35 years old) than their male counterparts were more likely to have MMS positions. The cabinet reached parity in 2019 for the first time since the beginning of democracy, and Parliament also observed an increased representation of women.

In 2022, three out of four females (76,7% in 2017 and 77,5% in 2022) were operating businesses in the informal sector, and no major increases were observed during this period. The presence of males in the informal sector experienced a 5,3 percentage point increase over this period. The difference between male- and female-run businesses operating in the formal sector was 10,9 percentage points in 2017; a decline was observed for both sexes in 2022. Additionally, gender differences in the formal sector decreased from a parity of 0,67 in 2017 to 0,76 in 2022, pointing toward a narrowing gap in the sector.

The Gender Series IX report shows that over the period, there have been a growing proportion of own-account workers among male and female business owners. Females were more likely to be own-account workers than their male counterparts. While the proportion of male own-account workers increased between 2017 and 2022 by 7,6 percentage points, that of their female counterparts remained relatively the same.

Overall unemployment rates increased by 6,8 percentage points from 27,7% in 2017 to 34,5% in 2022. Males and females between the ages of 25 and 34 years accounted for the most unemployed when compared to other age groups. The presence of minor children indirectly contributes to unemployment, particularly amongst women. When exploring this effect, unemployment rates in 2017 and 2022 were highest among males and females who lived with 5 or more children in the household at 43,6% and 55,5% respectively. The report also indicates that the economic inactivity rate was higher amongst females than their male counterparts in all categories. This was true for both years of reporting.

Between 2017 and 2018 the majority of females indicated grants (62,7% and 61,3% respectively) as their main sources of income, followed by remittances (60,7% and 53,8% respectively), while their male counterparts indicated income from a business (71,6% and 75,8% respectively), followed by salaries/wages/commission (66,4% and 66,0% respectively) as their main sources of income.

The number of social grants recipients increased by 4,8 percentage points for both males and females between 2017 and 2021. However, males recorded the highest increase of grant recipients of 5,6 percentage points while their female counterparts recorded an increase of 4,2 percentage points. For both periods, individuals living in Eastern Cape (41,8% and 47,8% in 2017 and 2021 respectively) were the most likely to receive grants, followed by Limpopo (40,1% and 46,4% in 2017 and 2021 respectively).

The report provides an analysis relating to gender disparities, trends and patterns in economic empowerment, including an in-depth analysis of economic, social and political domains related to gender using secondary data from Stats SA, as well as administrative data obtained from external sources. It covers trends in gender disparities over the past 5 years to assess progress made towards gender equality.

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