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# The Thinker

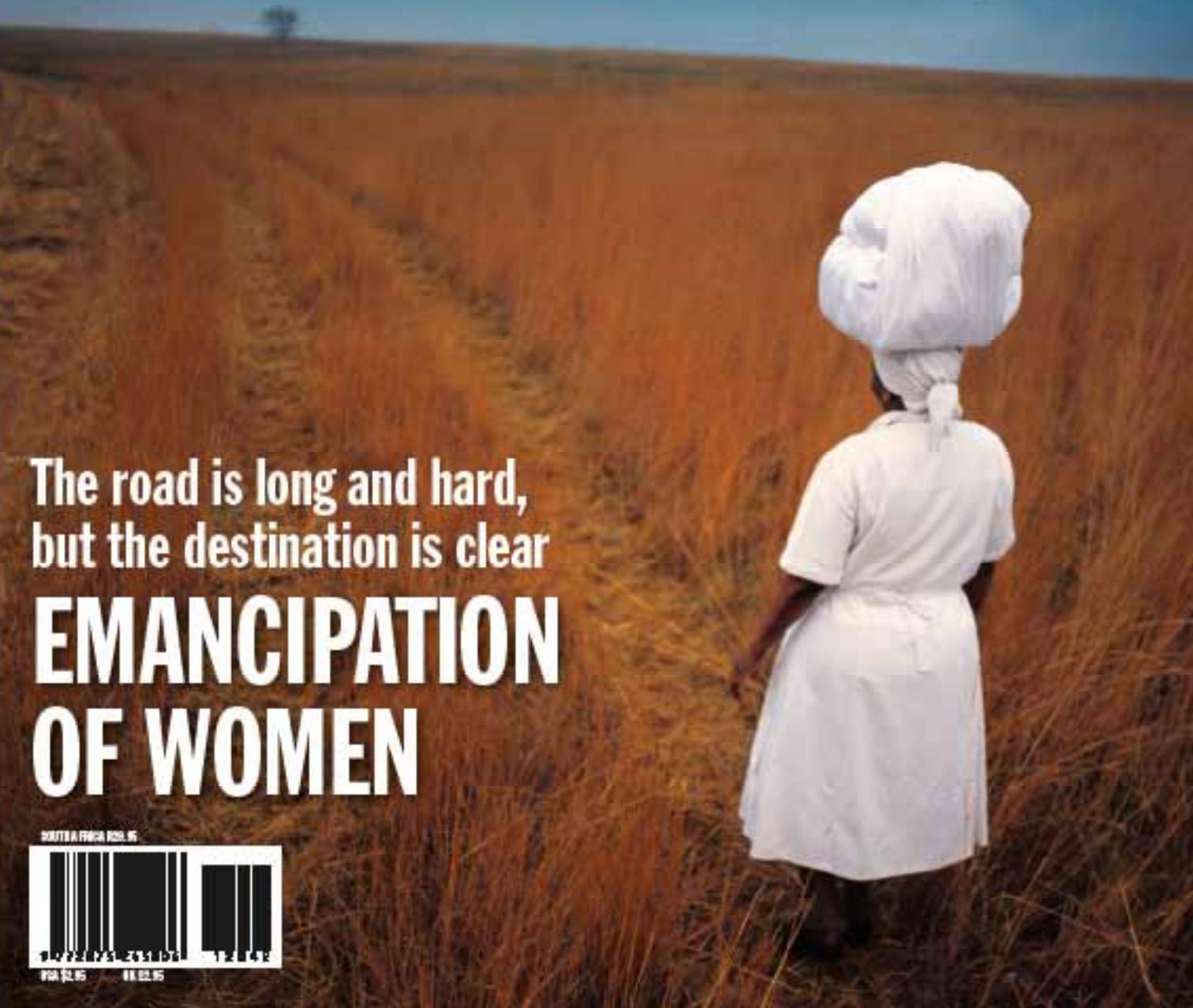
F O R T H O U G H T L E A D E R S

Mpoza Muller DLODLO DE PANDOR Dlanga  
Lindsey-Renton de Beer Amien Roberts  
DLAMINI mqolomba Rensburg  
CARNESON MCGREGOR APRIL Σ Stuart-Thompson  
Motshekga

The road is long and hard,  
but the destination is clear  
**EMANCIPATION  
OF WOMEN**

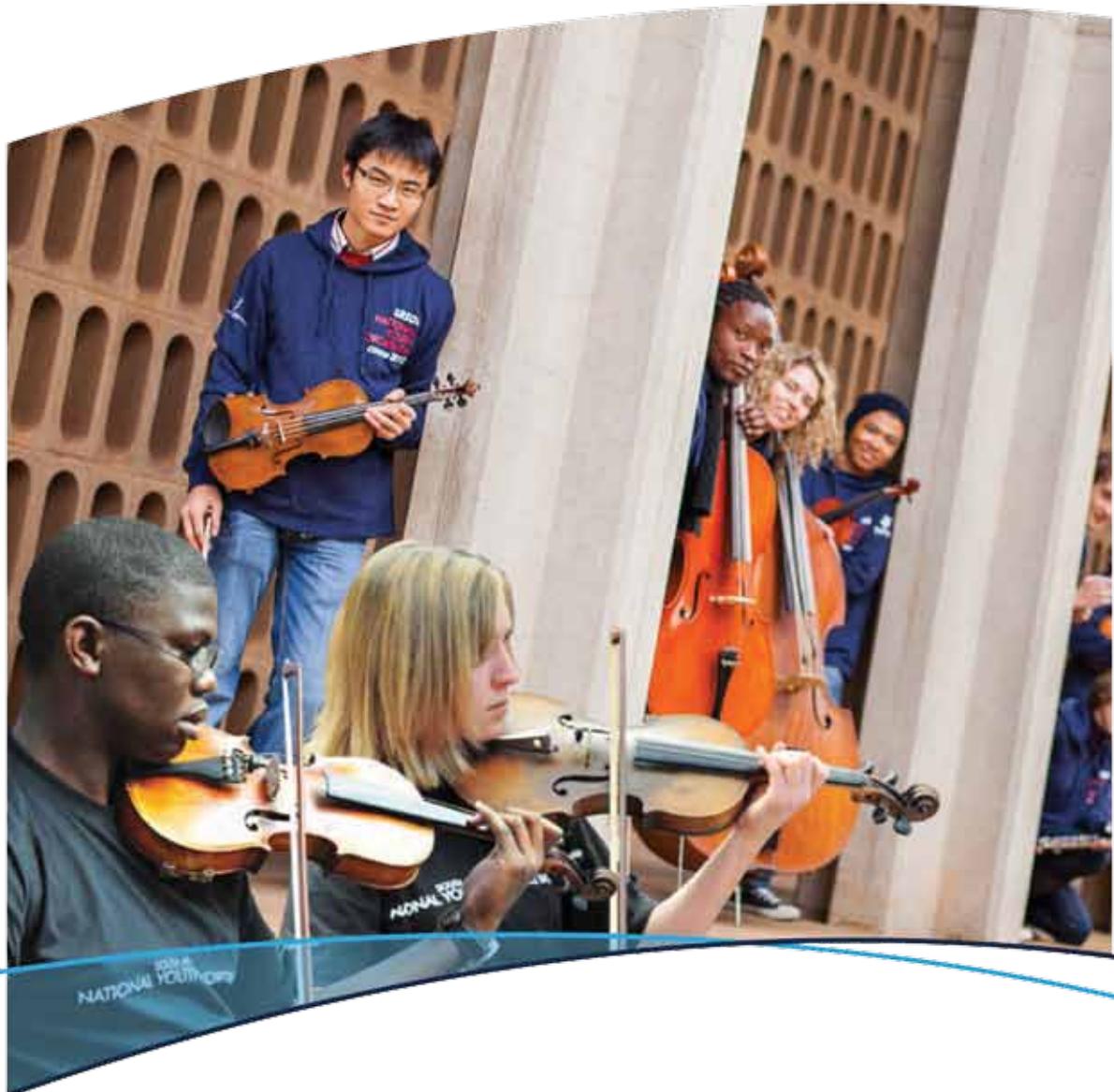


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## On the Cover:

The journey is long, but there is no turning back...

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I am writing the editorial this month because we decided that this issue would be written entirely by women. So let me start by giving a heartfelt thank you to all of you who responded at short notice to our appeal for contributions for our magazine in celebration of August, our women's month.

The election of Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma as the first Southern African and the first woman to chair the African Union Commission is a very significant event. It shows that African leaders can solve their differences and act in unison, and gives tangible expression to the resolution which declared the decade between 2010 and 2020 as the Decade of Women. "My election should not be seen as a personal victory but it should be seen as a victory for the African continent in general," she told reporters before flying back to South Africa. "We will continue to work in a way that tries to build consensus."

In her acceptance speech, Dlamini Zuma said she was humbled by the honour bestowed on her by the leadership of the AU. She undertook to work towards the unity of the AU, as well as towards peace, stability, development and the upliftment of women and children.

*The Thinker* congratulates Dr Dlamini Zuma on this appointment and is confident that she will serve the AU with distinction.

We have much to be proud of in South Africa, in terms of promoting gender equality, particularly in relation to adopting and defending a Constitution which outlaws discrimination on the grounds of "race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth". We have also achieved an extraordinary improvement in the level of representation for women in decision-making positions in government - and now in the AU - in a remarkably short period - outshining other countries in this respect.

In this month's edition, Ayanda Dlodlo's moving article looks back and celebrates the courage and commitment of the women of Umkhonto we Siswe; whilst Siki Dlanga

looks forward, with a deeply inspiring belief that future generations of black South African women will continue to change the world for the better.

Recent discussions in many forums have, however, highlighted the sad fact that there is still an overwhelming amount of work to be done. These include the ANC policy conference, and the Conference of the Progressive Women Movement of South Africa (PWMSA). As Angie Motshekga, President of the ANC Women's League, records in her article, some of the participants felt that change has not yet impacted on women within the working class and the poorest of the poor.

### Women's power in decision-making processes

The ANC Women's League has been pushing for more real power for women in politics. In May, Angie Motshekga appealed to members to fight patriarchy. She said that there had been a regression in government and within the ANC on women's issues with valuable gains being lost. Very few of the leadership roles, even at branch level, were held by women (*News 24*, 7.05.12). The strength of patriarchy in this country crosses racial, ethnic and religious boundaries, with deep roots everywhere.

Motshekga also deplored the behaviour of Cosatu members in their attacks on DA marchers in Pretoria and the insults shouted against Helen Zille and Lindiwe Mazibuko. "What worries me... is the sexism and racism that emerged. As an advocate of women's rights, this upsets me... It's the same reprimand we've always given Julius Malema and the Youth League concerning Zille - focus on her politics, not on her as a woman. Leave her sex and race out of it" (*News 24*, 16.05.12). "The nation needs to move on and work towards healing the wounds of the past instead of rubbing salt in them."

Hlengiwe Mkhize (ANC NEC Member and ANCWL Treasurer General) explained after discussions in the commission on gender at the recent ANC policy conference that, in spite of the ANC's gender parity policy, most women were still put in leadership positions as additional members or as



deputies to their male counterparts. The ANC Women's League wants gender parity in the top leadership of the ANC. It also wants a 50/50 gender split in the party conference delegations in a bid to empower women in the governing party. Mkhize added that women were saying the party should "move beyond numbers' games and begin to talk to power-sharing between men and women in the organisation" (*City Press*, 29.06.12).

She also reported that the commission has discussed the possibility of a summit to 'unpack' women's rights - "a gender summit that will look at power relations in all respects, so that it is not only women who are talking about these issues". ANC NEC member Paul Mashatile also said there was a proposal that there should be an audit of the country's cultural practices to assess whether or not they were in line with the Constitution.

### Constitutional human rights

Upholding the human rights guaranteed in our Constitution is a complex process, mainly because attitudes and established behaviour patterns do not change as the result of decrees and laws - although these provide an essential foundation for the changes required.

South Africa committed to the eight UN Millennium Development Goals, of which number 3 is "Promote gender equality and empower women." South

Africa's Country Report on progress in relation to these goals in 2010 made comments - which are still relevant today - on the difficulty of:

- "Aligning constitutional protection of religious and culture practices with the secular rights held by women and girls under the constitution and related legislation"; and
- "Working with a broad range of community and interest groups to address social, religious and cultural beliefs, assumptions and practices that remain as barriers to women's empowerment and gender equality."

It further stated that

- "In the context of this patriarchal society, there is a history of violence and gender inequality, as women are perceived to be subordinate and inferior to men."

It made several recommendations about practical steps which could be taken to assist in the empowerment of women, and almost all of these are being addressed by the organisation South African Women In Dialogue (SAWID). Its extraordinary work is described in a contribution from Marthe Muller. This and many other organisations and individuals are at last beginning to "work with a broad range of community and interest groups to address social, religious and cultural beliefs, assumptions and practices that remain as barriers to women's empowerment and gender equality."

Waheeda Amien writes about the Muslim Marriages Bill, questioning the inexplicable delays in enacting the long-prepared legislation. She also explains the issues raised and the need for Muslim men and women to understand and debate these issues, and to demand action from the government instead of just accepting the status quo.

As a direct result of our South African history of colonialism and apartheid, certain customary practices are, correctly, recognised as highly sensitive issues. Many people associate challenges to traditional beliefs and behaviours as yet another attempt to impose 'Western' or 'liberal' values on sections of our society that have resisted change. There is still, in South Africa, a certain reluctance to examine the impact

on the lives of women of some long-standing cultural and religious practices. The fact that nearly all societies have been in the past highly patriarchal and accepted without questioning various levels of servitude for the majority of people, usually including most women, but are changing (at different rates and in different directions) is conveniently forgotten. Change, in one direction or another, is inevitable, and the relevant question is: 'In which direction do we move?'

Amongst the issues discussed by at the ANC Policy Conference were 'ukuthwala' (abducted marriages) and 'ukungenwa' (inheriting a wife). *'In some parts of the Eastern Cape very young girls still run the risk of being abducted and forced into marriages with much older men. ANC national executive committee (NEC) member Bathabile Dlamini said the Eastern Cape pushed for the adoption of the proposal. "There was agreement that this is a violation of women's rights ... and that South Africa has dealt with issues that have to do with the abuse of women and the oppression of women. All provinces said they don't support 'ukuthwala' so we have won as women," she said' (City Press, 29.06.12).*

Women, particularly in rural areas, still face daily challenges as a result of continuing patriarchal attitudes. Examples of this are documented in the article by Melanie Roberts and Nicola Stuart-Thompson where they argue that female community health workers are hampered by prejudices held against them, especially in rural areas. Mamosa Motjope questions the continuing dominance of white males in the engineering profession. Ronel Rensburg and Estelle de Beer examine the complexities of the term 'empowerment' and ways in which it can be achieved.

In the ANC Policy Conference's Commission on Gender, the decriminalisation of prostitution was proposed, but it was decided that further dialogue was needed, partly because of the opposition of churches and many other organisations of civil society. More advocacy and further research may be required on this issue, linking it to the problems of human

trafficking. Zukiswa Mqolomba has made a valuable contribution to this debate by clearly presenting the issues from different viewpoints.

An area where there needs to be a co-ordinated coherent offensive in the context of women's rights in South Africa is, of course, that of rape: rape and abuse of women and children, considered by some of our citizens as normal behaviour; baby rape; the rape of lesbians; and constant sexual harassment, threats and humiliation for all females and gay people. Rape and sexual abuse at home and at school also seem to be spiralling out of control.

Some members of South African society, many of them unemployed, disempowered and disillusioned young men, vent their fury on the most vulnerable in their communities or try to convince themselves of their personal power by degrading and hurting those chosen as hate objects to fulfil their need to identify an elusive enemy: these victims are women and children, people with disabilities, foreigners, people with different lifestyles and other 'outsiders' - whoever is least likely to be able to defend themselves or retaliate. Whilst the anger and frustration is understandable, the chosen release for their feelings is not. All of our society must stand visibly and firmly together to stop this outrage. People must know for a fact that, "We have struck a rock!"

Women's issues are not problems affecting women alone, but all of us. In the caring and cohesive society we seek to build, these issues must not to be highlighted for one month of the year and then dropped. So we fervently hope that in future, not only will far more women submit articles and creative pieces to *The Thinker*, but that we shall receive relevant submissions on current women's issues on a regular basis.

Once again we are happy for this opportunity to congratulate the women of our country, young and old, black and white, gay and straight, employed and unemployed, rich and poor, on the occasion of 9 August, Women's Day. We wish you a life filled with human dignity and respect. Let us dream, like Siki Dlanga. And let us turn our dreams into reality.

## All contributing analysts write in their personal capacity

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**Dr Waheeda Amien** is a Senior Lecturer in Law at the University of Cape Town, Co-founder of Shura Yabafazi ('Consultation of Women') and Chair of the Recognition of Muslim Marriages Forum. She is an expert in Muslim Personal Law and Human Rights and writes in her personal capacity.



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**Lynn Carneson** was born in 1944 to parents who were committed fighters against fascism, racism and sexism. Lynn's biography, 'Red in the Rainbow', is a testament to the courage and perseverance of her family. Her multimedia exhibition with the same title is currently at the Nelson Mandela Gateway Museum in Cape Town. She has also published two books on the educational value of Drama Teaching and is a qualified drama teacher. For over twenty years she has run Convivium, an international consultancy specialising in corporate governance. She is a senior Fellow at the Stellenbosch University Centre for Corporate Governance.



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**Siki Dlanga** is a voice of joy calling all of Africa to attention from the mouth of the Eastern Cape. After working for a few years in Cape Town she has returned to the Eastern Cape to pursue her writing on a fulltime basis while she completes her BA Communications degree through Unisa. She is a published poet. She is currently selling her first poetry

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anthology. Her poem The day of the African Prophet was included in Bozza Hits 3 found in Nokia Music Store.



**Ayanda Dlodlo**, a former MK combatant, is secretary of the MK military Veterans' Association. She was appointed as the Deputy Minister of Public Service and Administration of the Republic of South Africa in November 2010. She

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# The Longest Revolution

I think we have come to a stalemate partly due to this reality..., that the agenda for the liberation of women has at certain moments in history assumed *“a subsidiary, if not an invisible element in the preoccupations of socialists”* and progressives.

By Angie Motshekga

**W**e have emerged recently from the 2nd Conference of the Progressive Women Movement of South Africa (PWMSA) and the National Policy Conference of the African National Congress (ANC) in which the current status and empowerment of women have come under focus.

Out of these critical reflections we have acquired renewed energy sharply to take the gender question in South

Africa to a higher level spurred on by the general consensus that beginning with the 1994 democratic breakthrough, great strides have been made on the matter of qualitative empowerment and meaningful emancipation of women, within and without the ANC and government.

Unsettling questions and concerns emerging out of the dialogical reflections of progressive women, and also gaining some momentum in the

public discourse, are around the extent to which gains of transformation from apartheid and ‘internal colonialism’ have, or have not, translated into a better life for the majority of women, the African women in particular.

Among the views expressed, was the position that change has not reached women within the working class and the poorest of the poor and that the goal of 50/50 gender parity appears to be elusive. Factors that fuel some of these

genuine concerns could be located in the slow pace of transformation in the private sector with respect to women's empowerment and representation at board and senior management levels.

Perhaps these are the coordinates of the perspective which says, pregnant with pessimism and a deep sense of disillusionment, that *"after initial gains women seem to be losing the political edge"* (Mail & Guardian Supplement on Women's Month, 26 Aug - 1 Sep 2011).

It is in this context that I believe we should begin to interrogate to what extent democratic South Africa has been able to advance the progressive agenda of women's empowerment and emancipation.

### Triple subordination of women

The 2012 PWMSA conference at the Walter Sisulu University, in the Eastern Cape, had a telling theme: "the involvement of women in the economy."

From such a theme and flow of discussions, delegates from across the political spectrum could discern the current state of the women's struggle and the nature and content of challenges on the way towards a non-sexist society that would be characterised by approaches to and treatment of 'women's rights as human rights.'

The ANC Women's League (ANCWL) had sent a high-level delegation under the stewardship of its national President, Mrs Angie Motshekga, who is also South Africa's minister of Basic Education. The League leadership had just emerged from the ruling party's (ANC) policy conference in Midrand, from 26 to 29 June 2012.

The leadership was therefore in a good position to share with progressive women its vision on what needs to be done effectively to resolve the women's struggle for gender equality, empowerment and full emancipation. This is the longest revolution, according to Juliet Mitchell in her socialist critique of the problem of the subordination of women, titled *Women: The Longest Revolution*, 1966 (<http://www.marxist.org>).

In Mitchell's view, this problem "of the subordination of women and the

*need for their liberation was recognized by all the great socialist thinkers in the nineteenth century. It is part of the classical heritage of the revolutionary movement."* I think we have come to a stalemate partly due to this reality shared by Mitchell and many others, that the agenda for the liberation of women has at certain moments in history assumed "a subsidiary, if not an invisible element in the preoccupations of socialists" and progressives. The ANCWL interrogates this state of affairs in earnest in the seminal ANC Gender Paper.

The ANC Gender Paper was the first intervention of this nature in the history of the ANC to be made by women before plenary, as was the case on

**“It was for good reason women launched the PWMSA, to unite progressive women and strengthen our gender machinery for the final onslaught on patriarchal power, traditionalism, social exclusion and cultural domination.”**

the occasion of the 3rd ANC National General Council in September 2010, in Durban, where it was first presented. It was later refined, as informed by material conditions on the ground, for the 2012 ANC National Policy Conference. This document constitutes the basis for discussions and broader consultation ahead of the 53rd ANC National Conference in Mangaung, in December 2012.

Central to the ANCWL's outlook and approach, as reflected in its Gender policy document prepared for the ANC Policy conference, is a consciousness of the special-type triple subordination of women, obtaining particularly in ex-colonies on the African continent and elsewhere. This ideological orientation has over many years of struggle shaped our strategy

and tactics as the political home of women.

The 2006 Declaration of the Progressive Women's Movement which was adopted at the Inaugural Conference in Mangaung, on 5-8 August 2006, spoke of this situation as *"the triple fold struggle characterised by class, race and gender oppression."*

The gender question had always been located within the national question in South Africa whose objective had always been to unite all South Africans behind the vision to create a united, democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous society.

The ANC president of the exile period, Cde Oliver Reginald (OR) Tambo, articulated in clear terms this theory and practice of the women's struggle in September 1981 at one of the ANC women's conferences, in Luanda, Angola: *"The mobilisation of women is the task not only of women alone, or of men alone, but of all of us, men and women alike... There is no way in which women in general can liberate themselves without fighting to end the exploitation of man by man."*

In spite of the perspective of the popular women's movement we had adopted vis-à-vis the philosophy of the feminist movement, we had been conscious of *"the problems inherent in the widespread practice of assuming the existence of common interests, ideologies, politics, and experiences"*. We knew that *"identities are a contested terrain"* (Marxism and Class, Gender and Race, 2001).

From as early as the 1900s, women have been in the forefront of the broader struggle to create a united, democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous society. As early as 1913, under the leadership of Charlotte Maxeke and others, they staged a daring combat against oppression and exploitation. They protested against discriminatory laws that restricted free movement of Africans – like the pass laws whose rejection triggered the massacre in Sharpeville, in 1960. Their struggles led to the formation and recognition by the ANC of the ANC Women's League in 1948.

This revolutionary process produced strong leaders and national heroines who moved us 'two steps forward'

towards the humanisation of South African society and the creation of a caring and loving society.

These are exemplary women who gave their lives, selflessly, so that we can all be free, women leaders the calibre of Charlotte Maxeke, Lillian Ngoye, Helen Joseph, Ama Naidoo, Albertina Sisulu, Adelaide Tambo, Bertha Gxowa and many others.

It was for good reason women launched the PWMSA, to unite progressive women and strengthen our gender machinery for the final onslaught on patriarchal power, traditionalism, social exclusion and cultural domination.

Each year, on 9 August, which only became a national holiday after 1994, democratic South Africa remembers the historic march of 20 000 unarmed women to the Union Buildings, against the draconian pass laws of the time. This year is no different. National Women's Day is a milestone in the women's struggle for a better deal.

The significance of the historic Women's March lies in the fact that it exposed the disempowering myth of women as politically inept, immature and perpetually tied to the home like a dishcloth is to the kitchen.

And so, as we celebrate this year the ANC's 100 Years of Selfless Struggle, so must we remember to chronicle the immense contribution of women in building the ANC and lifting South Africa out of the clutches of a racist, sexist and exploitative regime.

### Great strides we made

To a large extent there is great progress in the empowerment of women. The aspirations of women for equality are contained in the post-apartheid *Constitution* of 1996 which goes a long way in guaranteeing rights of women.

In an article on Women's Day, South Africa's Ambassador to Italy, Ambassador Thenjiwe Mtintso, demonstrated categorically the extent to which the quality of life of women has changed since 1994:

*"Not only has the ANC and its government opened democratic spaces in society for the participation of women in all spheres of life and for the creation of real democracy and a non-patriarchal*

*society, but it has also led the same campaign in [the Southern African] region and the [African] continent.*

*"The ANC government played a critical role in the adoption of the Southern African Development Cooperation (SADC) Gender Protocol with its programme for gender equality and the commitment of the not less than 50% quota for women in all decision-making structures in SADC countries by 2015."*

The country has embraced the declaration of 2010 to 2020, by Africa's Heads of State and Government, as the African Women's Decade. The

**“The significance of the historic Women's March lies in the fact that it exposed the disempowering myth of women as politically inept, immature and perpetually tied to the home like a dishcloth is to the kitchen.”**

*Constitution* of 1996 is consistent with gender-sensitive prescripts of the *African Charter for Human and People's Rights* which says:

*"The States shall ensure the elimination of every discrimination against women and also ensure the protection of the rights of the woman and the child as stipulated in international declarations and conventions."*

South Africa's progressive legislative framework is aligned to the international system and instruments for promoting human rights of women, including the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

By 2009, the country was in the 6th best position in the Global Gender Gap Index by the World Economic Forum. It had made significant improvements in female labour force participation (ipsnews.net).

In 2010, it ranked number 49 out of 102 OECD countries on the Social

Institutions and Gender Index. At the time, it was number 3 in the whole of Africa.

In 2010, more females than males were enrolled in tertiary institutions, at 56.4%. The South African Schools Act of 1996 has provided a framework for advancing the democratic transformation of society, combating racism and sexism and all other forms of unfair discrimination and intolerance.

Three years ahead of the 2015 target for Millennium Development Goals, we are set to realise universal access to primary education, including for the girl-child. The country has initiated programmes for increasing the number of girl-learners who take Mathematics and Science at school. Projects include the Girls Education Movement and Techno-Girl that are intended to encourage girls to study Maths, Science and Technology.

A focus on education is key to empowering women and attaining the 50/50 quota. Education has a tremendous multiplier effect that brings lasting benefits to individuals and communities and thus the need to promote the campaign of making education a societal responsibility.

Our skills shortage was evident during the infrastructure drive that came with South Africa's hosting of the FIFA Soccer World Cup in 2010 wherein a considerable number of engineers were imported into the country.

The 2012 ANC National Policy Conference has reiterated the organisation's commitment to champion the 50% quota for women in all spheres of national life. Currently, 43% of Cabinet ministers are women, with 44% in Parliament.

The 2011 Women in Leadership Census of the Businesswomen's Association of South Africa (BWASA) has confirmed that: *"The South African government has been noted for its efforts towards gender equality: Many of the country's ministers, deputy ministers, directors-general and deputy directors-general are women."*

It has found that in the tally of women at all levels (from the lower skilled to senior management) in government, there are more women (56.3%) employed in government

departments than men (43.7%). And has concluded: “*South Africa is not lagging far behind some of its international counterparts and is indeed, in some instances, leading in terms of gender inclusion.*” In countries such as France, Spain and Switzerland, women represent 40% of ministerial positions (BWASA) compared to 43% in South Africa.

Another view represented in the *Mail & Guardian Supplement on Women’s Month* (26 Aug - 1 Sep 2011) is that “*this may be good on paper, behind it all is a raging debate on what it means on the ground.*” An interesting, yet most certainly unsettling question often posed by women feeling their revolution has dragged on long enough, even 18 years into democratic South Africa, is: “*Do the numbers reflect mere tokenism, or have they effected real changes for women living in South Africa?*”

The 2012 Women’s Month has posed for progressive women these pertinent questions seeking to critique most critically the content and quality of the gains that had been made for and by women. Answering these questions would be very critical as it would then tell us to what extent can and should women celebrate 100 Years of Selfless Struggle or bemoan ‘*one hundred years of solitude.*’

### Current challenges

Notwithstanding what we have said about the trajectory of women’s empowerment that we have achieved in South Africa since 1994, through an empowering constitutional and legislative framework, there would not be any contradiction in terms if we were to say that the country is still ranked among unequal societies.

This is so, given the huge legacy of the past we had to grapple with, and the concomitant triple challenge of inequality, poverty and unemployment from which, as we argue in the ANC Gender Paper, women suffer the most. As in many other countries, particularly in rural communities and informal settlements, women bear the brunt of devastating hunger, gender-based violence, HIV and Aids and other poverty-related diseases.

The United Nations’ World Food

Programme Gender Policy and Strategy has reported that gender inequality is a major cause and effect of hunger and poverty, estimating that 60 percent of chronically hungry people are women and girls (*Bua News*, 7 March 2012).

We need practical steps. Regrettably, I do not think at the 2nd Conference of the PWMSA we were able to say how we should proceed with the women’s agenda, also at an economic level, practically and with sustainable gains for women even for those at the grassroots. We should have gone sufficiently far in showing how we will stimulate and inspire “the involvement of women in the economy” and also concretely spell out the institutional mechanisms required to direct and manage this agenda.

Much still needs to be done to empower women. In fact, on female representation at board and management level, the 2011 Women in Leadership Census says that change has been marginal especially in the business sector.

According to this Census, “*although women make up more than half the South African population and 45% of the workforce, this is not reflected in the leadership of the workforce.*” There were only 15 women CEOs and 18 women chairpersons from a total of 339 companies (BWASA). In the Foreword, the proposition is advanced that “*if left to market forces and without any enforcement mechanism, this situation will continue.*” Empowerment, like wealth, does not trickle down.

### What is to be done?

The ANC Gender Paper articulates far-reaching recommendations on fundamental issues key to transforming the oppressive reality defining what it means to be ‘woman’ in a dominantly patriarchal society. A critical priority is the Gender Equality Bill, which, once law, will provide the framework for speeding-up the achievement of 50/50 gender parity.

Intensifying the campaign to support women in starting up enterprises and growing existing ones, as well as affirming and supporting women farmers through, among other things, land acquisition, equipment and skills, are some of the means the ANCWL

believes will accelerate empowerment.

We could begin to fast-track women’s involvement in the economy if we were to persuade financing institutions to avail funding for women’s empowerment programmes in the country and on the continent. Another practical intervention would be to provide specific training programmes to maximise the skilling and employment of women, a priority the ANCWL is resolved sharply to promote.

Beyond these minimum programmes, as Juliet Mitchell has said, “*until there is a revolution in production, the labour situation will prescribe women’s situation within the world of men*” (<http://www.marxist.org>).

The country will empower and emancipate women to the extent that it strengthens measures for tackling abuse and violence against women. We have in mind, *inter alia*, law reform on bail and sentencing, victim empowerment, legal literacy, and expanding access to the courts especially for women in rural communities. These are some of the ways we think will help arrest gender-based violence and the subordination of women.

### In summary

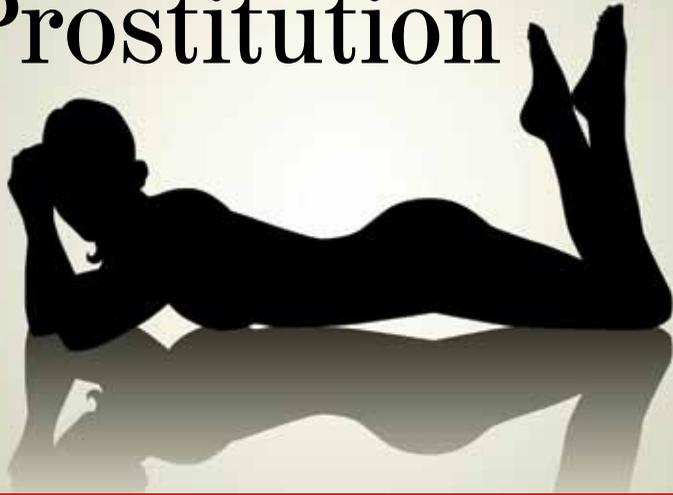
In the final analysis, global prosperity and peace will only be feasible once all the people of the world are empowered to order their own lives and to provide for themselves and their families. These should necessarily include the marginalised and “*wretched of the earth*” who are condemned to peripheral lives on the strength of disempowering notions of power – like gender, race and class.

There is ample research showing that in Asia, Latin America and Africa, where women have been given the chance to succeed through increased educational opportunities, families are found to be much stronger, economies are growing, and societies are indeed flourishing.

In a nutshell, for “*the longest revolution*” to be resolved, in the wisdom of Juliet Mitchell: “*the main thrust of any emancipation movement must still concentrate on the economic element – the entry of women fully into public industry.*”

**SEX FOR SALE: THE STATE AS PIMP**

# Decriminalising Prostitution



There are no easy answers, only difficult questions... the state can no longer 'turn a blind eye' to the shocking realities of the industry. The ills that characterise the industry persist despite the intentions of criminal law.

By Zukiswa Mqolomba

Debates on adult prostitution have been raging in South Africa's public and legal domains since the 1990s. These debates were heightened in 2007 with Labour court Judge Halton Cheadle ruling on the "Kylie" vs *Michelle van Zyl* case which characterised Kylie's relationship with her massage parlour as being typical of an employment relationship, however, unlawful. The debates spiraled once again in light of the forgone 2010 Fifa World Cup, with the former National Police Commissioner, Jackie Selebi, proposing a temporary relaxation of the criminal law on adult prostitution. The ANCWL has since come out of the shadows in ardent support of the campaign to decriminalise South Africa's sex industry. The ANCWL's support became clear in light of the ANC Policy

Conference and on the back of the regulatory work of the South African Law Reform Commission (SALRC) which has proposed models to address the challenges of adult prostitution in South Africa.

A number of political organisations and institutions have spoken in favour of decriminalisation. COSATU (WC), the former Minister of Women, Youth, and Persons with Disabilities, Gauteng legislature, as well as some local municipalities in the Western Cape and North West, for instance, have made public pronouncements in favour of legal reform.

At a May Day rally in 2009, the COSATU Western Cape provincial secretary, Tony Ehrenreich, for instance, gave full and unambiguous support to the decriminalisation campaign stating:

"The union federation supported the sex workers' demands for labour rights. It's not our place to make a moral judgment on prostitution. It's a reality in South Africa today".

The 2009 COSATU Gender Policy Conference also made resolutions in favour of decriminalisation.

However, debates rage on without a firm grasp of either the nuances of South Africa's sex industry or a set of policy perspectives to ground the debate.

This article makes no attempt to resolve the matter but seeks instead to highlight the nuances that characterise the industry for consideration by policy makers. In essence, it argues that it is simply not enough to adopt narrow morality without considering the appropriateness of legal and enforcement responses in addressing structural risks and vulnerability. Nor does it suffice to adopt blindly neo-liberalism for its own sake without duly considering the social and personal risks 'inherent' in the trade. Any state resolve will have to be a considered one. In this instance it will need to consider fully the varied ideological thrusts that inform the debate, as well as the contradictions between theory and practice.

## Different perspectives which inform the legal response

### 1. Prostitution as Work

There are those who see adult prostitution as legitimate employment for women, comparing it to wage labour. They see prostitution as the contracting out of the sale of sexual services (labour) in exchange for money. A cash value is attached to prostitution, just as a cash value is attached to a person's labour power in the labour market or to commercial goods in economic markets. In essence, in the business of sex, sex does act as a commodity like any other and, as such, can be said to fall within the ambit of standard economic theory. Prostitutes are therefore seen as having the right to exploit the value of their sexual labour, like any other labour, in a legitimate bid to sustain their livelihoods.

The National Director of Public Prosecutions, the City of Cape Town, the Family Policy Institute and the Rape Crisis Centre, however, are examples

of those represented in a lobby group that have actively discouraged policy moves in favour of reforming the law in this respect, arguing against any constructions that validate prostitution as a meaningful employment opportunity for women based on free choice. This lobby argues that most women are coerced or physically forced into a life of 'sex for sale' and cannot escape. This coercion comes either in the forms of 'direct' coercion (for example, trafficking), or indirect forms resulting from the economic marginalisation of women through educational deprivation and job discrimination, constituting a more subtle form of coercion. Even where women appear to freely choose prostitution as the only or the most lucrative form of employment available, this choice is not really made voluntarily. The choices women make as free agents are also eroded by the nature of the industry itself.

Opponents argue rather in favour of exit strategies that will expand women's options, as well as the criminalisation of only the buyer rather than the seller. In essence, prostitutes should not be treated as criminals but rather as victims of circumstance.

## **2. Prostitution as Violence and Encouraging organised Crime**

"Then there are the ancillary harms: the rapes, the robberies and the inevitable beatings punctuated by shouts of "bitch" and "whore" and "slut", gratuitously meted out by pimps, by johns and by the police. These are the commonplace insults to injury that are directed at prostitutes simply because they are prostitutes." (Carter and Giobbe, cited by the SALC, Issue paper, 19 July 2002)

Opponents have challenged the perspective that adult prostitution is a victimless act of service. Prostitution, at its worst, is said to involve the repeated experience of violence and personal violation, physical threat and disease, emotional pain and degradation.

Kaplan (2001) paints the same picture of the sex trade, describing prostitutes as being victims of constant violence. He says that prostitutes are far too often forced to engage in unprotected sex, and even robbed of compensation by clients who threaten

their lives instead. Clients often behave violently during sexual intercourse and largely because they feel they've paid for the service and therefore 'own' the provider. They often do not consider sex workers as human beings

Studies have also shown strong correlations between the experiences of violence and personal violation in prostitution. Most studies reveal that early sexual and physical abuse, child neglect and victimisation, slavery and debt-bondage, poverty and unemployment are the biggest factors that shape and influence decisions to join the sex trade.

The decision to join the sex industry is therefore often shaped and influenced by earlier experiences of violation, which persist in the experience of prostitution, resulting in negative consequences on the personal welfare of most prostitutes.

“Prostitutes are therefore seen as having the right to exploit the value of their sexual labour, like any other labour, in a legitimate bid to sustain their livelihoods.”

Decriminalisation is also seen as encouraging other forms of crime. The Netherlands, State of Victoria (Australia) and Germany have reported increases in human trafficking as a result of decriminalisation. This is largely because it is often difficult to distinguish between voluntary prostitution and human trafficking. This distinction is often meaningless to clients who do not distinguish between voluntary versus trafficked prostitutes. The demand that leads to human trafficking is exactly the same as demand for prostitution.

Dissenting scholars (e.g. Davidson et al ((1995); Fick (2006); Chapman (2005)), however, maintain that adult prostitution remains a vulnerable trade largely as a consequence of criminalisation. They argue that criminalisation exacerbates such

appalling conditions by pushing the industry underground and beyond the 'regulatory eye' of the state. Fick (2006) argues, for instance, that criminal laws render prostitutes easy prey for violence and exploitation. She argues that the physical safety of prostitutes is threatened and/or exacerbated by the criminal sphere in which they are forced to operate. She supports Chapman's (2005) argument that 'hookers tend to be surrounded by felonious confederates because what they do is illegal. The enterprise attracts violent people because violence is often useful in a business that can't expect protection from the cops. It is said that the retail liquor trade used to be that way too, during prohibition. Since repeal, it has been about as violent as the dairy industry.'

Conditions are undoubtedly exacerbated by the violations of basic rights involved in the enforcement, entrapment, investigation, and apprehension of prostitutes. Police are notorious harassers of street prostitutes and often demand sex in exchange for indemnity. Laws are also selectively enforced, with escort agencies having long circumvented the law and successfully so. Police have also discriminately targeted women suppliers, as opposed to male clients, notwithstanding the fact that the procurement of sex is also criminalised under new amendments.

## **3. Prostitution as exploitation of Women**

Some feminist perspectives oppose prostitution on the grounds that it degrades and dehumanises women by objectifying them and imposing a commercial value on the women's body. This gendered view hinges on the fact that prostitution largely trades in women and young girls, with clients almost being exclusively male. Prostitution is therefore seen as an intrinsic component of gender-based subjugation, reflecting the imbalance of power between women and men in society more generally. Drawing from the accounts of many a prostitute, there is abundant evidence that prostitution allows men to consciously oppress and coerce women into satisfying ill-conceived fantasies of

domination using economic and political power to legitimise control. Decriminalisation therefore reinforces the gender contradictions that plague society today.

Proponents of decriminalisation, however, argue that adult prostitution serves a useful social function and does not necessarily debase women. Prostitution is seen as an assertion of sexual freedom and independence in which a woman is able to determine where and how she uses her own body. This view sees prostitutes as free agents and not victims, with bargaining power equal to that of the client.

#### 4. Prostitution as a Health Hazard

Research continues to report high HIV/Aids incidence rates in prostitutes, despite reports of increased condom use and best practice for HIV/Aids prevention for the industry. Prostitutes in South Africa's industry continue to report condom use as being responsible for client loss and more frequent non-payment. Insistence on condom use has also led to physical abuse by clients, and clients have insisted on paying less for sex when a condom was used. Health concerns are exacerbated by the fact that prostitutes tend to have limited to or no access to healthcare due to stigmatisation, as well as the costs involved in accessing basic HIV/Aids and STI health-care. Concerns over the 'spiral effects' of the 'ills of the trade' therefore find legitimate space, particularly amongst families.

Whereas high HIV/Aids prevalence rates raise serious questions about the appropriateness of full decriminalisation (which simply removes all criminal laws without imposing health standards), limited access to healthcare also raises questions about the appropriateness of criminalisation. It is an undisputed fact that a criminalised environment makes it impossible to enforce health standards and practices amongst prostitutes. Criminal law often compounds the risks associated with the sex industry as it pushes sex trade underground and therefore denies prostitutes social protections, and renders them vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

#### The micro reflects the macro contractions in society

As diverse as the South African sex-trade is, what is glaringly evident is that 'sex work' tends to be divided into particular types of social groupings. South Africa's sex industry is visibly segregated by race, gender and class and is 'discriminatory' to an extraordinary degree. Women working in the most oppressive settings are almost exclusively black from delibilitated townships and/or rural areas. At the top end of the market (i.e. teaser bars, escort agencies, etc.), the racial composition is

“Opponents have challenged the perspective that adult prostitution is a victimless act of service. Prostitution, at its worst, is said to involve the repeated experience of violence and personal violation, physical threat and disease, emotional pain and degradation.”

almost exclusively reversed. According to Davidson & Taylor (1995), South Africa's sex industry is made even more unpleasant by the fact that it finds its current form reflecting in part the legacy of the apartheid regime. It therefore not only exploits the poverty and the absence of alternative economic opportunities for women and girls, but feeds on the human suffering caused by the apartheid regime's particularly brutal distillation of racism, sexism and homophobia. South Africa's sex industry therefore reflects the racial, gender and class contradictions prevalent in South Africa today.

#### The Role of Criminal Law in regulating Social Behaviour

Over and beyond varied political perspectives, a bigger philosophical

question emerges about the role of criminal law in regulating social behaviour. Criminal law in South Africa continues to criminalise prostitution. The act of criminalisation is seen as a social mechanism that is used to coerce members of society, through the threat of pain and suffering, to abstain from conduct which is harmful to various interests of society (Milton 1993). Its objective is to promote the welfare of society and its members by establishing and maintaining peace and order.

Law makers have advanced various rationales for prohibiting commercial sex work, most of which have found basis on traditional concepts of morality which include prevention of sexually transmitted diseases; immorality; the prevention of public nuisances and crime prevention.

However the British Wolfenden Committee on Homosexual Offences and Sex Work stated "it is not the function of the law to intervene in the private lives of citizens, or to seek to enforce any particular behaviour beyond what is necessary to carry out the functions outlined" (SALRC 2002: p. 36).

The Committee argues that the function of the criminal law should be limited to preserving public order and decency, to protect citizens from what is 'offensive or injurious' and to provide sufficient safeguards against exploitation and corruption of others, particularly those who are especially vulnerable, which would include sex workers.

The Committee even refers to the importance that society and the law should give to individual freedom of choice in matters of private morality stating that "Unless a deliberate attempt is to be made by society, acting through the agency of the law, to equate the sphere of crime with that of sin, there must remain a realm of private morality and immorality which is, in brief and crude terms, not the law's business."

Lord Devlin, cited in the Commission's report, gives a counter-argument affirming that the 'loosening of moral bonds' is often the first stage of disintegration of a society, and therefore society is justified in taking the same steps to preserve its moral code as it does to preserve

its government and other essential institutions: “The suppression of vice is as much the law’s business as the suppression of subversive activities...”

Ackerman J (SALRC 2002: p. 38), a Constitutional Court judge, emphasises however that the Constitution does not debar the state from enforcing morality. However, he does add the following cautionary note: “What is central to the character and functioning of the state, however, is that the dictates of the morality which it enforces, and the limits to which it may go, are to be found in the text and spirit of the Constitution itself.”

The Constitutional Court (Ackermann J and Goldstone J) also argues that though under common law and section 39(2) of the Constitution ‘policy decisions’ and ‘value judgments’, have to reflect ‘the wishes, often unspoken, and the perceptions, often but dimly discerned, of the people’, a balance had to be struck between the interests of the parties and the conflicting interests of the community according to the court’s perceptions of what justice demanded. They suggest that the above concepts should be replaced, or supplemented and/or enriched by the appropriate norms of the objective value system embodied by the Constitution of the Republic.

### International best practice

It is interesting to note the great variety of legal responses across the globe and the relationship with ideological orientation and political culture.

In Muslim countries, for example, it is a criminal offence for any person to be involved in adult prostitution, and is punishable by means of the death penalty. Prostitution is also criminalised in Norway, Thailand, Namibia, Nigeria, Swaziland, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, Cote d’Ivoire and in 49 of the states of the United States of America. In the 1840s Sweden had legalised and regulated prostitution, but since the 1990s Sweden has again criminalised prostitution on the grounds of sexual exploitation of women and gender violence.

In the Netherlands, prostitution is decriminalised. In this instance, prostitutes as tax paying citizens, are

unionised, and brothels operate like any other legal business. New Zealand has also opted for decriminalisation in an attempt to minimise the harm imposed by an underground industry, whilst emphasising that this is not intended to endorse or sanction prostitution as ‘meaningful employment’ nor a morally accepted practice.

In some countries prostitution is legal and regulated - for example Germany, Senegal, Turkey and the Australian state

“Most women are coerced or physically forced into a life of ‘sex for sale’ and cannot escape. This coercion comes either in the forms of ‘direct’ coercion (for example, trafficking), or indirect forms resulting from the economic marginalisation of women.”

of Victoria. In such cases, prostitutes are obliged to register as sex workers, must work in brothels, and undertake regular HIV/Aids testing, etc.

In other countries, prostitution is partially criminalised. In Japan, for example, only vaginal prostitution is illegal. In Canada and Bulgaria, prostitution is legal but it is illegal for parties to negotiate a sexual contract in public space, including bars. In Denmark, Brazil and Costa Rica only profiting from prostitution by others is illegal.

### Closing remarks

Personally, as the writer, I am torn on the subject matter and have not yet found final resolve. My instinctive response is that no girl-child nor adult women should be forced to trade in sex in a legitimate bid to sustain livelihoods. Secondly, I do not believe that the vagina should be commodified and commercialised: the vagina is not for sale nor is it on auction. Neither

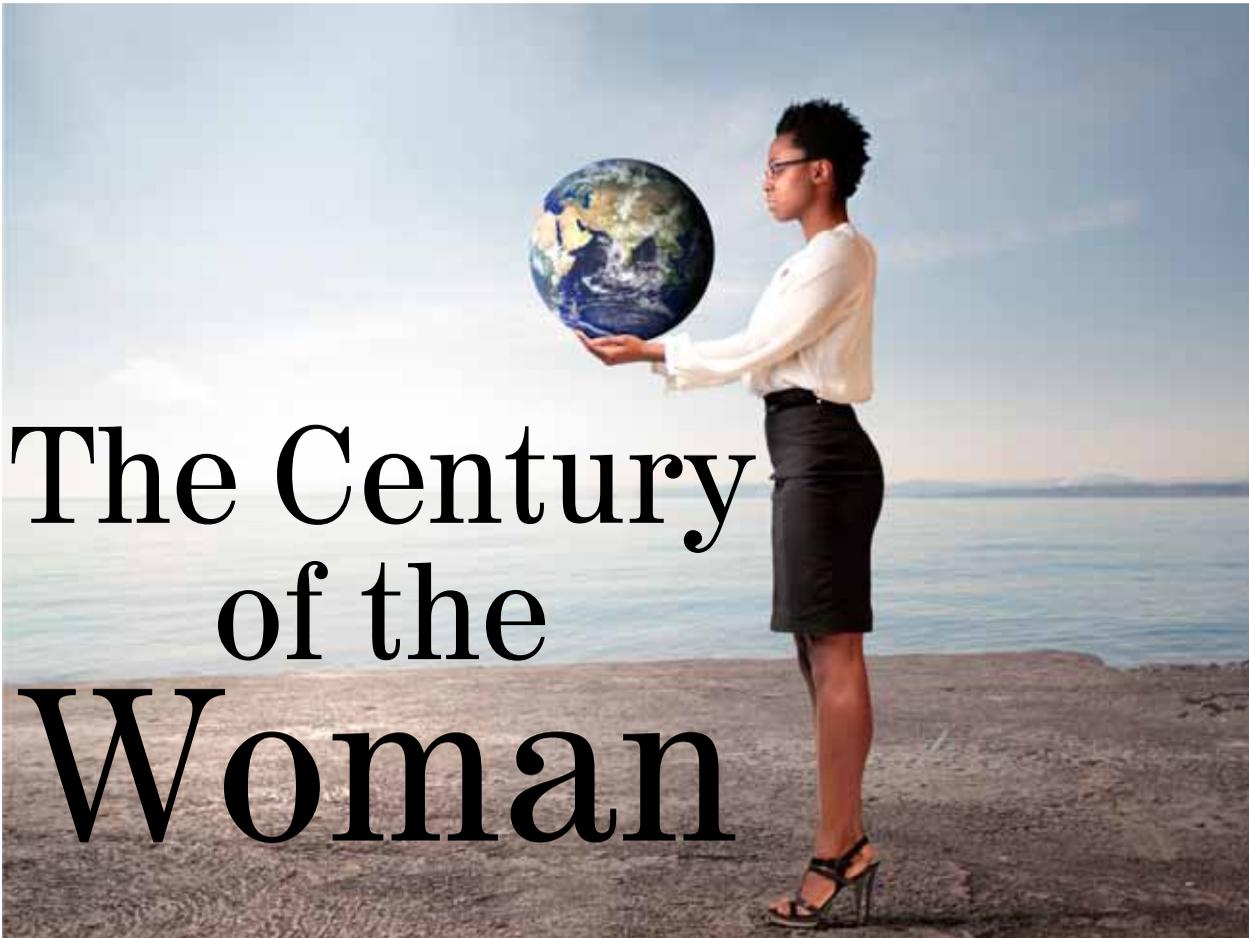
do I think that prostitutes should be treated as criminals as, more often than not, they are victims of structural inequality and broken society more generally. However, I am fully aware that an ‘inappropriate’ legal response further exacerbates the conditions of risk and vulnerability of these very same women: a bad response is as good as no response at all. The best answer must allow women to choose even the unorthodox; provided it is based on actual choice, building her spirit as she thrives on the best of humanity.

There are no easy answers, only difficult questions.

But the state can no longer ‘turn a blind eye’ to the shocking realities of the industry. The ills that characterise the industry persist despite the intentions of criminal law. Policy-makers are therefore obliged to take cognisance of the intricate nuances that characterise the sex industry and to ask themselves both theoretical, as well as tactical questions, as follows:

- What should be the ideological thrust(s) that inform South Africa’s legal response and how do you deal decisively with the material contradictions?
- How do we give programmatic expression to the constitutional obligations imposed on the state to extend protection to society’s most vulnerable citizens?
- What kind of society do we want to build? What are the imperatives of our social transformation project?
- How do you find alignment between competing social ideals, whilst respecting the plurality of South African society?
- What is the role of criminal law in regulating social behaviour and in shaping the kind of society we want to build?
- What is the best response bearing in mind prevailing circumstances?
- How do we frame our response in ways that unite rather than polarise, mobilising society towards a treasured unity premised on a shared vision for the future?

Whatever the policy approach to prostitution, policy-makers are obliged to introduce measures that will deal decisively and strategically with the challenges mentioned above.



# The Century of the Woman

Based on Sankara's thinking, until society makes a conscious effort to emancipate its women, we can never achieve the greater dream of emancipation of all people: the two go hand in hand.

By Amanda Mbali Dlamini

On December 10, 2009, the 21st century was officially declared "The Century of the Woman," following great strides made in the 20th century to promote women's rights, allowing women into the work-place and, to a small extent, into leadership. This past century saw women start to reject the 'in-the-kitchen-barefoot' stereotype and start to claim their independence from traditional roles which limited them to being wives, home-makers and mothers. Although these noble roles still remain a large part of women's lives, they no longer constitute the only dreams women are entitled to.

Necessity has also propelled women to independence. In modern society more and more women are the sole providers in their households.

The era of feminism was very useful to the progression of women as it allowed them to have a collective voice and address various injustices that affect women such as social, political and economic equality to men. Yet, the term now, incorrectly, carries quite negative connotations as it is associated with a war women are waging against men. Again, very incorrectly, most feminists are seen as aggressive, bitter and determined to cause dissent between the sexes. This has resulted in

many people now rejecting the feminist label in favour of the seemingly more politically correct term: Humanist. Yet it is worth asking whether there is still a need for feminism.

Most religious sectors are established from a patriarchal point-of-view. Although other sectors of society have embraced the equality of women, religious entities are lagging behind. This is most evident in one of the most divisive issues where religious sectors are unwilling to waver, the issue of termination of pregnancy and women's rights to contraception. Having worked in the Reproductive Health Sector, it is apparent that although social and

economic imbalances are the main cause of unplanned pregnancies amongst young women, religious sectors are more concerned with the morality of the act of taking a life, rather than the social conditions that lead to teenage pregnancy. Other woman-specific issues that feminists often advocate include the right of women to decide their sexual orientation as well as other issues that relate to women being victimised because of their gender. So it could be argued, before society embraces Humanism, it is still vital to consider those women-specific issues that feminists bring to the fore and to address those prior to moving forward as equals.

The reason the 21st century has been declared The Century of the Woman goes deeper than the fact that women are now equal to men and need to be acknowledged as such. When it comes to the issues affecting the globe today (environmental, war, conflicts, social, economic), the world is calling for a woman's touch in its leaders. Harvard Professor Marty Linsky stated in an article that Barack Obama is USA's first woman president. "He is pushing against conventional wisdom in various important ways, with approaches that are usually thought of as qualities and values that women bring to organizational life: a commitment to inclusiveness in problem solving, deep optimism, modesty about knowing all the answers, the courage to deliver uncomfortable news, not taking on all the work alone, and a willingness to air dirty linen. (Linsky, 2008).

It is well known that women are often more collaborative and intuitive in their approach to problem solving than men. In the digital age, where global connectedness via the internet has substantially increased access to information, the old saying 'Knowledge is Power' has lost some of its relevance. According to Avanaide "Across industries, regions and companies large and small, executives report the exponential growth in data and ability to access to critical information is creating very real business challenges. More than half of business executives, 56 percent, report they feel overwhelmed by the amount of data their company manages. Many report they are often

delayed in making important decisions as a result of too much information." These days leaders are required to not only trust their subordinates due to the quality of information they'll receive from them in order to make quality decisions, but to also filter through large amounts of data and intuitively make the best decisions whilst considering not just the bottom line, but also various factors such as the environment, sustainability and also the impact on people. The complexity requires leaders to think multi-laterally

“ It is well known that women are often more collaborative and intuitive in their approach to problem solving than men. In the digital age, where global connectedness via the internet has substantially increased access to information, the old saying 'Knowledge is Power' has lost some of its relevance. ”

and wear multiple hats at the same time in order to lead effectively. Again, this is a characteristic that women are able to bring to the workplace with ease.

In his latest book, *Attuned Leadership*, Dr Reuel Khoza stresses the importance of humanness when he states: "The attuned leader combines compassion, vision, moral duty and good governance, seeking to encompass even those who may not be regarded as followers. To be attuned is to strive for harmony with the followership, seeking to fulfil a larger destiny by reaching for transformative goals." Both men and women have a role to play in the success of the 21st century, yet the declaration of the

century as The Century of the Woman suggests a mind-shift into embracing feminine qualities as essential for effective, transformational leadership.

There has been a lot of debate as to whether the plight of women can be compared to that of oppressed races across the world. The issue of those in power taking advantage of that power against those more vulnerable is a universal one. Thomas Sankara once stated: "Posing the question of women in Burkinabè society today means posing the abolition of the system of slavery to which they have been subjected for millennia. The first step is to try to understand how this system works, to grasp its real nature in all its subtlety, in order then to work out a line of action that can lead to women's total emancipation. In other words, in order to win this battle that men and women have in common, we must be familiar with all aspects of the woman question on a world scale and here in Burkina. We must understand how the struggle of the Burkinabè woman is part of a worldwide struggle of all women and, beyond that, part of the struggle for the full rehabilitation of our continent. Thus, women's emancipation is at the heart of the question of humanity itself, here and everywhere. The question is thus universal in character." Based on Sankara's thinking, until society makes a conscious effort to emancipate its women, we can never achieve the greater dream of emancipation of all people: the two go hand in hand.

According to the organisation that established the vision for The Century of the Woman, the goals for this century are the following:

- The full empowerment of all women (full and equal education, equal legal rights and, equal access and fairness in economic and financial power areas).
- The recognition and expansion of women's equal and indispensable partnership with men essential to creating a lasting and sustainable prosperity for all.

It is clear that for any system of oppression to be perpetuated, ignorance and economic dependence are key weapons. Although it is not my belief that this is a war between men and women, it is a war against a

social system that has allowed women to continue to be victims due to their ignorance and economic dependence. Therefore one of the fundamental cornerstones of reversing the problem is the education of women. My mother once told me this story of her uncle who only had enough money to take one of his kids to school, and needed someone to help out with the house chores whilst the other child is away. The uncle decided that he'd go to the school and request that the daughter studies from January to June, then the son from July to December, because they'd occupy one seat in the classroom at a time. The teachers at the school explained that it didn't work like that, so he had to make a choice between the son getting an education or the daughter; he chose the son.

Although this was often not the desire of the parents, with limited resources, it was known that the son had better chances of getting work and helping out the family than the daughter, so he was the better investment. As stated in the African Women's Report for 2009, "Improvements are still required in the education sector to push some African countries towards achieving the MDG targets in education. Access to and retention levels in most countries are demonstrating that the sector is in peril. In particular, the majority of countries demonstrate lack of capacity to ensure continuity of both boys and girls from primary to secondary level. These patterns show clearly that girls tend to be excluded with progression up the educational ladder."

Having explored the 21st century's need for women in leadership and also reviewed the various challenges that continue to impact women and society, the most logical next step is to observe what ought to be done to bridge the gaps. As with most global issues, the future of our society depends largely on our leadership. The future requires leaders who will embrace the role of women in society, but more importantly, will nurture and grow the competence of women in various sectors, the most important of these being women in leadership.

A couple of years ago, Maria Ramos launched a programme with the Gordon's Institute for Business Science (GIBS) called Imbokodo, Leading Women. The aim of the programme is to develop women in executive positions in order to establish value-based leadership skills that transcend just emulating men in order to lead effectively, but foster Authentic leadership that embraces your nature as a woman and a leader. Having graduated from Leading Women, I learnt a lot of practical leadership

**“Very incorrectly most feminists are seen as aggressive, bitter and determined to cause dissent between the sexes. This has resulted in many people now rejecting the feminist label in favour of the seemingly more politically correct term: Humanist. Yet it is worth asking whether there is still a need for feminism.”**

skills, but the most impactful part of the programme for me was learning that within me I have the qualities it takes to lead. The programme involved exploring my values, my personal leadership qualities as well as my blind-spots and how those I lead experience me. John Maxwell, in his book *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, states that leadership is about influence, nothing more, and nothing less. So it's clear that after all is said and done, a leader needs to influence those they lead. The better attuned leaders are to their followers and the better they know themselves, the more influence they can exercise.

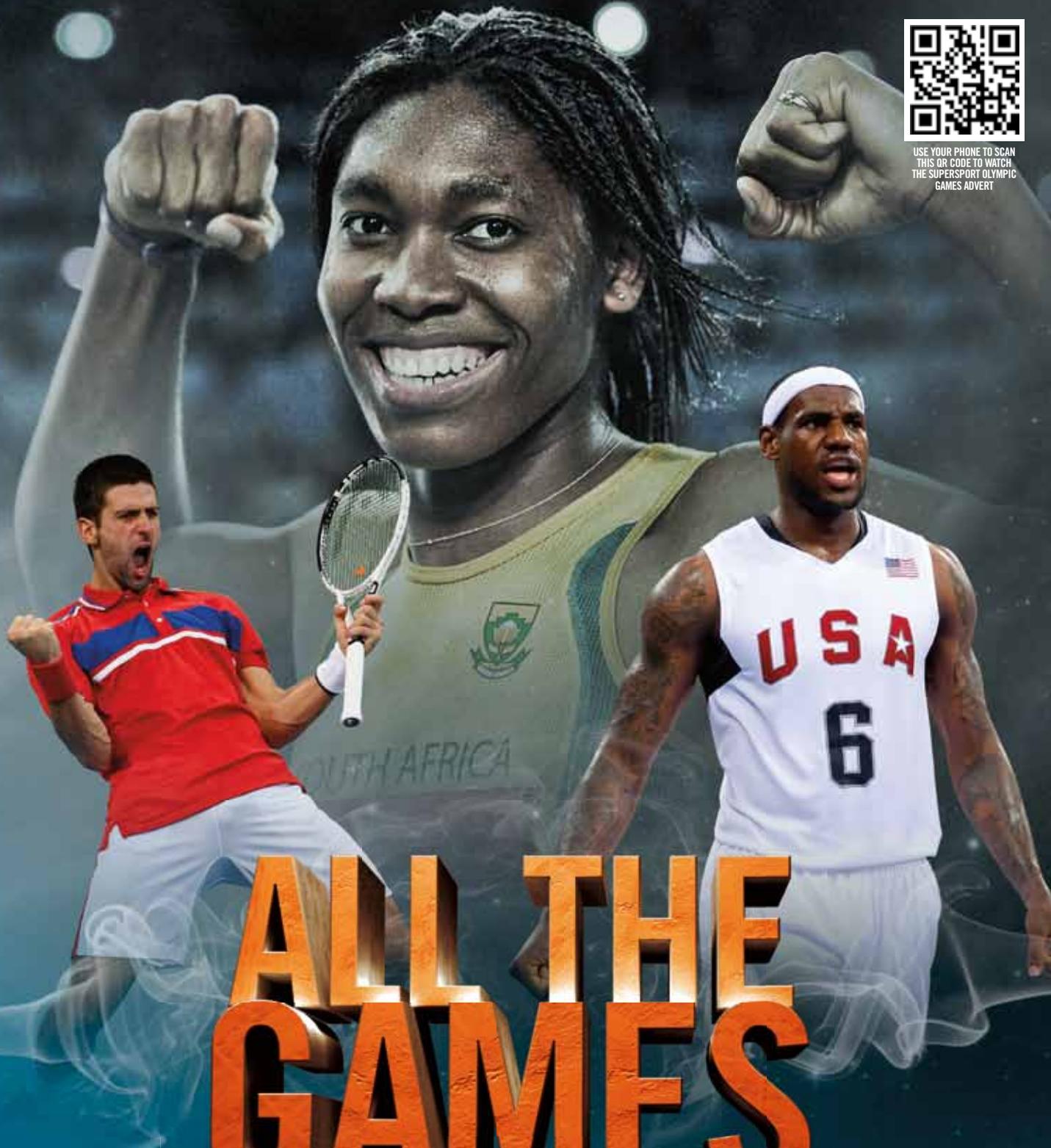
In the days of BBBEE, in theory women are now given plenty of

opportunities to lead, but the mind-shift for many has not yet taken place. Even today most women do not believe they have what it takes. That alone is more important than any policies that are in place: women need to feel empowered to lead and to believe that they can do it successively. The next key driver to reaching the goal of grooming future women leaders is mentorship. Those with the practical experience can guide younger women and prevent them from making similar mistakes in their own lives. I've had the pleasure to have women like Futhi Mtoba, Thoko Didiza and Makano Morejele as mentors. Their guidance, wisdom and humility is truly inspiring. There's an African proverb that goes: 'Lift as you climb.' As a young executive, I cherish the wisdom of more experienced women leaders, yet I also acknowledge my role as a mentor to younger women, which is why I was excited to be part of Noliitha (meaning a ray of sunshine), this is a programme instituted by Nombuyiselo Shabangu from Deloitte. The program allows female executives to go into underprivileged high schools and offer mentorship to young women. In African culture, it takes a village to raise a child, and the role of a mentor is one of the best gifts a young person can have at her disposal.

In a recent radio interview I was asked the question: What three words do you most associate with who you are? My immediate response was that I'm firstly a woman, I can relate to no other universal group as I can with women. The other two, I'm an African and I'm an artist. My identity, personality and life's purpose is linked to those three things, but of all three, the greatest one is that I'm a woman. I have been raised by a mother who always instilled in me the knowledge that there is nothing I cannot achieve, if I put my mind and heart into it. That alone has driven me to excel, to know that the term 'woman' is not a burden but a blessing, and being the woman that I am, I've come to embrace the fact that I have a role to play in the future success of my country and continent. It's amazing to go through life knowing that you were born at the right place, at the right time, for the right purpose. To Lead.



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# Celebrating Umkhonto we Sizwe

They were the women of the Luthuli, June 16, Mmadinoge, Moncada, the Young Lions and other detachments that came after them: young, militant, hugely disciplined and patriotic.

By Ayanda Dlodlo

The ANC celebrates its 100 years of illustrious history and Umkhonto we Sizwe celebrates 51 years. In celebrating Women's Day, we cannot ignore nor forget the revolutionary zeal of the women of Umkhonto we Sizwe in executing their military tasks. They executed political missions of mass mobilisation through many ways in and out of the country. They defended the camps, property of Umkhonto we Sizwe and the peoples of the host countries that opened their hearts and homes to the young South African Freedom Fighters.

Popularly known as uMzana by their male counterparts, and as previously written about, as Oliver Tambo's Flowers of the Revolution, the Izintombi zomkhonto were an illuminating feature of the "people's army", inspired by many great female revolutionaries and combatants who graced the armed forces of liberation movements across the globe.

These were young women who came from all over the country, driven by their quest to liberate the oppressed masses of our people. Young women who chose the people above self. Young women who had to forego their youth and childhood to bear the yoke of liberating the people of South Africa. Young women who had to postpone child bearing and marriage in some instances, as this was not a primary focus of the growth of these women.

They were young women who did not let their femininity get in the way of their ideals and aspirations but led from the front, advancing the vision of the African National Congress. They were the women of the Luthuli, June 16, Mmadinoge, Moncada, the Young Lions and other detachments that came after them: young, militant, hugely disciplined and patriotic.

Tracing some of these gallant female combatants to find out where they are in life today is a nostalgic experience that always makes the eyes smart, thinking of where they come from and where we are today. Some are very poor and struck by shame and sadness for the societal situations they find themselves in, others prospering and gracing the corridors of power in both the public and private sectors.

Yet many more did not live to see the freedom that we are so abundantly blessed with.

As the Umkhonto we Sizwe Military Veterans Association we also pay tribute to those women who were not trained members of MK but worked with MK combatants in strengthening the underground. Some of these women, like Nomvula Mokonyane, paid a heavy price for this and languished in solitary confinement and gave birth in the cells at Sun City Prison. Winnie Mandela, the ever willing soldier of the people, made it a little easier to link some with their networks in the rear through couriers she had established and her ability to relate directly with Lusaka in conveying messages and receiving directives.

Mama Albertina Sisulu made it a little easier to get medical attention for those who required emergency treatment after skirmishes with the enemy.

MaNhlapho continues to work with ex-combatants two decades into our liberation, but still displays that motherly care to those that encounter her even today as they did during the period of the armed struggle. MaNhlapho also had the unfortunate experience of being arrested and served many months in and out of detention. She has the emotional scars to bear testimony to this brutal harassment.

There are many more such women who shall always be remembered and celebrated by those of us who understand the pain and brutality of the past.

But so too shall we remember the struggles of the male comrades of exile who fought tirelessly for the emancipation of the oppressed women of South Africa and ensured that even in the ANC and throughout the alliance, our voice was heard. This was a voice that resonated in the streets of Johannesburg, the factory floors of Cape Town, the sugar cane fields of Durban, and everywhere in the country where the ANC had established a voice and a presence.

One thinks too of the mother to 19 year old Andrew Zondo who was sentenced to death and hanged at the age of 20. We remember the

rallying voices of the women of the world supporting the call for the stay of execution of many MK soldiers. We remember the support given to the mothers of those on death row facing the hangman's noose.

We think of the family of Nokuthula Simelane who was killed and whose remains have never been found. She was a young woman who refused to give information on any of her contacts and ended up being killed. And those scars of the past will never fade for the Simelane family as the Truth and Reconciliation process did not unearth the truth about their child's mortal remains.

In an insensitive world that expects

**“This history that was pervasive in its depiction of the hardships and sorrow that South African women endured in a brutal system of murder, torture, subjugation, disenfranchisement and deprivation.”**

us to move on and forget about the past, how do we rest with Nokuthula's remains lying somewhere unknown? And with those that killed her still intransigent and not wanting to put the family's pain to rest? Would it be irresponsible to feel that we could not truly trust every white man on the street who could very well have been Nokuthula's killer?

This is a country where the insensitivity is shown about the struggles, pain and loss of Black people and these are made into a satirical joke by the likes of Brett Murray in his crude vulgarisation of Solomon Mahlangu's last words as he walked to his death.

One would not even begin to imagine the pain that must have been felt once again by Solomon Mahlangu's mother that, in a democratic country whose constitution calls for the honouring of those who fought for this

liberation like Solomon Mahlangu, she would be reminded so brutally of the pain that she had tried over years to deal with.

This year we will celebrate the women of MK by paying a special tribute to Nokuthela Dube, the first wife of President John Langalibalele Dube, whose grave lies in Johannesburg. Through the beautiful work of Professor Cherif Keita, a Malian historian, we are reminded of this heroic revolutionary in a documentary and in the unveiling of her tombstone in August.

August 9 in the camps of Angola, Tanzania and Uganda were days celebrated through song, dance and sport. Male comrades treated us to the best they could offer: relatively good food, some sweets or chocolate from the black market in Luanda, and bananas. It was these little things that under a normal society we take for granted, that to us was utmost luxury in a place of nothing but camaraderie, sweat and sometimes hunger. It was this day that reminded us how special we were not only in the eyes of those that shared the trenches with us, but those who also remembered us in other parts of the world and celebrated the great march to the Union Buildings with us.

It was this history that rooted us deeply in the culture of resistance and militancy. This history that was pervasive in its depiction of the hardships and sorrow that South African women endured in a brutal system of murder, torture, subjugation, disenfranchisement and deprivation.

This was the history that gave us the strength to endure the difficulties of camp life that was difficult for men but worse for women. A life where even when you were pregnant and did not even realise you were, there was no ante-natal clinic or a choice of food to feed your cravings. There, too, was the danger of a horrible miscarriage because of the harsh training regime that we all had to go through that did not take into account the female physique and delicate anatomy when one was with child.

You could very well have been in your second trimester before you discovered you were pregnant. The emotional pain that followed this was



Over 80,000 organised and disciplined volunteers deliberately broke Apartheid laws and were jailed. These women, some in volunteer uniforms and some in traditional regalia, are from the Eastern Cape.

occasioned by the knowledge that you would have to be leaving the camp, cutting short your training and losing the prospect of going back home as a fully trained combatant to fight the enemy.

Last year we marked and celebrated the 50th anniversary of Umkhonto we Sizwe. At that time reflecting upon the trials, tribulations, joys and sorrows of women M.K freedom fighters I wrote (*City Press*, 7 August, 2011):

*Our MK, our ANC, our fellow fighters were proud of us. We were few but mighty.*

*Barely adults and in the spring of our adolescence, these were but some of the many girls from Soweto, Tumahole, Mdantsane, Sobantu village, Gugulethu, Potchefstroom and other townships who would not and did not spare limb or life for the liberation of our people.*

*These were the teenagers of yesteryear who responded*

*proudly when the leadership asked, "who do you serve, comrades", and in their shrill military voices answered, "we serve the people of South Africa".*

*This is the military generation of our armed struggle that carried 25kg base plates on their backs for kilometres on end in a tactics or artillery class.*

*This is the breed of women who sang "Dubula ibhunu" and other liberation songs with commitment and aplomb – as if their world depended on it.*

*These are the women who traversed the gorges and swamps and springs in the bush of Angola, learning the art of war with bazookas, PKMs, AK 47s, maps and compasses to hone their skills for use in their fight against a brutal system of criminality perpetuated against black people.*

*These are the women who read*

*Marxism, Leninism, the history of other liberation movements, 'the Volokolomsk Highway' and other politically motivating pieces of literature.*

*'Flowers of the revolution' was a term coined by one of the best leaders this world has ever produced. This was a term of endearment given to the women of MK by the commander-in-chief of MK – comrade president Oliver Reginald Tambo.*

*As we celebrate Women's Day towards the 50th anniversary of the formation of MK, let us bow our heads for the young girls of the 60s, 70s and 80s who sacrificed their childhood and youth for the liberation of all South Africans.*

In all, this was a life well lived, with all its hardships. It was such a fulfilling feeling to be part of an army of young men and women who put the people above self.

# ULYSSE NARDIN

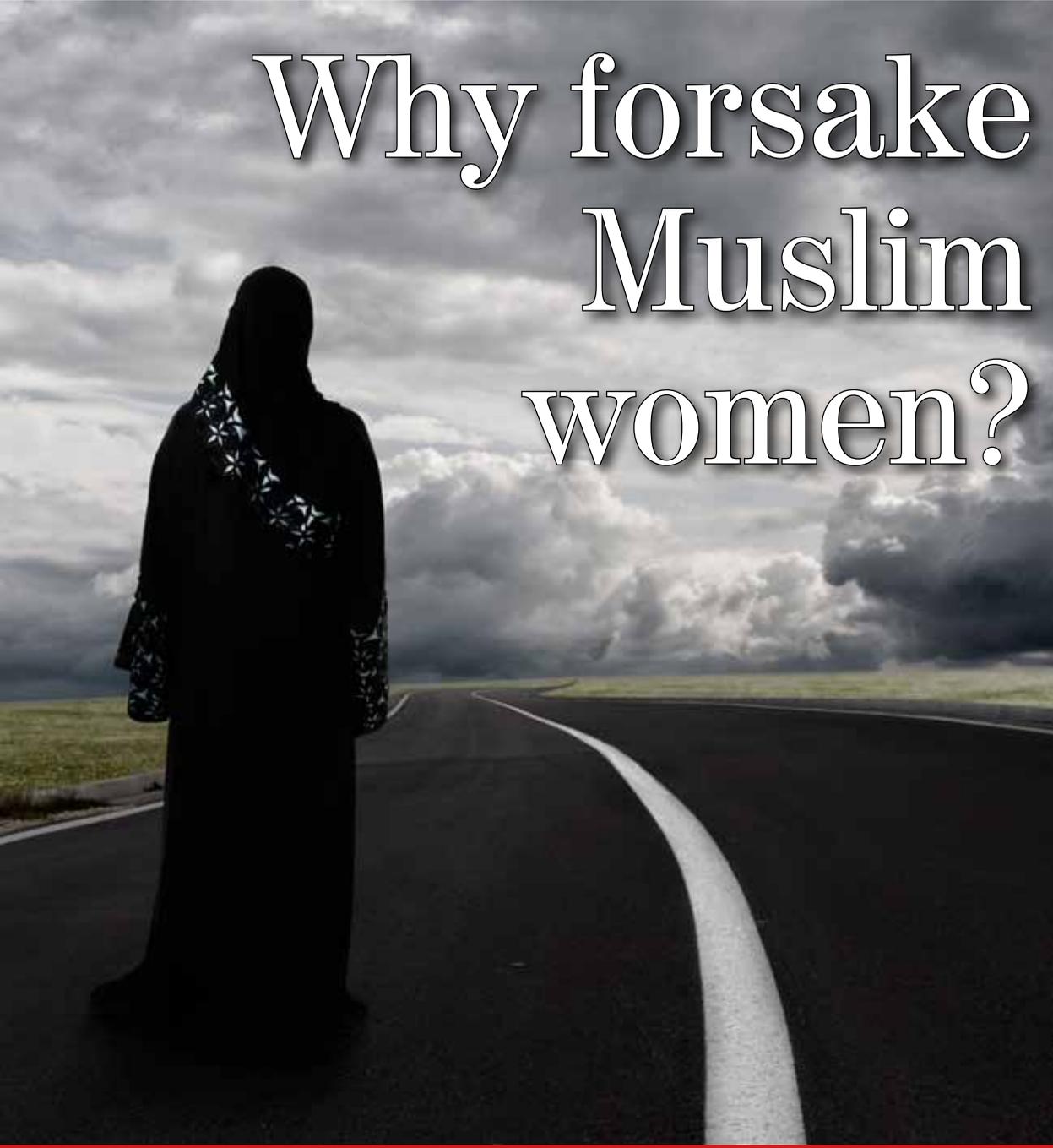
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A woman in a black hijab and abaya stands on a road, looking out over a cloudy sky. The road is paved and has a white line. The sky is filled with large, dark clouds. The woman is in the foreground, looking towards the horizon.

# Why forsake Muslim women?

Speculation abounds that the contentious nature of the 2010 Muslim Marriages Bill is the reason that government is not moving forward with its enactment. In fact, it has been 15 months since the DoJ received submissions on the 2010 MMB and the public has not yet heard one word about the outcome of that process.

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By Waheeda Amien

As we celebrate our 18th Women's Month since the advent of democracy in South Africa, we should pause to consider those aspects of our gender struggle that are still ongoing. For the purposes of this article, I would like to focus on one important feature, namely, the struggle of women married by Muslim rites.

As many may be aware, Muslim marriages are not legal in South Africa. The effects of this are far-reaching on all affected parties. For instance, women and men married by Muslim rites do not enjoy the same legal status as their civil law counterparts. They also do not enjoy all civil law benefits that are available to their civil law counterparts. For example, if one of the parties is a beneficiary of a state-funded pension scheme and in the event that her/his marriage is dissolved, her/his spouse would not be an automatic beneficiary of that scheme, although civil law spouses married in community of property would be. Furthermore, children born of parties married by Muslim rites bear the stigma of illegitimacy.

Moreover, women married by Muslim rites are disproportionately affected because discriminatory interpretations of Islamic law by *ulamā* (Muslim clergy) often preclude them from being able to access their Islamic law benefits. Even where *ulamā* are well-intentioned and order husbands to comply with their marital obligations such as *nafaqah* (maintenance), their 'orders' are unenforceable. In addition, non-recognition of Muslim marriages prevents women from challenging discriminatory interpretations of Islamic law or accessing their Islamic law benefits in secular courts.

So where does that leave women who are married by Muslim rites? Particularly those who are financially vulnerable? In short: without much legal protection. Admittedly, to a great extent, the judiciary has attempted to provide relief to vulnerable women whose cases were able to make it to court. But judicial intervention (without legislative intervention) still requires women to proactively institute their actions and to draw on their financial and emotional resources to sustain them through the legal battles. Consequently, many women fall by the wayside.

But what of the government's constitutional obligation to come to the aid of vulnerable women who are married by Muslim rites? Section 7(2) of the Constitution obliges the state to "respect, protect, promote and fulfill the rights in the Bill of Rights." And since sections 9 and 15(3)(a) protect the rights of all respectively to be treated equally before the law, to have equal protection and benefit of the law, to not be unfairly discriminated against on the basis of religion, gender and sex, and to have their religious marriages recognised through the enactment of legislation, one has to wonder why such legislation has not yet been enacted?

“Given the vast range of interests that were at play, it is fair to say that the 2003 MMB comprised a reasonable compromise between extreme positions.”

Casting our minds back to the negotiations period preceding the 1994 democratic elections, one also has to wonder what happened to the electoral promise that the ANC had made to the Muslim community when they assured them that their religious marriages would be recognised once the ANC attained power.

Certainly, since 1994, processes have been put in place in an attempt to draft legislation to recognise Muslim marriages. The first attempt in 1994 through the establishment of the Muslim Personal Law Board failed due to ideological differences among the members of the Board. However, the second attempt by the South African Law Reform Commission Project Committee in 1999 appeared to enjoy greater success with the submission to the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development (Minister) in 2003 of a comprehensive Report coupled with draft legislation for the recognition of Muslim marriages. This 2003 Muslim Marriages Bill (2003

MMB) was a product of extensive consultations between the Project Committee and various Muslim organisations and individuals as well as broader civil society that spanned nearly four years. Although the end product did not meet all the demands of all the role-players, it was certainly a document that most felt that they could live with. For instance, gender activists within the Muslim community and broader civil society argued that the 2003 MMB was not absolutely consistent with gender equality but it certainly promised more protection to women than they presently have. Given the vast range of interests that were at play, it is fair to say that the 2003 MMB comprised a reasonable compromise between extreme positions. It purported to regulate Muslim family law within an Islamic law framework while maintaining for the most part, compatibility with constitutional principles. It also contained innovative mechanisms for the management of religious marriages within a secular legal framework such as the requirement that adjudication of opposed matters arising from the MMB should be presided over by a Muslim judge coupled with Islamic law experts acting as assessors.

Whether it was intended to be so or not, the inclusion of such a provision was responsive to an important lesson learnt from the 1985 Indian case of *Shah Bano*. The *Shah Bano* case had resulted in huge outcry by extremist Indian Muslims who had been outraged that an all-Hindu Supreme Court bench had pronounced on issues relating to Islamic law. This was also the biggest point of contention among the South African *ulamā* relating to Muslim marriages being regulated within a secular framework; namely, that disputes relating to Muslim family law should be adjudicated by Muslims. Yet the Project Committee recommended a unique solution by proposing to have Islamic law experts assist in the secular judicial decision-making process, which was supported by many members of the South African *ulamā*.

Given that there had been general consensus among moderate members of the South African 2003 MMB, which resulted in some amendments being

made to the 2003 MMB. An amended MMB was subsequently submitted by the DoJ to Cabinet and thereafter approved by Cabinet in 2010. Consequently, there did not seem to be any need for the WLC to re-launch its application in the High Court. The DoJ then opened the process for consultation by inviting the public to tender submissions on the 2010 MMB and set 31 May 2011 as the deadline to receive submissions. A flurry of activity within civil society ensued with organisations and individuals trying to make their opinions heard about the MMB. The pace stepped up a notch when the media became involved and debates about the viability of legislation that purports to recognise a minority religious marriage dominated the public domain.

Interestingly, the amendments affected by the DoJ resulted simultaneously in a greater degree of secularisation and Islamisation of the 2010 MMB than was reflected in the 2003 MMB. Unsurprisingly, this caused some consternation among those who had previously supported the 2003 MMB especially since the changes appeared to have been made without consulting the relevant role-players within civil society.

Moderate members of the *ulamā* were concerned that the MMB had been secularised in a way that they did not find comfortable and progressive Muslims were dismayed at the increased Islamisation of the 2010 MMB. An example of the latter is the inclusion of a definition of Islamic law, which limits its sources in a way that may prevent progressive interpretations of Muslim family law from being applied to disputes arising from the MMB. Examples of the increased secularisation of the 2010 MMB include: firstly, the removal of the requirement that disputes arising from the MMB should be adjudicated by Muslim judges and Islamic law experts; and secondly, while the 2003 MMB obliged parties to seek binding arbitration prior to adjudication, the 2010 MMB enables parties to subject their dispute to voluntary mediation. It is not surprising that the increased secularisation met with unhappiness on the part of moderate members of the *ulamā*, given in the first instance,

the widespread belief among Muslims that Islamic law must be adjudicated by Muslims, and in the second instance, the *ulamā* perceived the arbitration process as the opportunity through which they would be able to continue regulating Muslim family law within the community. Their fear is that the recommendation for voluntary mediation may decrease their ambit of intervention. Notwithstanding the changes to the 2010 MMB, moderate members of the *ulamā*, progressive Muslims and gender activists within civil society have not rejected outright the 2010 MMB because they view the changes as areas that are still up for discussion. In other words, they are willing to negotiate with the DoJ to fine-tune the MMB where necessary.

“ There is also the 1998 Recognition of Customary Marriages Act, which afforded legal recognition to customary marriages. Why then is the same respect not being shown to Muslims, particularly Muslim women? ”

In my view, the changes are not insurmountable. If one considers the practicalities of securing a Muslim judge to preside over MMB related disputes, it is understandable that the DoJ would have removed that requirement given the paucity of Muslim judges within our judiciary; not to mention the normative challenge of having to figure out how to determine whether or not a judge is Muslim. However, it does seem reasonable that in a matter where clear guidance is not provided in the MMB itself, the opinion of an Islamic law expert should be sought. So there is no reason why the MMB cannot include a provision that enables a judge to, where applicable, either use Islamic law experts as assessors or as witnesses to testify as experts, which in turn would assist the judge in the decision-making process. These options are in any event available in our legal system, whether they are expressly included

in the MMB or not, but their inclusion may provide to those members of the *ulamā* who deem it necessary, the comfort of knowing that they have been explicitly provided for.

As far as compulsory arbitration versus voluntary mediation is concerned, the *Qurʾān* provides guidance. In the case of marital disputes, *Qurʾān* 4:35 encourages parties to each obtain a representative to assist them in trying to resolve their differences. This injunction appears to support our contemporary understanding of mediation, which is a process that aims to facilitate a resolution, which through the guidance of a third party, parties arrive at themselves rather than have a ruling imposed on them. The discretion that the 2010 MMB proposes for the parties to first try to mediate their dispute therefore appears to be consistent with the spirit of *Qurʾān* 4:35. And the replacement of arbitration with mediation will not preclude the *ulamā* from making their mediation services available.

As for the concern about the increased Islamisation of the MMB, the solution is quite simple. Where it is not needed, it should be removed because for the purposes of adjudicating the MMB, the MMB needs to provide as much clarity to the presiding officer as possible. However, if, for instance, the definition of Islamic law remains, it should be as inclusive as possible because the sources of Islamic law are not limited to just the very few mentioned in the MMB. There are several other examples of Islamisation throughout the MMB, which could benefit from the same approach. For example, the requirement that a Family Advocate must have regard to Islamic customs when trying to determine who should have guardianship, custody and access of a minor child is unnecessary and dangerous because one is expecting a civil servant who may not have any knowledge of Islamic law or customs to make a pronouncement on just that. As indicated above, pronouncements on Islamic law that arise from the MMB should best be left to a secular judge in consultation with Islamic law experts.

In addition to the changes that appear in the 2010 MMB, niggly concerns that existed in the 2003

MMB persist in the 2010 MMB. For gender activists, the issues of unequal divorce and a default matrimonial property regime of out of community of property are ones that they still hope can be changed. Again, the solution is not complicated and is in fact available in Islamic law. The 2010 MMB recognises the main forms of divorce that are available to husbands and wives including *talāq* and *khul'a*. *Talāq* enables a husband to unilaterally repudiate his wife at any time and without having to show fault. *Khul'a* is meant to serve as the wife's counter-balance to her husband's right to *talāq* by enabling the wife to release herself from the marriage on a no-fault basis provided she returns her *mahr* (dower). Unfortunately, the 2010 MMB requires the husband's approval of the financial compensation that a wife pays to him before *khul'a* can be effected. This interpretation of *khul'a* does not accord with Prophetic tradition, *Qur'ānic* injunction (2:229) or the way *khul'a* is understood in most majority Muslim countries. For instance, the divorce laws of Egypt, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Philippines do not require a husband's permission before *khul'a* is granted. If the less onerous interpretation of *khul'a* is adopted, it would go a long way toward equalising the position between husbands and wives in Muslim marriages.

As for the default matrimonial property regime of out of community of property: if one considers that a Muslim marriage is a contract between two parties whereby they are free to contract the terms of their marriage as they choose, then gender activists' contention that the default regime should be in community of property does not flout Islamic law. In fact, the default regime could be anything provided the parties are free to contract out of it. The determining factor, however, should be what would be the best default option for the most vulnerable party in a Muslim marriage, especially one who is in an unequal position to contract the terms of her/his marriage. In that case, the in community of property regime makes the most sense because it provides a fair distribution of the estate upon dissolution of the marriage. Those who

operate with relatively equal bargaining powers would be better positioned to negotiate a regime that is out of community of property; therefore the option to do so should be available in the legislation but it should not be the default option.

A third issue that has left both the *ulamā* and gender activists in a bit of a quandary is the 'opt in, opt out' provisions of the 2010 MMB.

**“ One simply has to think of the recognition of same-sex marriages through the enactment of the 2006 Civil Union Act and the permissibility of abortion through the 1996 Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act. Both pieces of legislation were highly controversial and drew great ire from almost every religious quarter in the country. Yet, government went ahead and respected, protected, promoted and fulfilled the rights of vulnerable parties who would benefit from those enactments. ”**

The 2010 MMB proposes that it will apply automatically to parties who are currently married by Muslim rites but they would have the option to 'opt out'; while parties who enter into Muslim marriages after the MMB is enacted or who currently have both Muslim and civil marriages will have the option to 'opt in'. The *ulamā* would prefer that the only option should be 'opt in' while gender activists argue that the option should be 'opt out' in both instances. The justification for the latter position is to protect the more vulnerable party who is unable to assert her/his rights.

In light of the above, it seems clear that the 2010 MMB is contentious even for those who support the enactment of legislation to recognise Muslim marriages. There are also those Muslim

extremists and secular extremists who do not support the enactment of any legislation to recognise Muslim marriages because they advocate a strict separation between religion and state, a position that is at odds with our Constitution. Furthermore, there are those gender activists who expect the MMB to be 100% consistent with gender equality before they will support it. Yet, those who reject the MMB comprise a minority view even though they tend to make the most noise.

Nevertheless, speculation abounds that the contentious nature of the 2010 MMB is the reason that government is not moving forward with its enactment. In fact, it has been 15 months since the DoJ received submissions on the 2010 MMB and the public has not yet heard one word about the outcome of that process. The media furor also died down after the 31 May 2011 deadline expired. But surely the lack of consensus around the 2010 MMB cannot be the real reason that the process seems to have been halted (again); especially since it is not unusual for government to enact contentious legislation. For instance, one simply has to think of the recognition of same-sex marriages through the enactment of the 2006 Civil Union Act and the permissibility of abortion through the 1996 Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act. Both pieces of legislation were highly controversial and drew great ire from almost every religious quarter in the country. Yet, government went ahead and respected, protected, promoted and fulfilled the rights of vulnerable parties who would benefit from those enactments. There is also the 1998 Recognition of Customary Marriages Act, which afforded legal recognition to customary marriages.

Why then is the same respect not being shown to Muslims, particularly Muslim women? Whatever the reason, government has an obligation to provide legislative relief to Muslims. The next step should either be for the DoJ to bring together those who are interested in working with the 2010 MMB so that they can try to develop a workable solution that does not negate the rights of Muslim women or allow the MMB to enter the parliamentary process.

## THE POWER OF THINKING WOMEN



# Transformative action for a kinder world

Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, the newly-elected chair of the African Union Commission

SAWID is determined to work towards the material and social sustainability of individuals and communities, not by fixing old systems, but by creating targeted, holistic, and coordinated interventions that will result in measurable changes to the day to day conditions of women and the girl-child.

By Marthe Muller

“When women are excluded from effective economic participation, they are deprived of the right to productive existence and exerting their influence on society and the environment.” (Dr Vuyo Mahlati, in *Women and the Economy*, July 2012)

We are fortunate to live in extraordinary, if deeply unsettling, times. Cracks in the global macro-economic framework and continuing conflicts over resources in various parts of the world are confirming that our most basic survival strategies for life on earth are seriously flawed. Social

unrest around the globe, flowing from the legitimate aspirations of millions of people for equality, social and economic freedom, and for meaningful participation in the governance of their societies, show that, above all, people matter, and that people can only sustain what they can participate in.

Eighteen years after the end of apartheid, a political system that systematically set out to cripple the human potential of the majority of the inhabitants of this country, women and poor families in South Africa continue to face tremendous obstacles to reaching their full human potential.

Given that women are the most likely to be poor and marginalised, due to the continuing impact of gender inequality, power relations between men and women, and the burden of unpaid care-work that women bear, it is women themselves who have to show the way towards transformational and holistic interventions that heal the wounds caused by a brutal and brutalising past; interventions that imbed self-reliance and freedom from drudgery at the household level, that professionalise work women often do for free, that demand an inclusive and compassionate macro-economic framework, designed to serve human needs rather than pander to corporate greed, and that enable girls and women to contribute maximally to the social and economic life of their country, their region, their continent and the world.

South African Women In Dialogue (SAWID) is determined to work towards the material and social sustainability of individuals and communities, not by fixing old systems, but by creating targeted, holistic, and coordinated interventions that will result in measurable changes to the day to day conditions of women and the girl-child.

### **SAWID: Women as Champions of Change**

SAWID traces its origins back to July 2003, when around 1000 women from all over South Africa gathered at the University of Pretoria to develop and share strategies for mainstreaming women's issues, and to discuss the post-conflict developmental challenges.

South African women had gathered, convened by a volunteer steering committee, representing women leaders in government, business, civil society and academia; across the political spectrum, including Zanele Mbeki, Dr Brigalia Bam, Dr Mohau

Pheko, Mandisa Tsotsi, the late Prof Harriet Ngubane, Sandra Botha, Prof Hlengiwe Mkhize, Dr Thandi Ndlovu, Wendy Lucas Bull, Suraya Bibi Khan, Baby Tyawa, Thoko Mpumlwana, Gernia van Niekerk, and others, to celebrate the achievements of women and the nation since 1994, to identify and address on-going challenges, and to envision a plan towards a post-2004 future.

The success of this initiative, and the healing nature of the barrier-breaking and leadership intervention that

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preceded it, led by the multi-lingual Mike Boon of *Vuka South Africa!* and forty facilitators, bolstered the desire of the women of South Africa to use the power of facilitated dialogue to forge a programme of action towards the realisation of a vision for the development of South Africa informed by the experiences and wisdom of women, and which would be measurable in terms of the actual concrete changes in the day to day lives of women around the country.

In alignment with the demand of women for skills development and capacity building, more than 80 training workshops were held during the first SAWID National dialogue in 2003, in collaboration with the University of Pretoria, in areas like the Writing of Business Plans, Project

Management, Conflict Resolution, Effective Parenting, Craft work, Food Gardening and Basic Computer Skills.

The founding Trustees of the organisation included Zanele Mbeki, Irene Charnley, Wendy Lucas Bull and Mathabo Kunene.

In 2004 young women demanded, and received, their own Young Women in Dialogue Forum when they complained that their interests were not being addressed by older women who were out of touch with the interests and challenges faced by younger women. The first YSAWID Chairperson, Oya Hazel Gumedé, was co-opted into the Global Youth Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Forum at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in 2005, and later nominated to be South Africa's official representative on the Commission On The Elimination Of All Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) of the United Nations in New York, taking over a position that had previously been occupied by another Sawidian, Mavivi Myakayaka Manzini. In March 2007 another Ysawidian, Alidia Modjadji Seabi, organised and facilitated a session at the UN CSW that encouraged young African girls to come together and share information about issues affecting girls in their respective countries. The theme was *African Girls in Dialogue: About us, for us, by us.*

SAWID situates itself within the context, legacy and collaborative efforts of generations of South African women, who in two pivotal moments of our nation's history collaborated to have their voices heard: in 1956, when 20 000 women protested the hated pass laws, and in 1991 when 81 women's organisation united under the umbrella of the National Women's Coalition, combining their efforts to draft a Women's Charter of Effective Equality, where, in February 1994, women claimed "full and equal participation in the creation of a non-sexist, non-racist democratic society."

SAWID nurtures four diverse programmes in addition to the Annual National and Regional Coordination Forum: a Pan-African Peace and Reconciliation Programme,

a Young Women's Programme, an Older Person's Programme and a Development Programme.

Since its inception, SAWID has been characterised by its concerted efforts to influence public policy and influence and empower the state machinery to fulfil the needs of individuals and families at the local level, where people live.

### **The Role of Women in Creating Social Cohesion**

The recent Social Cohesion Summit held in Kliptown on the 4th and 5th of July acknowledged the negative indicators of social cohesion which still affect the lives of the majority of South Africans: issues of "poverty, inequality, unemployment, homelessness, landlessness, poverty of health, violent crime, abuse of women and children, the elderly and foreign nationals and uneven and inadequate local government service delivery in historically neglected communities."

The national social cohesion strategy also points out that South Africa's desire to attain a socially cohesive society would depend on the ability of all its inhabitants to weave together the elements that would ensure social cohesion: "strategies to overcome the social divisions of class, race, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability and other dimensions of social difference and diversity, as well as address issues of material and social inequalities like apartheid remnant spatial patterns, housing, worklessness, local delivery dynamics, demographic change and school choice, amongst other variables of human choice and agency."

SAWID has consistently worked towards social cohesion in all its activities, through a strict inclusivity checklist which includes race, ethnic origin, language, religion, age, geographic origin, sexual orientation and economic status, through an emphasis on simultaneous translation of all dialogues in all the languages of the country, through the multi-faith devotions that precede any SAWID event, and through a deep respect for the cultures of other people, symbolised by the Voortrekker dress that SAWID Founder and Patron Zanele Mbeki

chose to wear at the Gala dinner at the end of the first SAWID National Dialogue in 2003.

### **Barrier-breaking, Healing, Reconciliation and Peace**

SAWID is well-placed to lead the country in a barrier-breaking, healing, reconciliation and social cohesion agenda, as the organisation, and its Pan African Peace and Reconciliation Forum, grew out of the spontaneous display of support shown by women from South Africa towards their Congolese sisters who were attending the Inter Congolese Peace Dialogue (ICD) in Sun City in 2002 and

“ The signing of the Comprehensive and Inclusive Pretoria agreement took place at about midnight on Thursday 6 March 2003, directly related to the public display of solidarity and social cohesion by South African and Congolese women.”

2003. This led to a 5-day Peace and Reconciliation dialogue at Esselen Park in March 2003 between 125 Congolese women and 200 South African women, which allowed women from conflicting parties in the DRC to come together to increase their participation in the dialogue for peace and nation building in their country and to ensure that the post-conflict society provides a framework for gender equality.

One of the highlights of this peace dialogue was the public demonstration of Congolese women with South African support organised on March 6, 2003 at the Union Building grounds to demand that the Inter Congolese Dialogue (ICD) sign the Draft Constitution and the Memorandum on the Army and the Protection of Institutions. The message of the women was also a call for peace, the

implementation of the Comprehensive and inclusive Agreement as well as the representation of women at all levels of responsibility. The signing of the Comprehensive and Inclusive Pretoria agreement took place at about midnight on Thursday 6 March 2003, directly related to the public display of solidarity and social cohesion by South African and Congolese women.

Subsequent peace dialogues and bilateral meetings were hosted with women from Burundi, the Great Lakes Area, Liberia, Tunisia, Nigeria, the SADC countries and Southern Sudan.

Because SAWID was founded on the lessons learnt in promoting peace with women in DRC and Burundi, it was natural that subsequent SAWID programmes should give pride of place to "Pan-African Peace and Reconciliation". Much of the programme work in this regard within SAWID is grounded on the principles and programmes of the AU and NEPAD, in line with South African foreign policy.

In July 2008, after the brutal attacks on various African nationals leading to killings and the displacement of many from their homes that left the nation traumatised, guilty and distressed, SAWID convened a Women's Peace Dialogue in Alexandra, where the violence had started, under the theme, Grounding Peace in our Communities. SAWID believed that it was incumbent upon themselves to respond timeously because it is the *raison d'être* of SAWID to promote inclusivity in diversity among South Africans and on the continent. It would not have been possible for SAWID to talk peace to women from other SADC countries and to other women on the continent when violent conflict was engulfing many in South African communities.

### **The Centrality of the Family, Self-reliance and Poverty Eradication**

During the first SAWID Forum in July 2003, the women in their Plan of Action identified the Eradication of Poverty as fundamental to improving the status of women and the development of communities. At the 2005 SAWID Forum women committed themselves to

implementing a practical programme to reach poor communities with development resources, and SAWID therefore crystallised its own Poverty Eradication Model based on targeting poor communities with a basket of services (the Development Caravan) to be provided through partnerships with CBOs, FBOs, SOEs, private sector and government.

SAWID's poverty eradication approach involves the training of Social Auxiliary Workers, young matriculated men and women from the same poor rural communities, to enter identified poor families with a basket of services that include personal identification, human settlement (including water, sanitation and electricity), health, education, family dynamics, employment, income and psycho-social support. This is done in close collaboration with the local municipality, social work mentors and supervisors, and a community hosting team.

#### The Development Caravan Initiative

The Development Caravan is a synchronised poverty eradication system for local communities in nodal areas to mobilise support and catalyse self-organisation through targeting families with a basket of services and through stakeholder engagement.

The Development Caravan has been in progress since January 2008, and has effectively resulted in 60 trained and graduated Social Auxiliary Workers; 21 Social Auxiliary Work Learners, 3 Professional Social Workers, 3 Project managers and an administrator (a total of 87 people) successfully and competitively employed.

The Development Caravan adds value through skills by training jobless youth and creating an adaptable skilled labour force, capacitating municipalities to better utilise skills in the local economy and supporting employment progression and skills upgrading. The role of the Social Auxiliary Workers (SAWs) is to:

- Coordinate and build resources; coordinate access to these resources by the poor families and communities, promote entrepreneurial orientation and create awareness of the importance

and role of Indigenous Knowledge Systems.

- Coordinate multi-sectoral involvement (private partners, government departments, development communities and other agencies) for infrastructural development and support so that poor families can have access to clean water and sanitation.
- Build self-reliance by linking poor families to health (mental and emotional; physical and lifestyle) and education and training (literacy and skills development) services.

Through the Development Caravan programme, SAWID targets the most pressing social problems (especially

“Through the Development Caravan programme, SAWID targets the most pressing social problems (especially the problem of unemployment) in geographically isolated and economically marginalised areas in the country.”

the problem of unemployment) in geographically isolated and economically marginalised areas in the country.

The SAWs work through existing networks and organisations to promote small holder farming and access to information and technologies by the poor families in the absence of adequate support from agricultural extension and local economic development officers. They link SMMEs' promote partnerships and linkages through bridging gaps within local economic development interventions, established enterprises and small businesses.

The SAWs link poor families to government services and use a case work approach to restore family systems, strengthen community

networks, and increase family participation within and outside of the households.

South African Women in Dialogue is currently seeking to position its holistic family-based poverty eradication approach as a key model for the implementation of the national poverty eradication strategy in the country, and to act as a catalyst for the voices of women and youth to be gathered, captured, disseminated and represented at all levels where decisions are made that affect their lives.

#### Advocacy for an Inclusive Macro-Economic Framework

In a recent document on *Women and the Economy*, presented at the 5th year review conference of the Progressive Women's Movement of South Africa (PWMSA) in Umtata in July 2012, Dr Vuyo Mahlati, a development economist (who is both the Chairperson of the Development Commission of South African Women in Dialogue, and the President of the International Women's Forum of South Africa) drew attention to the urgent need for what she called a “collaborative and concerted approach to women's economic emancipation for sustainable wealth creation and social equity.” She also highlighted the role that civil society formations have to play “in fast-tracking women's economic empowerment.”

In her role as a member of the National Planning Commission she pointed out that the emphasis on “strategic focus and collective, concerted efforts” honoured the contributions of legendary South African women like Charlotte Maxeke, who championed the establishment of the Bantu Women's League in 1918, Ida Mtwana who was the first ANC Women's League President, and stalwarts of the struggle like 1956 Women's March icons like Lillian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph and others who “systematically, consistently and collaboratively fought subordination to patriarchy and white domination” by putting “humanity, dignity, solidarity and equality at the centre of their struggle.”

The India, Brazil, South Africa

Women's Forum, of which SAWID was a founding member, was proposed in September 2007 as an addition to the then Business, Academic and Parliamentary Forums of the India, Brazil, South Africa trilateral partnership, and called for "an inclusive macro-economic framework which makes visible and values the importance and centrality of women's contribution to the development of our economies." SAWID was represented on international fora on this issue by women like Dr Vuyo Mahlati, Nomboniso Gasa, Dr Mohau Pheko and Prof Edith Vries.

### Knowledge Management and Monitoring and Evaluation at Local Level

Unfortunately, in the midst of the much-touted "knowledge economy," we lack the most basic knowledge tools to gather, collect, order, package and share meaningful information regarding women's development needs and the achievement of gender and development goals. No systematic gender disaggregated database exists in the Southern African region that collates and maintains gender disaggregated datasets with regularity. No tool has been designed to measure the attainment of global development goals at local level. We also grapple with the eradication of poverty without any structures in place to measure the movement from indigence to self-sufficiency of individual households.

SAWID is a partner to a proposal that advocates, in alignment with the African Union goal of the e-transformation of Africa, the creation of an electronic framework for networking and effective action to support the goals articulated by the women of South Africa (and their development partners). This aims to ensure that a monitoring and evaluation template is put into place to assess whether women at local levels live lives of dignity, with adequate access to health, education, nutrition, employment, income, information and other resources.

SAWID, the Centre for Democratising Information, the Women's and Gender Unit of the University of Pretoria and ICT Works,

a 100 % women-owned ICT company, are currently seeking funding to collaborate in the design of a research methodology, sets of disaggregated data, a knowledge management platform and an M and E tool whereby the development efforts and activities of government, civil society, the private sector, labour and community can be coordinated, aligned and tracked for enhanced effectiveness, based on identified human needs.

### Alignment with Strategic National and Continental Processes

South African Women in Dialogue, in partnership with the Independent

“ The women of South Africa prioritised poverty eradication, job creation, early childhood development and civil society coordination for effective action, amongst other themes, and they made a formal submission to the NPC prior to the release of the first proposed National Development Plan. ”

Development Trust, government's largest development stakeholder, has been instrumental in advocating changes in the configuration and focus of government to ensure effective poverty eradication at household level. A study tour to Chile and Tunisia in 2006, to study the poverty eradication strategies of two countries in the world who had more than met the Millennium Development Goal of halving poverty at that time, resulted in recommendations which included the need for a Women's Ministry and a central coordinating Planning Ministry,

and the need for a targeted poverty eradication strategy. Partly due to insights gained during this tour, South Africa now has a Ministry for Women, Children and Persons with Disability, a national anti-poverty strategy, and a National Planning Commission.

The country still has not adopted a comprehensive and holistic poverty eradication approach, however, and the women of South Africa, in alignment with strategic processes taking place in the country and on the continent, seek to contribute to a transformative development agenda that advocates the centrality of women in issues of peace and reconciliation, poverty eradication and economic empowerment, climate change and the green economy, social cohesion and nation-building, community participative research, the democratisation of information, and knowledge management.

These strategic initiatives include the African Decade of Women, South Africa's National Planning Commission's Vision 2030, the New Growth Path for South Africa and the Social Cohesion and Nation-Building Agenda.

### The African Women's Decade, 2010 – 2020

The launch of the African Women's Decade in 2010, with its theme of *Grassroots Approach to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment*, coincided with the establishment of the National Planning Commission (NPC) by President Zuma.

The special focus areas of the African Women's Decade include poverty eradication and women's economic empowerment, agriculture and food security, health, maternal mortality and HIV and AIDS, education, science and technology, environment and climate change, peace and security and violence against women, governance and legal protection, finance and gender budgets, women in decision-making and the young women's movement. In addition, women attending the NGO Forum preceding the launch of the African Women's Decade in Nairobi urged the African Union Member States to:

- Ensure that grassroots women

are fully represented and actively involved in all platforms of decision making

- Make efforts to bridge the divide between women in decision making and grassroots women in poor rural communities and informal settlements
- Enhance capacities of grassroots women's networks to do community research, situation analyses, and manage and own action plans
- Recognize and publicly acknowledge the critical role that grassroots women play in subsidizing the state in reference to access to basic needs
- Invest in demonstrated ability of grassroots women's groups to mobilize and organize on issues of governance, accountability and development
- Make efforts to engage men at grassroots level, including elders' councils and religious leaders, in the promotion of gender equality at household and community levels.

### **The National Planning Commission's Vision 2030**

In response to the call from the National Planning Commission for civil society input into the Vision 2030, and in response to the opportunity afforded women by the focus on the African Women's Decade, South African Women in Dialogue responded by gathering and amplifying the voices of women in local communities to provide their input into a plan of action to reduce poverty and inequality.

Of the areas highlighted by the Diagnostic Overview, namely unemployment, education, infrastructure, the spatial legacy of apartheid planning, an unsustainable development path, the inadequate public health system, poor public service performance, high corruption levels and poor service delivery, and lack of social cohesion, the women of South Africa prioritised poverty eradication, job creation, early childhood development and civil society coordination for effective action, amongst other themes, and they made a formal submission to the NPC prior to the release of the first proposed National

Development Plan on the 11th of November 2011.

### **The New Growth Path**

The New Growth Path that was launched by the Minister of Economic Development in South Africa following a trend of jobless growth and increasing unemployment, also required a process of engendering to ensure that women's needs were met and taken into consideration when resources were allocated for its implementation.

The New Growth Path presents an opportunity to unravel the feminine face of poverty by proposing a holistic civil society approach to poverty eradication that is aimed at graduating poor families out of a dependence on grants, and unlocking the burden of unpaid childcare by women through the professionalisation of Early Childhood Education. This would help to develop low-wage industries in sectors that women are already participating in. It is clear that there is a need to professionalise traditionally "soft" jobs like domestic work, home-based care and early childhood education or crèches, where large numbers of women are currently volunteering their services or receiving very low salaries.

The professionalisation of Early Childhood Education is a priority in a country where low early education is an indicator of intergenerational poverty, and allows large numbers of women already doing this work to be up-skilled and professionalised.

Women must further ensure that societal tools are designed that allow networking, collaboration and monitoring and evaluation of all efforts aimed at empowering them. Gendered community based research, where income is paid for information, and innovative approaches to Knowledge Management and Monitoring and Evaluation, could prepare the way for women to enter the Knowledge intensive sector in large numbers.

Training of large numbers of rural women as climate change experts and barefoot solar engineers, (based on the successful Indian College of that name, The Barefoot College, and African Barefoot colleges in Rwanda and Sierra Leone), has the potential to create

sustainable environmental outcomes and community resilience while employing large numbers of women in the green economy.

### **Conclusion**

We are living through an era of enormous transformation in every corner of our planet. These transformations include the breakdown of unsustainable economic systems, the dissolution of undemocratic political systems, uncertainty around the extent and implications of climate change, and attempts to coordinate systems and processes that would otherwise result in waste and needless endeavour through the duplication of effort. It is becoming abundantly clear that the hourly choices we make impact profoundly on the web we are attached to.

The women of South Africa are determined to act as Champions of Change towards the eradication of poverty and inequality, with women at the centre of the development agenda, focusing their efforts in alignment with strategic outcomes and goals articulated in the African Decade of Women, the vision 2030 of the National Planning Commission, the New Growth Path and the Social Cohesion and Nation-Building agenda of South Africa.

In collaboration with the Human Sciences Research Council, SAWID has committed itself to show how, building on women's self-reliance and current survival strategies, families can be graduated from grant dependency through targeted and holistic programmes that create jobs in areas where humans experience the greatest needs, including early childcare, food security, poverty eradication through family-based interventions, and the reduction of violence against women and children.

Through the capturing of sustainable and innovative lessons and best practice, the women of South Africa seek to influence policy and ensure the implementation of holistic, sustainable, family-based, psycho-social programmes that nurture human and environmental capital as they advocate compassionate macro-economic systems and revitalised social networks.



**T**oday as a black young woman I can be who ever I want to be. I am no longer viewed as an inferior human being nor do I relate to any feelings of inferiority. This generous gift of freedom is one that was handed to us by generations and generations of African and non-African women who fought for centuries for the equality of women around the globe. My generation of women owes this freedom to a certain day in Sharpeville and later Soweto.

In response to freedom a few questions need to be answered. Are women treated with dignity in South Africa? With freedom comes responsibility. What is our response to freedom? In all truth the question of dignity and the responsibilities of freedom go hand in hand. My generation has much to overcome which hardly existed in times past. The generations of women before us fought for the right to have any career they so desired and be remunerated as any man who holds the same position. The generations of women in the past enjoyed a secure home, a family, children who could thrive in love though they may have suffered marginalisation and other kinds of discrimination that would be unbearable today.

My generation has little family stability. What my generation has is what the previous generation longed for. What my generation longs for is what the previous generations had. It could be said that the generations past did not give the most important inheritance. Can all our money and power save us from being raped with our children? Can our positions of power raise every HIV/Aids orphaned child's parents from the dead? Does the older generation that fought for freedom know anything about being given difficult choices as a teenager? Do they know about the weight of responsibility that rests on a young girl whose emotional intelligence is still developing and yet must make choices that would frighten even her parents? The Guttmacher Institute reported that South Africa performs more than 850 000 abortions per year. What happened to us? What happened to the simple burden-free choices of

youth? What happened to making choices about which games to play or which ice-cream flavour to purchase? It is safe to believe that young girls and women are the most burdened people in our nation?

There are many more educated young women in South Africa whose contribution to the growth of our economy is something to be proud of. June 2012 M&G released its yearly "200 successful young South Africans."

**“ We want our children to inherit a better continent. We want to be able to tell them stories of how bad it used to be in some parts of the continent. We do not want them to witness it with their own eyes. We want them to dream other dreams to take the continent to greater heights - heights that we cannot even imagine. ”**

There are more successful young people in our country than ever before. It is a success we do not celebrate enough. Yet still, to those whom much is given much more is required. Much has been given to our generation. We are a generation whose generosity simply has to be broader, deeper and stronger. Our heads have to think further than ourselves even though this is a very difficult thing to do since we are the breakthrough generation. We cannot afford to be selfish and self-absorbed. The moment we are selfish and self-absorbed is the moment our possibilities and capacity will shrink to the size of a pea since selfish people do not think further than themselves. They do not see much. They collect everything for themselves and while they might believe themselves to be

rich they have done themselves and their children the greatest disservice for generations. While they dream only for themselves they hold themselves ransom and they remain in a small pitiful world that will never realise great ventures or possibilities. We have to think locally and globally at the same time. Nelson Mandela once wrote: "Sometimes it rests upon a generation to be great. We can be that great generation." We are without a choice. We have to have bigger hearts and use our brilliant minds. Great hearts attract solutions. Our generation requires it. We owe it to Africa. We owe it to our nation.

Contrary to the xenophobic beliefs, of some, we do owe Africa something. Are we going to sit at the tip of the continent of Africa and enjoy our lot while we refuse to look at Africa's plight? When we have ignored the rest of Africa and we find her at our doorstep are we going to get rid of her and unsympathetically tell her to return to where she came from? If we are useless to Africa now then we are a useless generation. We do live for ourselves. When our neighbouring nation suffers we feel the pangs of her pain. If we ignore her pain it will soon be ours.

Why should the rest of the continent be the South African young woman's responsibility? We have a responsibility by virtue of being free. If we become generous we will be more appreciative of our own fortunes rather than spending our times rioting in the streets and demanding service delivery. Of course we deserve jobs and service delivery. However if we quit rioting, we might discover how powerful we are to cause the change we desire. Someone once said that what frustrates you the most holds the key to your passion. In your passion lies the expression of your gift to turn that frustration into something to celebrate.

Why should Africa be the young woman's responsibility? Africa is known as the mother continent. Women are intuitive. Women know how to make homes work. Women are compassionate. Women can make any place look and feel like a home. The day that young African women

decide to no longer be threatened by the rest of Africa or no longer see non-South African Africans as foreigners but as fellow members of the same continent - that will be the day we might begin to be a powerful force in our continent to bring meaningful change, not arrogantly but as fellow Africans working side by side to make our continent a place to envy. If women can run homes, then women can run the continent. If women can create pleasant places to dwell in and groom well-mannered children, then women can create an Africa that is a peaceful pleasant place to dwell in. We can have a continent that is foreign to hostility of any kind. We can no longer afford to be the corner of Africa that shrugs off the rest of the continent. We can no longer afford to be the corner of Africa that is jealous, that sees people whose state is less than ours as a threat to our economy or our welfare. Our fear speaks of people whose minds are blind to possibilities. We need to be a generation of young women who envision the future. We must work with the rest of the continent because if we do not others will. Africa is our inheritance. It is our Africa. Who must take care of it?

We have to start asking questions. We need to begin to listen to the rest of the continent. Mostly we must dream about what is possible for the whole continent. It is time for us to no longer be estranged to our brothers and sisters. Recently I went to Mozambique. I went with a team of people who dared to see hope in hopeless situations. For us to see hope was to look through God's eyes and dream bigger than the limited human experience for a second. What we found changed our lives forever. It changed how I saw the continent of Africa. It changed how I saw poverty and people who are poor. We found paradise. An American woman called Heidi Baker decided to love one orphan at a time in Mozambique and one day it became an orphanage. To be really modest she has now adopted more than 300 orphans who are all well taken care of. They all go to school. I would even go as far as to say that place looks like a place any child would want to live in. It is the happiest place imaginable. It has become a

**“What my generation has is what the previous generation longed for. What my generation longs for is what the previous generations had.”**

world attraction because people all over the world want to witness this miracle.

We live in a time where our talents are no longer questioned because of our gender. Our gender has become an advantage. That places us in a leadership position by default. Our gifts and our talents are no longer restricted by the colour of skin. This puts a huge responsibility on our shoulders as a generation of women who can use our compassion and combine it with our intuition and skills to touch this continent in a way that will set the standard for the next generation. We want our children to inherit a better continent. We want to be able to tell them stories of how bad it used to be in some parts of the continent. We do not want them to witness it with their own eyes. We want them to dream other dreams to

**“If women can run homes, then women can run the continent. If women can create pleasant places to dwell in and groom well-mannered children, then women can create an Africa that is a peaceful pleasant place to dwell in. We can have a continent that is foreign to hostility of any kind. We can no longer afford to be the corner of Africa that shrugs off the rest of the continent.”**

take the continent to greater heights - heights that we cannot even imagine. However, we have our part to play first. What inheritance will we leave for them? Our inheritance has been freedom and equality.

I dreamt that we had no borders. I dreamt that Africans could move freely between areas. I dreamt that we were generous. I dreamt that we saw possibility in every situation. I dreamt that we brought relief in places where there was pain. I dreamt that we were not so insecure. I dreamt that young women in Africa sat around in a large table and dreamt of a better future for those who could no longer dream. I dreamt that our hearts were enlarged so that we were no longer fearful or sceptical of one another. I dreamt that we no longer saw resources as scarce but we kept searching for what has not yet been discovered. I dreamt that we were creative with what was scarce just like we have made food multiply in the kitchen when we had little food. I dreamt that we lived larger than life. I dreamt that we truly believed that the possibilities were endless. I still dream of new roads, new technologies yet unimagined, distinctly African new architecture unlike any other continent. I dream that we will shine as bright as the sun and the world will be healed by our beauty and warmth.

There have been dark times in our continent and nation where to dream and believe anything better seemed way out of reach. There were a few dreamers who chose to be imprisoned for their impossible dreams. There were dreamers who preferred to die than to live a life less than what they knew was possible. There were dreamers who marched together to Pretoria, Sharpeville, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Durban and Soweto in a time where women did no such things. This was a time where people were supposed to submit to laws of segregation. They dreamt and now we live their dreams. What dreams will we dream for the children, men and women of our African continent? A home becomes what the woman makes it. This continent will become how we envision it. Those who dream, lead.

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# Entrepreneurship and innovation to address job creation



By South African Breweries

The South African Breweries (SAB) Foundation is in the process of sifting through some of the country's most innovative products and processes aimed at improving the lives of people, specifically women, youth, people living with disabilities and people living in rural areas. The Innovation Awards was launched in 2011 and is part of the SAB Foundation's primary focus to ignite a culture of entrepreneurship in South Africa as a source of economic growth, job creation and innovation.

"Developing entrepreneurship is the key to job creation in South Africa. If we are able to combine entrepreneurship with a spirit of innovation, I believe that we have an amazing opportunity to take our job creation expectations to another level. This is also aligned to what our country sorely needs," says

Cyril Ramaphosa, Chairperson of the SAB Foundation.

The Innovation Awards offers a first place grant of R1 million and two runner-up grants of R500 000 each. In addition, several seed grants are awarded to deserving innovations. There is also a separate category for entries from women, youth, people with disabilities and people living in rural areas.

Grants include funding for the up-scaling and commercialisation of the innovative solution, a process supported by the Foundation over a period of two years or longer, as needed. The size of the grants is designed to allow substantive progress to be made by the winners.

Product innovations cover goods and services which can be divided into new or improved. A new product

may use advanced technology and knowledge or a combination of these. An improved product is one which is already in existence for which the winner has increased its performance significantly.

Process innovations involve adapting and creatively improving ways of delivering a product or service. This could come from changes in knowledge, perception and understanding.

An open competition puts innovator applicants and their innovations through a rigorous, phased adjudication process. In the end, investments are made in those innovations which are pioneering, scalable and can be commercialised. Innovated solutions entered must have progressed past an idea and be at proof-of-concept stage.

The SAB Foundation was founded

in 2009 as a beneficiary of SAB's Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment deal, SAB Zenzele, and holds 8.4 million participation rights in the empowerment scheme. Dividend income received from SAB Zenzele is used for investments in initiatives which benefit the wider community.

The SAB Foundation Innovation Awards is overseen by a board of trustees which include respected South African businessmen and women with a passion for entrepreneurship as a means of addressing job creation in South African.

Research conducted by the SAB Foundation into entrepreneurship highlighted three critical points:

- South Africa lacks a critical mass of SMEs;
- South Africa only has a few high-profile entrepreneurial role models; and
- The country's culture of innovation is largely untapped and un-commercialised.

To address these challenges, the SAB Foundation aims to contribute to the development of entrepreneurship by supporting the growth of a critical mass of SMEs; developing entrepreneurial role models; and stimulating and rewarding innovation.

Other than the Innovation Prize, the SAB Foundation aims to achieve its objective through the following investment initiatives:

- Tholoana Fund - offers small-scale grassroots support for non-profits, co-operatives, micro-businesses and other ventures investing in entrepreneurial development and providing income generation opportunities and employment. The focus of the fund is rural, women-owned and youth-owned enterprises.
- Grant capital investment - offers support and financial assistance to high-impact, black-owned businesses in partnership with Endeavour, a non-profit organisation dedicated to transforming emerging markets by establishing high-impact entrepreneurship as a leading force for sustainable economic development.

Since the first entrepreneurial investments were made in 2011, a



total of 40 micro and small enterprises have received financial investment and business support. This has resulted in 93 jobs being created.

The winner of the inaugural SAB Foundation Innovation Awards 2011 was Reel Gardening, whose community gardening product, Garden in a Box, received a grant of R1 million. Since then, the innovation has been implemented in 15 schools and communities and has benefited more than 2000 people. Around 1500 square metres has been planted with the capacity to provide at least 1200 meals a day. More than 600 learners and educators have been trained in sustainable development and plans are in place to employ more staff as the demand for community and school

gardening increases. At the same time, the Garden in a Box design is being refined and improved.

Reel Gardening is owned by 25 year-old Claire Reid, who created a handmade vegetable planting strip made from biodegradable paper. Each vegetable strip is water soluble, contains fertiliser and non-modified seeds, and includes a set of seed growing factors to maximise the germination rate.





# Promoting 21st century South African women from an economic perspective

This paper uses the significance of gender development through the informal sector as an example of what gender activists and the South African government could promote through its BRICS collaboration.

By Yazini April

As a young democracy, South Africa has done an excellent job in promoting women's rights. South African gender advocates can take pride in the fact that a political platform had been created for women to be heard, particularly with the great advancement in terms of the percentage of women in Parliament. In regards to education, girls have more access to schooling than in the past, and special measures have also been taken to address the needs of rural women. Then, there is also the establishment of the Ministry for Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities to ensure that women's issues are mainstreamed in

government's programmes. However, despite all these aforementioned political advancements, little breakthrough has transpired for South African women in the economic terrain. This document argues that gender based groups need move beyond the political landscape and also focus on 21st century tools of governance which are premised on economic diplomacy. Unlike the previous century where political and military might prevailed, government dominance in the global arena now also requires economic power and growth where millions are lifted out of poverty, as in the case of China.

Given that the majority of unemployed and poverty stricken individuals in South Africa are women, it is even more critical for South Africa to support a gender based development agenda as a strategic growth tool. Furthermore, post-1994, it has become a global player which includes membership in fast growing economic alliances such as Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (BRICS). The emergence of BRIC as a formalised geopolitical entity is expected to have profound long-term consequences for the global economy and political order. These four countries collectively amass twenty-five percent of the planet's

land surface, contain approximately 40% of the world's population and have a combined GDP exceeding \$15 trillion, a figure larger than that of the United States.

Key economic strategies most of the BRICS countries have implemented include effective economic reforms buttressed by industrial development. Industrialisation is a key economic indicator of developmental success. Millions of women are benefitting from industrial development in most BRICS countries. South Africa is the only country in which the low skilled, low employed population is dominated by women. Furthermore, South Africa economically ranks lowest amongst the BRICS countries in relation to industrial development. In order for South Africa to maintain its status as an emerging market, it will need to fast track its economic agenda with the full involvement of women as they are the key bread winners in both rural and urban development settings.

Given South Africa's recent emphasis on industrial development is demonstrated by the recent Special Economic Zone Policy Bill presented by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) along with the Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission which lists 17 strategic integrated projects that cut across energy, transport and logistics infrastructure to schools, hospitals and nursing colleges.<sup>1</sup>

This paper proposes that as part of a gender economic growth strategy, South Africa should also prioritise gender development as part of its BRICS agenda. This paper uses the significance of gender development through the informal sector as an example of what gender activists and the South African government could promote through its BRICS collaboration. The case study used is that of the Yiwu City market where women in the informal market were successfully absorbed into acquiring world trading status. In the last ten years, Yiwu, which is based in Zhejiang, China, has become the biggest export base of commodities and an important trading window in China. The United Nations, The World Bank and Morgan Stanley have also acknowledged Yiwu

city as the world's largest market of small commodity wholesalers which absorbed the informal market. The flourishing market has helped non-State industries to grow, and this in turn has boosted the local economy and created more than 500,000 jobs, with annual tax revenues exceeding \$94.3 million.<sup>2</sup> *Time* magazine recently produced an article with statistics demonstrating how the Chinese market has become one of the most sought after by major international branding companies.<sup>3</sup> It is on this basis that Yiwu has important strategic lessons for economically empowering women in South Africa. The Yiwu success story is a relevant case study for South Africa as it not only continues to have a large informal

**“Unlike the previous century where political and military might prevailed, government dominance in the global arena now also requires economic power and growth where millions are lifted out of poverty as in the case of China.”**

market but contains the necessary ingredients as Africa's gateway, to establish a world trading window on the continent. The presidential infrastructure and Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in South Africa could help to facilitate the development of trade in the region.

According to the Sugosh Foundation, South Africa is not an exception in having a high rate of women in the informal market. Most women across the globe rely on the informal work sector for an income.<sup>4</sup> The informal sector, or informal economy, is a broad term that refers to that part of an economy that is not taxed, monitored by any form of government, or included in any gross national

product (GNP), unlike the formal economy.<sup>5</sup> Wang and Kusakbe argue how having access to, and constructive government support for, informal markets is important in developing countries for poverty alleviation, food security, income generation and services, not only for small producers. They maintain that informal activities continue to be viewed in a negative light and consequently are excluded in the social security system and urban development planning. Vendors are often viewed by policy makers as problems, in contexts such as pedestrian and traffic obstruction, and city sanitation, as there tends to be little coordination and cooperation between traders and local municipalities.<sup>6</sup>

The informal market has also become controversial in most African countries as it often takes place in congested private places or public open space, particularly in urban areas; this becomes problematic in any society, as urban space tends to be highly political and involves various interests. Last month Ghana banned Asian traders from engaging in the local vending business due to public outcry. Other African countries, for example Botswana and Kenya, do not permit *spaza* shops or any form of vending by foreign informal traders. In short, informal trade has become such a competitive and accepted way of life through which many women are able to support their families, that it is now a political powder keg in many countries on the continent.

In South Africa, policies and benefits are geared towards the formal economy, thereby ignoring the significant role of the informal economy in the livelihood of ordinary families, usually those headed by women. Most work in the informal sector is of a low skilled nature in the categories of domestic work and elementary occupations.<sup>7</sup> Pat Horn further argues that not only do women occupy low income, low skill occupations, but when activities undertaken by women in the informal sector start to become more profitable, they are gradually taken over by men.<sup>8</sup> Men's work in the informal sector is spread across the various industries, with some concentration in the taxi (transport), construction,

and agricultural industries. Women, on the other hand, are ostensibly concentrated in the domestic work and trade, with little representation elsewhere. South Africa's rates of involuntary unemployment and participation in the informal sector are attributed to an underperforming formal sector and barriers to entry into this sector.<sup>9</sup> Employment in street trading comprises 42% of total informal sector employment.<sup>10</sup> The clothing industry falls under manufacturing, which absorbs a percentage of total informal sector employment. The clothing industry predominantly employs women. The state of South Africa's informal economy especially in regards to the development of SEZs is worrisome. As in the Yiwu SEZ case, how will South Africa manage to absorb its large unemployed and informal sector? It seems that the majority of the South African population continues to remain excluded from the formal labour market.

As already indicated earlier, Yiwu city has become the biggest export base of commodity, international market created by hawkers, and now China's 10th SEZ. In the 1980s Yiwu with no geographical advantages and few natural resources, was just one of the hundreds of anonymous, poverty stricken places in China. According to the Yiwu Municipal government, Zhejiang Yiwu Industrial Park was approved by the State Development and Reform Commission in 2006. On November 22, 2010, the CPC Yiwu Committee and Yiwu Municipal Government decided to separate the Zhejiang Yiwu Industrial Park Administration from the Suxi Town Government in a hope to speed up the development of industry clusters. After the separation, the Industrial Park Administration has become a permanent body which is responsible for rapidly integrating and upgrading the industry clusters and their overall plan.<sup>11</sup> Based on the existing industry clusters, the local government is poised to ensure that the Park will promote the regional block-shaped economy and develop itself into the national industrial base and international industrial cluster. It will grasp the opportunity of international industrial

transfer, speed up the development of new technological industries and emerging industries and work hard to build more dynamic industrial clusters in Yiwu. Currently, it has 17 foreign-funded companies, 10 joint ventures and 2 high-tech companies. These enterprises have invested 120 million US dollars.<sup>12</sup>

Another key government contribution is based on putting money and energy into several vendor shop markets over the last 30 years. Then the government rented out these shops to vendors at very low rentals. Private companies are not allowed to get into market building business. Currently Yiwu attracts vendors from all over China owing to its low shop rentals. Furthermore, as a result, small and large factories from cities like Wenzhou, Ningbo, and even Guangzhou, where tons and tons of products are produced each day for exporting, come to Yiwu's market in flocks to sell their products. The Yiwu special economic zone created by the Yiwu municipality now boasts three state level industrial bases for its SEZ zone, namely China Zipper Industrial Base, China Writing Instrument Industrial & Trade Base and China Cosmetic Industrial Base. According to local government data, Yiwu's exports grew by 35 % in 2010 to \$28 billion.<sup>13</sup>

Yiwu is comprised of ingredients that South Africa can easily establish for its own economic zones by also targeting world shoppers from the continent and beyond. Yiwu is also relevant for South Africa as it has no natural advantages of any kind: it is far from main transport hubs, hemmed in by mountains, and never developed much of an industrial base. The main export ports of Ningbo and Shanghai are both over three hours away by truck. However, in the last ten years, Yiwu has become the nexus of a large, complicated global trade route, the main supply depot for tens of thousands of shops all across the world.<sup>14</sup>

The Yiwu market scenario raises further questions, such as why South Africa has not been able to ensure that our traders, particularly women in South Africa, are strategically utilised to create economic growth in the same fashion as in the Yiwu case? This paper is not

proposing that South Africa implement the Chinese system of economic governance. Neither is it discouraging industrial parks that are big business or services oriented. However, we should evaluate other developing economies such as Papua New Guinea where the economy and government revenue which was previously fuelled by the extractive industries is now being used to tap the informal economy. South Africa has all the necessary governance tools necessary to promote strong sustainable governance measures. The fact is, good governance is no longer measured by elections and political growth or simply by democratisation standards and processes. An industrialised economy with heavy gender participation will guarantee a more effective role for the South African government as a BRICS player.

Effective gender participation also does not mean tokenism, limited to gender positions or posts in the economic and political arena. South Africa can only achieve its economic objectives through gender by ensuring that the people selected to lead the necessary programmes have the necessary skills and patriotism, and do not focus on tokenism and self-enrichment, but on hard work and dedication.

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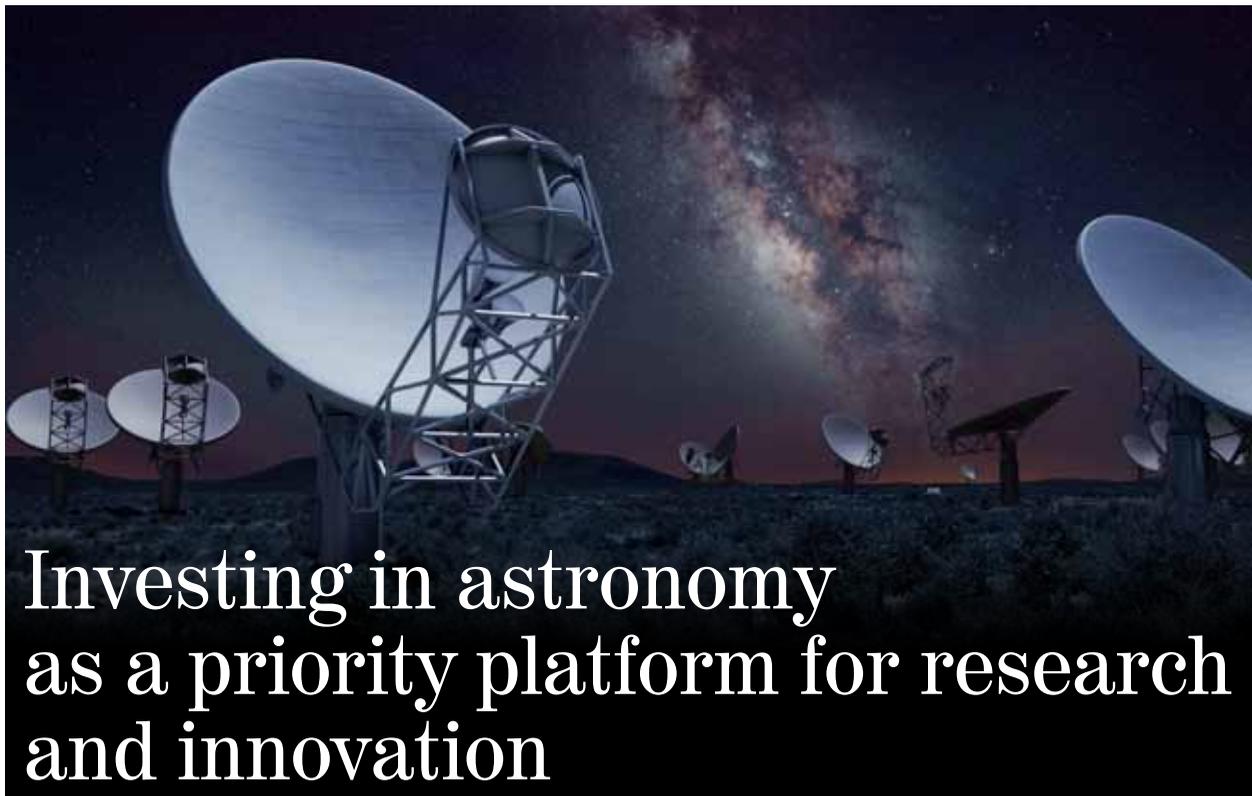


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# Investing in astronomy as a priority platform for research and innovation

We are a country that must invest in human capital and build a skilled workforce. The potential of astronomy to be a vehicle for encouraging a greater interest in scientific careers among the youth is immense.

By Naledi Pandor

Astronomy is a trail-blazing frontier science, and South Africa is investing in this science as a priority platform for research and innovation.

The Department of Science and Technology recognises the importance of strategic international scientific and technological cooperation. The recent achievements outlined in this article contrast strikingly with the priorities of the apartheid government – whose focus was particularly concentrated on military objectives.

Because South Africa is responsible for no more than 0.5% of global research output, we have developed relations with African partners to optimally leverage international partnerships and investments in support of national programmes and capacity-building.

Over the past few years, we have

consistently worked to present the case for astronomy, as a priority focus area for science partnerships between Africa and Europe. For many observers of Africa-EU cooperation such a proposition may be surprising at first hand, given Africa's pressing socio-economic challenges, and some may harbour doubts regarding astronomy's relevance for development.

We are, however, in a position to not only respond with policy rhetoric, but with concrete results. Outcomes of programmes such as South Africa's MeerKAT telescope demonstrate astronomy's potential to be an unrivalled platform for training the next generation of African scientists and engineers, and to drive innovation in vital economic sectors such as ICT infrastructure and energy.

But why prioritise astronomy?

Identifying the most appropriate focus areas for Africa's major science and technology investments can best be done by identifying those areas where Africa enjoys a comparative advantage over other regions.

In this context astronomy is identifiable as an appropriate discipline, owing to the excellent conditions for observation on our continent. We have access to the Southern skies, with large territories unscarred by light pollution or radio-interference. We are determined to exploit this geographic advantage to the maximum, for science and our continent.

South Africa is already home to the Southern African Large Telescope, the single biggest optical telescope in the Southern Hemisphere. It is part of a partnership which includes the involvement of several European

countries. South Africa is not the only African country which plays host to leading global astronomy facilities. There is also the example of the HESS gamma-ray telescope in Namibia, a unique African-European partnership initiative, which in 2007 was awarded the European Union's prestigious Descartes Prize for scientific excellence.

But perhaps most significantly, in May South Africa and its partners in eight other African countries won the bid to jointly host the largest components of the Square Kilometre Array or (SKA), which will be the world's most powerful radio telescope. South Africa is already constructing the MeerKAT telescope, which will be integrated into the first phase of SKA. There is much excitement in Europe regarding MeerKAT's potential and several of Europe's leading radio astronomers have already been given future observation time to use the telescope from 2016.

We are a country that must invest in human capital and build a skilled workforce. The potential of astronomy to be a vehicle for encouraging a greater interest in scientific careers among the youth is immense. Astronomy is proving to be an unrivalled instrument for science education in terms of the excitement it generates among our youth. It is, thus, no surprise that astronomy's impact on development is enjoying increased policy attention, as recognised by the International Astronomy Union's decision to establish a dedicated Astronomy for Development Office in Cape Town, South Africa.

Training programmes in radio astronomy are helping us to grow Africa's future workforce of knowledge workers and engineers. We already have promising results. As a result of the various human capital development programmes associated with Africa's SKA bid, new astronomy programmes have been established at several African universities, including in Kenya, Madagascar and Mozambique.

Polymakers often talk about brain circulation to mitigate brain drain. We are achieving such mutually beneficial partnerships. Under our programmes several post-graduate African students are working at European universities,

contributing to knowledge generation in Europe, but leading European astronomers have also been taking up positions in Africa through the South African Research Chairs programme. We have seven Research Chairs dedicated to support South Africa's participation in the SKA project.

Astronomy not only benefits human capital development. The development of research infrastructures is also significantly boosted through targeted investments. These investments also encourage the development of research infrastructures of use to the broader scientific community, such as high-speed research networks and computing resources.

South Africa also plans to develop an African Very Long Baseline Interferometry (VLBI) Network to contribute to global radio astronomy programmes. Together with several partner countries in Africa we have identified several ground satellite segment communication dishes across the continent, which have now become redundant because of the construction of optical fibre networks.

These dishes can be converted without major expense to form part of a VLBI Network. Already there is ongoing work by a group of African scientists and engineers on the conversion of a 32m satellite communication antenna in Kuntunse, Ghana and the initiation of preparatory work in Mozambique. These are tangible steps taken by Africa to invest in research infrastructures, which will benefit global science.

Investments in these research infrastructures have rich potential to contribute to socio-economic development in the regions where they are located. Employment opportunities are created. Basic services and infrastructures are developed in regions, which are sometimes in remote, rural areas. There are multiple opportunities for African and European industries to work together in this context.

As a result of our construction of the SALT and MeerKAT telescopes, South Africa also has flourishing astronomy-based design and engineering cooperation with the likes of IBM, Intel, Telespazio, Finmeccanica and Nokia Siemens Networks. Opportunities for

South African-based high technology content enterprises have also been stimulated. Building on this cooperation we hope to see astronomy as driver for innovation and the development of business clusters.

Science and technology has become a crucial instrument for the production of new knowledge, technological innovation and industrial competitiveness. It has also become an important tool in economic diplomacy and global partnerships.

In South Africa's efforts at science diplomacy we have much to be proud of. A more detailed analysis, at another time, could also interrogate the obstacles, dead-ends and frustrations experienced, but that will need to wait. The South African science diplomacy agenda has achieved success in three areas:

- Diplomatic efforts to promote international scientific cooperation.
- International scientific cooperation to address political and economic developmental goals related to foreign policy.
- The science content of topical international relations issues and the diplomatic effort required to deal with them.

The growing dynamic interfaces between these three different components, as demonstrated by South Africa's relations with the European Union, Japan and the Russian Federation (where the Department has international offices), as well as with many of our African neighbours and the Americas and Asia, will only grow in importance. Herein is perhaps the biggest challenge for South Africa's future science diplomacy engagements, namely, having an agenda which is sufficiently focused in order to ensure an optimal investment of resources, but sufficiently flexible in order to respond to the rapidly changing dynamics of international relations in the 21st century, which, if not driven by science, most certainly will require a science-based response.



# Why is equality between women and men so important?



Divine Couple, Khajuraho Temple, India, 11th Century

The purpose of life is to love and to be loved and to feel loved and able to love.

By Lynn Carneson McGregor

**T**he well-being of our planet is closely bound up with how relations between men and women influence the way children are brought up and how they shape the world when they are adults. In my experience, when men and women work together creatively as equals to tackle problems, better solutions are produced. This is why I agree with Essop Pahad, editor of *The Thinker* when he says, "We cannot deal with issues of poverty, underdevelopment, conflicts and war without the empowerment and emancipation of women."

## Why should women be equal to men?

Some of us take equality of women

and men for granted and sometimes forget that this is not so for everyone. There are many reasons for equality including the following:-

- Women and men are both human beings and have a right to be treated with equal respect, dignity and to be given equal opportunities
- Apart from biological differences both men and women are equally capable of child rearing, being educated and following a worthwhile career
- Both men and women are equally responsible for the well-being of the next generation
- Together men and women create better solutions
- It is morally and ethically wrong

to discriminate against, oppress or abuse any human being on the basis of gender, race or any other reason.

With Women's month coming round again, it is always an opportunity to review how things are going in South Africa. My first attempt is to try to clarify for myself, what it means to me to be a woman today? What does it mean to my husband, sons, brother and male friends to be a 'man'? As someone who has experienced both the pleasures of working and living with men as an equal and the indignities of being treated as inferior, this is a subject full of contradictions, pain and pleasure and sometimes a combination of both.

### It is a mystery to me who or what I am as a woman

Even though I have run my own company, written books, created an art installation, brought up a child and have a happy marriage, why am I the person who always gets up to clear up, wash the dishes and make and hand out drinks? It is not just because I enjoy looking after people and making them comfortable. It is also conditioned behaviour learnt from my father that women should serve men. Every time I do it when I don't really want to, I am furious with myself.

Even I am seduced by the media to spend money on creams I know don't work in the hope that I will look younger and more attractive although I know I am devaluing myself. I have no objection to looking good and being attractive. But it should not be at the expense of selling myself short. I remember being told off by an ancient Native American woman when I was thirty when I complained about wrinkles. She said,

'Do you want to erase the memories of your life?'

'No'

'Then why do you want to erase the lines from your face? The lines on your face are the maps of your life. Honour them. Be proud of them.'

Apart from biological differences, I can no longer have rigid assumptions about differences between men and women. It is difficult to decide the extent to which we are brainwashed by our parents, teachers, advertisements and the media. Nature versus nurture arguments are used by people who want to hang on to their prejudices. I have seen too many exceptions to expectations that women are more caring, or men can't bring up their children or women can't have a proper career because of having babies. Not all women who are blond and beautiful are dumb.

What I do know is that the times of my life I have most enjoyed was when I have worked and lived in many parts of the world including the UK, Europe, the USA and India where it was taken for granted that I was equal and respected. There was not one time when I felt marginalised or inferior. I was lucky. Even in the

countries I worked in, not all women enjoyed equality. In India five years ago I met a group of women who had never been to school nor could read or write because their men did not want them to see men from outside their village. There have been many men in my life who expected me to defer to them or to obey them, not realising that as a third generation women's libber, it was impossible for me not to think for myself. In South Africa there are a growing number of women like me who are educated and in positions of power and responsibility. Some of my friends tell me that it is not easy to find men with the right attitudes who are willing to match them in an equal relationship.

“ More female teenagers than males commit suicide. Their feelings of depression and worthlessness are not taken seriously until it is too late. ”

My painful memories of how I was treated as a single struggling mother, how I was turned down for jobs because I was a woman and listening to the woman and children next door being beaten up remind me that a woman's lot is not always a happy one.

### How are South African Women being treated?

When I returned from exile in 1993 I was shocked by the segregation between men and women in South Africa. I was not used to being treated as if I did not exist or had no views of my own. When I visited informal settlements, I was shocked to see how many women were walking around with cuts, bruises and scars on their faces and bodies.

Many activists during the Apartheid Struggle fought injustice and oppression because they understood the human suffering involved. That is why the rights of women were upheld, enshrined in the Constitution and Institutions set up to protect the

rights of women. The new democratic government practiced positive discrimination for women to redress the imbalance. This is why there are more women in parliament in South Africa than in most other countries. A growing number of women are being educated and follow meaningful careers. More and more women are starting up their businesses. Girls going to good schools today are taking it for granted that they have equal rights and have different expectations about their futures certainly from those of their grandmothers and great grandmothers.

### Many South African women are still deprived of their rights

In spite of woman being 52% of the adult population, there are still considerably fewer women in power. Many are paid less for the same work. There are more women in menial positions.

South Africa has some of the highest statistics for violence against women in the world, other than war zones. Women are more susceptible to domestic violence and sexual assault than men. One in four women are regularly beaten up by their husbands or partners. Rape is not uncommon. In many cases brought to court, children are abused at the same time. Just over 40% of female homicides are by a husband or partner.

It is not easy for women to get justice. Some magistrates blame the women for provocation and let men, who damage or kill women, get off lightly. The police in certain areas have a reputation for beating up and raping prostitutes who are arrested, even before being convicted, rather than treating them with respect as human beings.

What is also of concern is that suicide is the second largest cause of death in teenagers, often caused by substance abuse and dangerous sex. More female teenagers than males commit suicide. Their feelings of depression and worthlessness are not taken seriously until it is too late. The growing numbers of very young single parents, some of whom have been raped, add not only to incidents of suicide but also chronic depression and despair.

The picture that emerges is that many men in South Africa do not believe women are equal and treat them with contempt, often having power over them by using violence or economic blackmail.

It is easy to blame men who abuse their women, but why do they do this? There are many answers to this, but the lives of young men are not much better. In poverty stricken areas, 42.2% of deaths of young men are injury related. 40% of deaths between the ages of 15 – 49 are HIV/AIDS related.

Surveys have revealed that many children in South Africa have first-hand experience of bullying, theft, assault or other crimes including rape. Women are not entirely innocent – either not protecting their children or abusing them as well.

The *Sunday Times* recently reported that certain men were discussing whether the State should pay for all Zuma's wives because it was a good model of male virility. I would like to ask them why they think it is a good thing to bring children into an unhappy cruel and loveless world before the country is healed.

#### How can we go forward?

Hopefully the suggestions below add to the long line of women and men who fully understand the value of equality between men and women.

#### 1. Balance the fight against oppression with valid reasons for equality

In a relatively new country we have to learn to work for the kind of society we would like and not just fight against injustice. We need to do both. The most powerful tool of change is to find ways of enabling people, including children, to have good experiences so they know they have a choice. If as women and men, we can share our dreams, we can then invent the steps and dance our dream awake.

#### 2. Continue to protect the rights of women

Perhaps it is time to re-visit the Constitution and check that there is agreement about basic values. What does equality mean in practice?

When is it eroded? How can moral conflicts be resolved? For example differences between those who have traditional values e.g. polygamy and patriarchy and the principles enshrined in the Constitution have to be worked out. If a man can have five wives, why can a woman not have five husbands? When are old customs no longer acceptable because they are abusive to women? Are we in danger of being so tolerant of diversity that we allow unlicensed abuse of behaviour?

#### 3. Honour the intensity of desire and 'Life's longing for itself'

Sexual desire and the urge to procreate will not go away. The relationship between men and women is deeply intense and can be blissful,

“The picture that emerges is that many men in South Africa do not believe women are equal and treat them with contempt, often having power over them by using violence or economic blackmail.”

painful or both. How do we deal with the whole spectrum of sexual urges, emotions, attitudes and assumptions so that it is not fraught with feelings of danger, frustration and anger? With HIV/AIDS, for many young people, sex is connected with danger, death, fear and grief, not just with love. The tragedy that they live must not be swept under the carpet.

#### 4. Invest more in reconciliation and healing

Physical damage is painful, but nothing to the trauma of emotional abuse and broken hearts. Mamphela Ramphele argues that, “We need to focus on ‘the psychological wounds of our nation’ brought about by the legacy of racism, sexism and engineered inequality over the past three centuries.

This has led to feelings of lack of self-respect that has led to inward-directed anger – domestic violence, community vigilantism, public violence and other self-sabotaging behaviour.” Fortunately there is a large body of experience in this area and it is possible to learn how to let go of the pain of the past. We need to unlearn deeply ingrained and soul damaging conditioned attitudes and behaviour.

#### 5. Learn to communicate more effectively. Don't take assumptions for granted

One of the greatest challenges is to learn how to communicate and connect differently and honestly with each other so that as men and women we can learn to trust each other at a deeper level. We already have experts and well developed techniques that should be applied more widely starting with schools, communities, civil and religious institutions.

Ability to really communicate is the first step to negotiating and finding acceptable solutions for real practical problems, e.g. who is going to take care of the children? If both are working, how can quality time be given to the children? If one partner is earning more money, how can the other partner reciprocate?

#### 6. Provide positive female and male role-models

#### 7. All women and men need to take responsibility and work together for ensuring that our children can experience love, security and hope for the future

Our children are precious. The more our children and young people can be physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally healthy, the greater the chance of developing a caring, happy, fair and vibrant society.

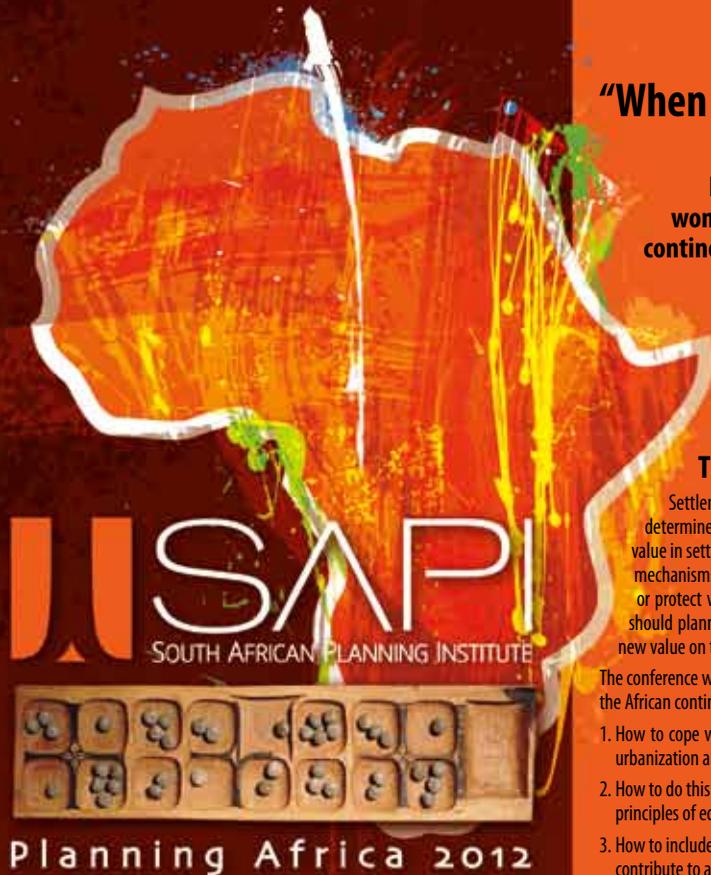
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Settlements, whether large or small host a collection of people and resources, all with a specific determined relationship to each other. Urban and rural planning is about adding or protecting value in settlements to benefit everyone living or passing through these areas. There are a number of mechanisms, tools and skills that planners can use and combine in different contexts to create, add or protect value. It therefore raises key questions about: What values drive planning? How do and should planners distribute land values? How can planners reassert the use capital value and create new value on the African continent?

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2. How to do this in a democratic way that ensures governance systems that take into account the principles of equity, fair distribution and just management of resources?
3. How to include all people in the planning and implementation of infrastructure and services, to contribute to an improved quality of life and of the environment to the benefit of all?

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- **Paul Farmer** – Chief Executive Officer of the American Planning Association
- **Mr Greg Clark** – International mentor and advisor on city and regional investment, development and governance
- **Christine Platt** – President of the Commonwealth Association of Planners
- **Kabir M. Yari** – Representative of the African Planning Association
- **Prof Phil Harrison** – South African Research Chair in Development Planning and Modeling and Member of the National Planning Commission
- **Prof Madhu Bharti Sharma** – Faculty of Planning and Public Policy, CEPT, India
- **Geci Karuri-Sabina** – Executive Manager: Programmes, SA Cities Network (SACN)
- **Thulani Kuzwayo** – Green Building Council
- **Martin Lewis** – South African Council for Planners (SACPLAN)
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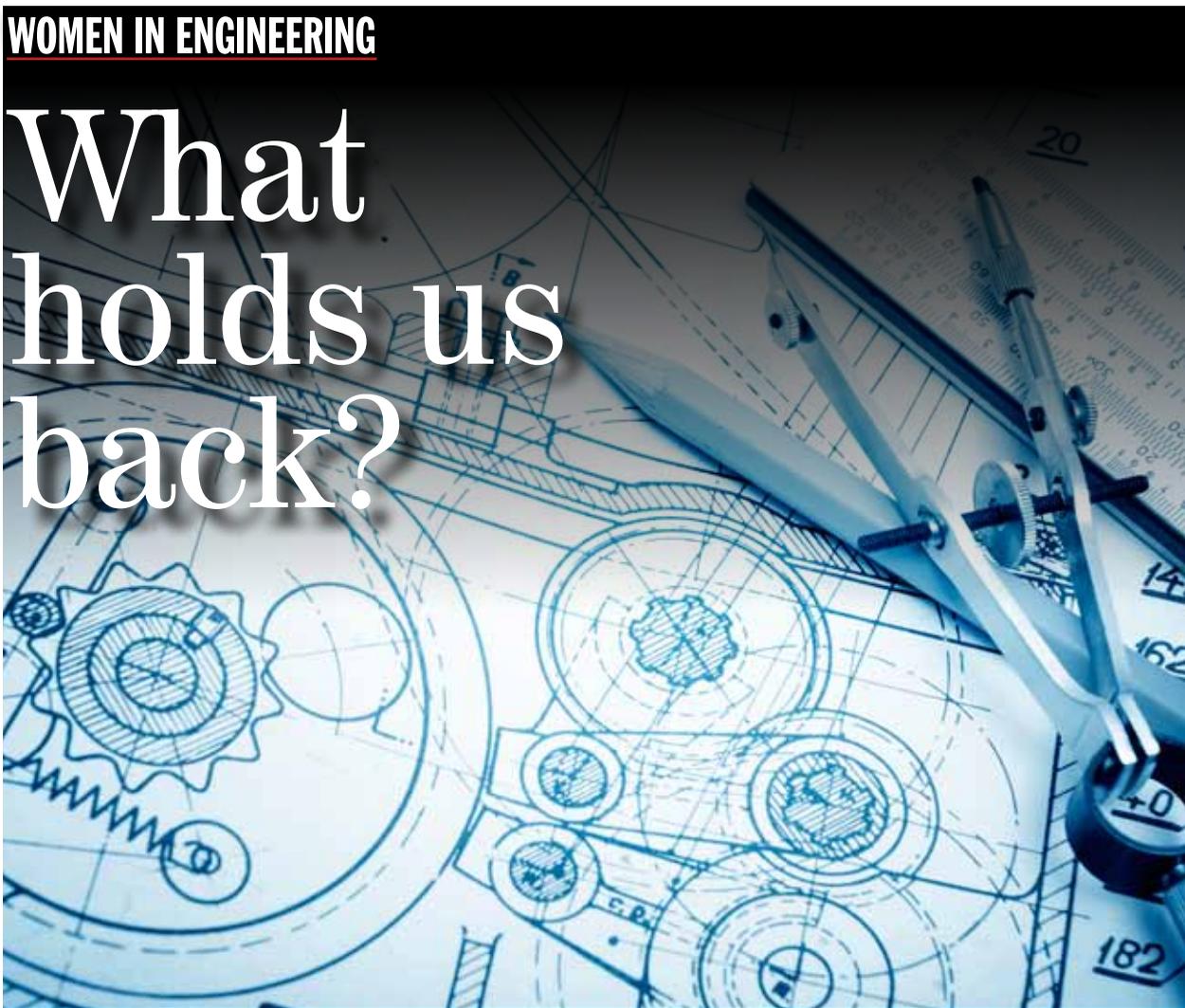
All planning professionals in the public and private sector, from related professions in the planning and development arena (geographers, development planners, economists, public management, sociologists, urban practitioners, built environment professionals), researchers and academics, decision-makers in planning and development, donors, funders, local and regional development bodies and associations, coordinators of strategic initiatives, corporate strategic planners, architects and property developers.

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**WOMEN IN ENGINEERING**

# What holds us back?



Technology and engineering are at the core of any progress made by an aspiring developing country. If South Africa aims to gain the lost ground in economic development, then we have to take seriously the underlying causes of the low throughput of African male and female engineering graduates.

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By Mamosa Motjope

“The nation has not yet found peace from its sins; the freedman has not yet found in freedom his promised land. Whatever of good may have come in these years of change, the shadow of a deep disappointment rests upon the Negro people, - a disappointment all the more bitter because the unattained

ideal was unbounded save by the simple ignorance of a lowly people” (W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*). Du Bois describes how for two centuries African Americans worshipped the idea of freedom as they saw slavery as the sum of all evil, sorrow and prejudice. “Emancipation was the key to a promised land of sweeter beauty

than ever stretched before the eyes of wearied Israelites”. Decades after the emancipation of African Americans from slavery, the African Americans realised that “freedom” had been a painful illusion, and will continue to be nothing more than an illusion without political and economic power.

For Africans globally, freedom still

eludes our grasp because we still have not consolidated our power from the various spheres such as politics and economics. This is the harsh reality Africans are waking up to in South Africa. Despite the Rainbow Nation euphoria and endless compromises made by blacks to turn a blind eye on the injustices and decades of crimes committed by whites against blacks, the nation has still not found peace. In hindsight, it is clear that the fight of African Americans is far from being won as they find themselves in a web of threads of power - judicial, economic, and political - that are continuously manipulated to cripple any progress they try to make as a collective. There are obvious parallels between the struggles of African Americans and the struggle of black South Africans post 1994. The only difference being that black South Africans have political power in a white economy.

The shackles around the feet and necks of black South Africans have not been removed but have been merely loosened to give an illusion of freedom. These shackles are tightly held intact by the institutions that control the economy, education, the judicial system and some government entities. The most unfortunate aspect of post-apartheid South Africa is that Africans have political power and yet consciously or unconsciously administer this oppression on behalf of monopoly capital. This self-oppression is a result of not fully analysing and understanding the nodes of power within the various institutions and the invisible threads that tightly bind white power. In a similar disturbing pattern, women are not conscious of the invisible power threads that render us powerless in the academic and professional fields despite the important role women play in building a nation. As an African female Engineering graduate I will give insight into some gate-keeping tactics that keep African women and men out of the Engineering field.

Professional fields such as Science and Engineering are white-male dominated and will continue to be so for as long as we do not fully understand the reasons behind the low throughput of African engineering graduates compared to the number

of African students who enrol to study engineering annually. The most effective propaganda assertion is that Africans do not excel in maths and science, Africans struggle with transition at university, Africans don't like maths and science, the quality of education is very poor and so on. These institutions of higher education are then able to provide these as anecdotal evidence to justify the low throughput of African engineering and science graduates.

**“There are obvious parallels between the struggles of African Americans and the struggle of black South Africans post 1994. The only difference being that black South Africans have political power in a white economy.”**

Undoubtedly, the quality of education in South Africa is shamefully pathetic, even more so for science and mathematics, but that does not mean there is zero output of good maths and science African Grade 12 students. There are a considerable number of African students who have attended private primary and high schools and hence have received the best education available in the country. One would expect that these privileged African students would perform as well as their white counterparts in University since they have had the same type of education for more than a decade. This is however not necessarily the case, especially in engineering. There are systematic hindrances that filter African students out of engineering, year after year.

Many African engineering drop-outs or graduates know very well the level of institutionalised racism that exists in some of our universities and is well concealed by global practices in the

academic spheres such as ‘Grading the Curve’. ‘Curve Grading’ is a statistical method that is used to assign grades to students to yield a pre-determined distribution of grades. In simple language, this method ensures that the students’ marks are reallocated such that there will be, for example, a top 10% with As, 80% with Bs and 10% with Cs. Different institutions will use curves with different skews. For example the marks could be allocated as 20% with As, 65% with Bs and 15% with Fail. This simply means students do not get the marks they would have scored on their exam papers. Once the exam papers have been marked then the marker will normalise the raw scores and force fit them into the Standard Curve used.

Curve Grading is a very common normalisation practice and widely used even outside the academic space, for example in corporates such as banks. In the corporate world, this method can be used for normalising the performance appraisal ratings of the employees. What this means is that the employees will obtain some appraisal rating as rated by their managers, peers and clients. The appraisal ratings of employees may then be normalised. Once again the employee can possibly end up with a different rating to that which was given by the managers, peers or clients. The corporate explanation is that not everyone can be a top performer, so the force fitting of ratings into the company’s Standard Curve separates the top performers, average worker and dead wood.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with the statistical method, provided that it is in a clear, transparent manner. It is implemented in a homogenous society the ‘Curve Grading’ can be a reasonable system to differentiate between performers and non-performers. But even in those societies the Curve Grading can potentially be used to discriminate against women.

However, in a heterogeneous racially charged society like South Africa, ‘Curve Grading’ can be a deadly statistical instrument utilised to systematically keep Africans at the bottom of the pyramid and the whites at the apex of that pyramid. This may seem like a simple mishap but its effects

are felt down the time line for the individuals who are either empowered or disempowered by this system. In universities, one finds that upon graduation the white students who have been continuously 'normalised' to be at the top will get opportunities to be recruited by the best local and global companies. The African students who were 'normalised' to be at the bottom will either be expelled due to academic 'non-performance' or if they do graduate their academic marks will prohibit them from being recruited by the best companies around.

When the African engineer eventually graduates to the workplace, (s)he will encounter the very same system under the guise of performance appraisal. The implementation of it by South African corporates makes it clear that it is intended to do much more than normalise any sort of data. There is a perception that this instrument is often used to give advantage to white graduates and to set the African graduate up for a slow career progression. Performance appraisal ratings will typically affect the salary increase, the bonus paid and the likelihood of getting a promotion within the organisation. Once the corporate has this system in place it then becomes fairly easy to show, using fancy graphs, how Africans are not skilled, not performing, need perpetual training and cannot be promoted. The end result is that the corporate has justification for not reaching their EE targets in terms of African representation and women representation at the various managerial levels. This of course is a lie that can be well hidden by the company's systems and processes because the 'Curve Grading' process is very subjective.

These are just few examples of nodes of power that are hard to identify and yet have a long term impact in shaping the engineering industry and many other industries in South Africa. These nodes of power have been overlooked by the political policy setters and emphasis has been placed on ensuring that there is black representation in the upper echelons of institutions such as universities, corporates, government funding institutions, etc. To understand

these power nuances is to understand systematic racism that is embedded in institutional processes and policies. These processes and policies when applied fairly, can potentially serve a good purpose reward performance. However in a country that is racially charged it is foolish to think that these processes and policies cannot be used in malicious ways to maintain the status quo of white power.

Technology and engineering are at the core of any progress made by an aspiring developing country. If South

**“ Professional fields such as Science and Engineering are white-male dominated and will continue to be so for as long as we do not fully understand the reasons behind the low throughput of African engineering graduates compared to the number of African students who enrol to study engineering annually.”**

Africa aims to gain the lost ground in economic development, then we have to take seriously the underlying causes of the low throughput of African male and female engineering graduates. We have to be honest about the fact that an increase in African engineers is a threat to some sectors of the society. We have to be realistic about the fact that the very people who feel threatened are the ones who ultimately decide how many African engineering students will pass or fail. They are also the very same individuals who decide when engineers qualify to be engineering professionals. These are power nodes that ultimately shape the engineering space and if we want to see change we cannot simply wish that they will

change their minds or hearts. It has not worked before and we know now that transformation of industries will not happen on a voluntary basis in South Africa.

Similarly, transforming the engineering field to have more women will not happen by luck or by wishful thinking. Very direct and clear interventions are necessary to ensure that we can have female engineers who will in future be well positioned to establish engineering companies. Almost two decades after achieving democracy we know for certain that we have not built institutions that create self-reliance for Africans, and particularly for African women. The reason has not been the lack of capital in the country. There is plenty of capital available in the South African government funding institutions to drastically change the level of entrepreneurship in the country. We can no longer accept that capital is not easily accessible as if it is a fact of life. This is simply not true and must be probed further. Do we have power nodes that systematically ensure that capital flows in a particular direction only and is not easily accessible to the majority of the people? Do Africans really have the power to change the direction of capital flow in these institutions? Are Africans merely playing an administrative role in moving capital to maintain colonial power? I am not sure, but strongly feel we need to better understand the drivers behind the flow of capital from government institutions to private companies.

The ideal of a transformed economy that has full participation of women in technology is attainable. As the recently freed-men and freed-women in our beloved land we should not wait for freedom to find us, but proactively seek to create the conditions for economic freedom. For us to create these conditions for economic freedom we need to apply some critical thinking to the systems, processes and policies that we encounter daily in our professional spheres. If we do not take progressive steps to analyse the institutional context and prepare ourselves to be change agents, then we will find ourselves with ambitions that do not reconcile with our reality.



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**SOUTH AFRICA'S WOMEN**

# The Untold Story

A woman with curly hair, wearing a white shirt, is holding a large folder or binder. She is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The background is a plain, light color.

Increasing the economic participation of women creates a 'multiplier effect', which comes about when women earn an income; it is first spent on families and then the home. They invest in their children's well-being, in their children's education and in their communities.

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By Jennifer Lindsey-Renton

South Africa is considered to be one of the most forward-thinking countries in Africa when it comes to gender equality, with the world's most advanced constitution securing the rights of its female citizens. Nevertheless, there is still a severe shortage of women in senior management positions in the workforce, with less than 5% of the CEOs at the helm of the top 100 companies listed on the JSE being women.

In the seven largest economies in Africa, the average participation of women in the labour force is 32.7%. This means that there are insufficient numbers of women who are actively involved in the production of goods and services, leaving a significant group of untapped potential outside the economy.

"Being proactive about creating opportunities for women to participate in the economy will improve their earning potential, enabling families to move out of poverty and contribute to the overall economy", explains Liz Zambonini, CEO of enterprise development initiative, The Hope Factory. "In addition, organisations can provide opportunities for leadership and entrepreneurship by creating role models. Research has shown that women entrepreneurs are better able to overcome a fear of failure if they follow a role model who exemplifies risk-taking and high achievement."

One of the most significant barriers faced by women undertaking entrepreneurial activities is access to finance. Even on a small scale, the formal finance sector does not accommodate the needs of women who may not have collateral security to offer for loans. Yet, research shows that when women are the direct beneficiaries of credit, their repayment rates are higher across all regions of the world.

"Our research has shown that women give back more to communities than men", says Zambonini. "Increasing the economic participation of women creates a 'multiplier effect', which comes about when women earn an income; it is first spent

on families and then the home. They invest in their children's well-being, in their children's education and in their communities."

Like The Hope Factory, WIPHOLD is an example of an organisation committed to black economic empowerment. According to Louisa Mojela, founder and Group CEO, "empowerment must benefit not only the thin upper stratum of successful women, but women as a whole, including the poorest and the most disadvantage in our urban, peri-urban

**“Even on a small scale, the formal finance sector does not accommodate the needs of women who may not have collateral security to offer for loans. Yet, research shows that when women are the direct beneficiaries of credit, their repayment rates are higher across all regions of the world.”**

and rural areas."

South African entrepreneurs who started their entrepreneurial careers by creating a 'home-based enterprise' (HBE), they have contributed R6 billion to the economy annually. It is for this reason that we need to support our women and assist them with the information and resources they need to make a better life for themselves, their families and their communities.

Examples of situations where women entrepreneurs have used the resources offered to them to better their lives and those of their communities abound, while globally, women-owned businesses are being recognised as engines of growth that

can assist in fuelling an economic recovery. The potential impact for women entrepreneurs on an economy is therefore significant.

Although the rate of women's entrepreneurship in Africa is higher than in any other region, this is not a sign of economic empowerment but rather an attempt to survive. Women account for 40% of the non-agricultural labour force and make up 50% of the self-employed, but compose only 25% of employees.

Research by Ernst & Young found that entrepreneurship is a means for women to move their families out of poverty. However, many women's "businesses" remain small, rarely employ others, and are subsistence based.

The challenges for African women are twofold. For those involved in informal economic activities, the challenge is to create access to more formal economic participation. For those who are educated and working in the formal sector, the challenge is to move up the corporate ladder.

"International research provides empirical evidence for the considerable contribution women can make in improving organisational performance", states Zambonini. "An educated woman will not only provide an invaluable resource within an organisation, she will also be equipped to expand entrepreneurial activities, be employed or be an employer in the formal sector, and harness the multiplier effect within her family and community."

According to an Inter-American Development Bank report, "Without a doubt, women joining the workforce will increase the economic overall efficiency of a country, whether developed or developing".

Creating opportunities for women to participate in the economy will improve their earning potential, assisting families to move out of poverty and contribute to the overall economy.

The potential impact for women entrepreneurs on an economy is significant. Or as Michaëlle Jean, the former Governor General of Canada aptly put it: "Empowering a woman is empowering a nation".

**MAKING RIGHTS REAL FOR WOMEN**

# Changing conversations about empowerment



The article argues that although empowerment is a right, it should also be treated as a personal choice – as every individual woman has the opportunity to decide what empowers her and therefore fulfils her in her personal and professional life.

By Ronel Rensburg and Estelle de Beer

**I** watched CNN to get a glimpse of the news headlines and came across devastating images of a woman being executed by the Taliban in Afghanistan, because she had been blamed for a dispute between two men and accused of adultery. She was shot nine times at close range and as her burka turned crimson with spilt blood, her executors laughed jokingly at her demise (CNN, 9 July 2012, 08:00).

*My hope for global gender equality*

*faded. And the harsh realisation that through the centuries, more heed had always been afforded to the ills of racism than sexism, hit home very hard.*

*But then I remembered that I am a South African woman...*

In the global arena South African women are hailed as possessing tenacity and endurance, yielding a great deal of influence in both political and socio-economic spheres. The concept of “mothers of the nation”

and the rocklike nature of South African women had been famous (and sometimes notorious!) symbols on the world stage and in the discourses of our time. Changes in the South African environment to some extent, have made society aware of indubitable basic human rights and along with these the rights of women. However, there is usually a deep chasm between rhetoric and reality. Ensuring that the rights of women move from latent to manifest

reality has become a challenge for the current and next generation.

This article attempts to provide some proposals from a communication management perspective, to help address the issues of women's empowerment in South Africa. However, nobody really has the right to be pedantic or prescriptive and there are indeed many ways to approach the debate on empowerment or lack thereof. This article does not work from a prescriptive hegemony but from an objective observation that the rights of women and their empowerment are still rhetoric and are not coming to full fruition – that their *rights* are therefore not yet made *real*.

### Contextualising empowerment

The term “empowerment” has come into common usage and is often open not only to ambiguous interpretation, but also to misuse. Recent theories of development communication consider the lack of religious, political, economic and cultural power of disempowered sections of the community as the central problem to be addressed in development.

Empowerment is a construct shared by many disciplines and arenas: *inter alia* politics, community development, psychology, education, economics, sociology, studies of social movements and organisations, as well as development. Empowerment also takes on different forms, in different contexts and for different people. Zimmerman (1984) asserted that a single definition of empowerment might make attempts to actively achieve reality of empowerment too formulaic, and thus demeaning the very concept of empowerment.

There are many definitions of empowerment, but a synthesis of descriptions could be to view empowerment as the access to development of knowledge, skills and abilities in people to enable them to control and develop their own actuality. Empowerment in the context of this article is about people having expanded choices and a much greater level of involvement and control in all parts of their personal, family and community lives. Empowerment places an emphasis on autonomy in community decision-making, local and self-reliance, direct

democracy and continuous social learning. In such a definition, the initiative is relayed to individuals and communities. The economic, political and social potential of households is emphasised. Empowerment is a multi-dimensional social process. Through acting on important issues that they view as challenges in their immediate environment, people become empowered. Empowerment – in the South African context - should

“Recent theories of development communication consider the lack of religious, political, economic and cultural power of disempowered sections of the community as the central problem to be addressed in development.”

ideally become a mechanism by which individuals, organisations and communities gain mastery over their existence. It is about the way things are now, and how they can be made better in future.

### Contemplating empowerment of South African women – a few questions

South African women have been given the right to empowerment by the South African Constitution – arguably one of the most encompassing and sophisticated constitutions of its kind in the world. Against this backdrop various questions about our understanding of empowerment can be raised:

- Are South African women taking and illustrating responsibility for their empowered position?
- Are South African women accepting this right, conversing about it, using the power thereof in a non-threatening way, living it and therefore bringing it into action and

making it a reality?

- Do South African women comprehend that an empowered nation is a nation of empowered individuals – men, women and children?
- Could the reality of empowerment lie in the freedom of individual choices that women make - on a daily basis - in their personal lives, working environment, in society and on a national and global stage?
- Is there still a resistance to empowerment and how will women deal with this small-mindedness in future?

### Power as an essential ingredient of empowerment

This article posits that the concept of “power” underlies the debate about “empowerment”. Decades after the death of Michel Foucault, his work still provides useful agendas for describing the power of women. There is a lot of feminist literature that appropriates Foucault's analysis of the effects of power. His adage: “Where there is a power, there is resistance”, is a fitting universal description for the lack of transfer of power to women in certain parts of the world. Power is inherent to empowerment. If power cannot change then empowerment is not possible. Power can also expand and in so doing empowerment can be expanded.

### Empowerment is a right and a personal choice

Basic human rights are strongly defined in the South African Constitution and from this given constitutional paradigm the empowerment of women can be interpreted as a given. The empowerment of women can also be seen as pivotal to improving the quality of life of all citizens (men, children, other women) and freeing the potential of each individual with whom women interact. Empowerment in its purest form should imply human dignity and freedom of any given discrimination. Empowerment is acknowledged in South Africa and in most parts of the world, but there are still battles to be fought in certain areas as fundamentalist religions and dogmatic cultural belief

systems are often used by manmade political ideologies to deny women basic rights and abuse them. The article argues that although empowerment is a right, it should also be treated as a personal choice – as every individual woman has the opportunity to decide what empowers her and therefore fulfils her in her personal and professional life.

#### **Empowerment is self-empowerment**

In lieu of the unfortunate past of the implementation of the rights of women through the centuries, there must be a *comprehension* (albeit not always *sympathy*) for feminist outrage and backlash. However, the question remains whether the harshness of postmodern feminist theory and practice should be seen as an ideal instrument in addressing the lack of women's rights and therefore their empowerment that still persists in contemporary society. There is power in the exercise and realisation of self-empowerment and that people in organisations and communities should be availed opportunities for and access to empowerment. The mothers of the townships have power, so does the CEO of an organisation, the politician, the international actress, the caregiver and the domestic worker – if they choose to empower themselves. Empowered women are satisfied and free to select what makes them happy. Thus the cliché (but the truth): nobody has the right to empower others. People can only empower themselves. Individuals, organisations and governments can provide access to the means of empowerment of others, though. Self-empowerment is the security of identity within.

Empowered women never claim to be victims. A danger lies in the victimisation argument, because playing victim runs the danger of crafting the demise of real women's empowerment. The backlash against "political correctness" of being forced to allow everything to women because they are women is also not the route to take any longer. Women consent to disempowerment if they play victims. Never in history have women been freer than today (if they have the freedom to choose empowerment

in the environments in which they find themselves) and young women across the world must be made mindful of the fact that they have not been victims and that their heritage is not victimisation.

“ In lieu of the unfortunate past of the implementation of the rights of women through the centuries, there must be a *comprehension* (albeit not always *sympathy*) for feminist outrage and backlash.”

Strong and successful women in business and society are often being depicted in an aggressive manner in the media. They are portrayed to be "more like men" and not as empowered women. This portrayal has left many an audience with the image that thriving women need to be aggressive to make their point, which is not the case. If women feel that they are empowered, they will assertively and confidently illustrate that power.

#### **Empowerment is a responsibility**

Empowerment is a responsibility as women who feel empowered also provide opportunities for the empowerment of the men, children and other women in their surrounding world. An empowered woman will take responsibility for the prosperity of herself, her family and her community. Self-empowered women should assist in the access to the means of empowerment for others.

The freedom of sexual preference is still wanting across the globe. In South Africa there is an iconoclastic negativity regarding gay relationships and practices. The freedom of sexual orientation is also a right in the Constitution. Too often still do we see "corrective rape" of lesbian women to "cure" them of their lesbian hankering. Tolerance for others with

different sexual preferences is self-empowerment in itself.

Empowerment of women equals empowerment of men. Transferring empowerment to men is powerful self-empowerment, but also an immense future responsibility for women. Men across the world have to cope with severe changes in the political, economic and social spheres. They have lost the mighty power that they have once had. In a bygone era men had to be the sole breadwinners, strong decision-makers, problem-solvers, captains of industry, walking testosterone and the pillars of communities. Once they were demigods and now they are mere power-sharers and in some cases totally disempowered.

Mutually empowering relationships are important in the process of empowerment. The responsibility of women is to help create and sustain relationships and relational contexts that could empower all people in all life activities.

#### **Empowerment is a call towards action**

Life is continuous evolution and empowerment can be viewed as an evolutionary process. Within the framework of rights that also may change in future, society needs to be aware of the evolution of empowerment as well as acting responsibly to accommodate this. Empowerment should ideally be a sustainable process of development.

South African women are the transferors of values, mores and social codes. They are the carers and the shapers of themselves, their families and their communities. They should confront their existence, engage in conversation with others, and communicate about how to embrace the responsibility of empowerment. Women need to illustrate their self-empowerment through their work and activities. Words must translate into actions.

#### **A communication management framework for women's empowerment**

As communication is of paramount importance in the process of

empowerment, the following are proposals from a communication management perspective:

- Empowerment should be viewed as good governance, promoted in civil society and seen as part of sustainable development. A national communication strategy for empowerment could be developed.
- Times are changing and with this there are changing discourses about sexuality and sharing in gender power relationships. Educational programmes encapsulating the importance of recognising and tolerating sexual preferences and role diversities, as well as how to interpret media images and content, are suggested.
- Support systems and mechanisms for empowerment should not only concentrate on realising gender equality and women's empowerment, but to achieve future objectives in sustainable development. Women's empowerment could influence poverty reduction, democratic governance, crisis prevention and recovery, as well as environmental sustainability.
- Self-empowered women are agents of change and important role players in sustainable business. Empowerment mechanisms and programmes particularly for rural women in the developing world are key to boosting the welfare of society.
- The empowerment of women lies in continuous conversation, listening

to and debating what it means to be self-empowered women in contemporary society. Empowered women should celebrate and share - through the telling of their stories - no matter whether these stories are about success or failure. They should portray their realities through continuous conversation. *Storytelling* could become case studies and frameworks for the lessons learned from the battlefield of empowerment of women in the workplace and on the playing field of life.

- Even if it is written in the Constitution that women have rights and should be empowered, action should be more visible. Despite our very sophisticated Constitution, the realities of many people will only change when a shared value system is present in the South African environment. Although values are cultural-based, basic values are universal and are voiced in the Constitution, but the Constitution and its meaning should become a living document. It could be reframed and vigorously communicated to reach all stakeholders in South Africa.
- A holistic approach, and focused institutional training mechanisms for empowerment, is on the wish list. Active engagement with various stakeholders will be necessary to achieve this outcome, such as mentorship programmes for young businesswomen.
- Transformative knowledge is necessary when it comes to the

promotion of empowerment. An outcomes-based or results-driven approach to development programmes is appropriate for the strategic shift to a governance objective to promote broader citizen participation and education. Education is pivotal in understanding empowerment.

**Concluding remarks**

There are still misconceptions as to what empowerment is and how to define it and these are being perpetuated by limited human frameworks. The expression: "we should empower women" is often uttered. This is a fallacy. No one person or institution can empower another. People empower themselves, but they need to have the tools and recourse to do so. The discourse about empowerment should change - into becoming a continuous conversation. The conversation about women, their roles, their power and their empowerment should move from rhetoric to reality. This is not the sole responsibility of government, but the responsibility of all people.

To the breasts that fed the village, to the havens that wiped our tears, to the hands that cooked our meals, to the fingers that dressed us, to the powers in the corporate corridors, to the brave hearts in government, to the nobles who teach our children, to the bearers of our nation - you are already empowered.

"It is not what you call me, but what I answer to." African proverb.

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# Adopt-a-River



Deputy Minister of Water Affairs, Rejoice Mabudafhasi presenting an award at *The Women in Water Awards*.

## By Department of Water Affairs

The Adopt-a-River project aims to piece together in a sustainable manner the objectives of aquatic ecosystem health, economic growth, human health and co-dependent land and water use principles. Human behaviour lies at the hub of most, if not all, of these aspects and will be treated as the key success factor in the sustainability of the programme.

Socially, this project is aimed at improving the lives of women (with or without disabilities) within or without the youth category. The beneficiaries should be from poor rural backgrounds and female headed households of the identified vicinity or location.

The Adopt-a-River approach enables the active participation of communities in our programmes and projects to ensure sustainability. The municipalities, sector partners, tertiary institutions, schools, private sector, agricultural communities, industries, community leaders and women in the vicinity of targeted rivers will be the key role players of the Adopt-a-River project. The spinoffs here will be water

saving, skills development for our youth, job creation, an improvement of water quality and of the state of our rivers.

It is through this programme that the Department reaches out to communities and, in particular women, as custodians of water.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

- Cleaning solid waste from river banks.
  - Provision of work-based training programs including basic water quality testing to monitor the quality of water in rivers that increase opportunities for women to participate in the workforce.
  - Creating training opportunities that promote self-esteem and life skills development. The courses they undergo include, but are not limited to:
    1. Water safety and First-Aid.
    2. The use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
    3. The separation of different waste streams.
  - 4. Basic water quality testing.
  - 5. Water purification.
  - 6. Turning waste into wealth: taking some of the waste taken out of these rivers to recycling sites for cash.
  - 7. Leadership development.
- Alleviating poverty and creating temporary jobs. All employees receive a stipend of above R1000 per month.
  - Promoting a spirit of volunteerism.
  - Enhancing community participation in cleaning their environment and promoting more public sector accountability.
  - Providing education on preserving the environment.
  - Providing communities with a caring and trusting environment that encourages personal development and offers a breeding ground for talent.
  - Promoting partnerships and volunteer actions that will facilitate the fulfillment of the Departmental mission of providing sustainable water resources.

**PRIORITY RIVERS, REGIONS AND NUMBER OF WOMEN PARTICIPATING**

The following rivers have been identified as priorities for the initial implementation of the Adopt-a-River project and which provide for rural development and, specifically, the empowerment of women within and without the youth bracket.

Name of river	Province	Number of rural women
Isipingo	KwaZulu-Natal	100
Luvuvhu	Limpopo	100
Buffalo	Eastern Cape	100
Mthatha	Eastern Cape	216
Kalspruit	Gauteng	200
Jukskei	North West	100
Mutale	Limpopo	100
Shixini	Eastern Cape	30 youths
Grade Spruit	Mpumalanga	44
WilgeRivier	Free State	20

**WOMEN IN WATER AWARDS**

The Department of Water Affairs recognises that our sources of water are a fundamental sources of life that need to be protected, cleaned, preserved, and properly managed for sustainable development.

Women in Water Awards was launched in 2002 as Women in Water and Sanitation Awards. These awards therefore serve as a vehicle for the Department to appreciate and recognise the good work women individually and in projects have been doing, unaware that they have been playing a vital role in the water sector. The awards encourage the perseverance of communities in difficult conditions and without resources, and finally, inspire other communities to learn good practices of water management and change their attitudes.

Water Affairs ensures a holistic approach in ensuring the conservation of our natural resources by affording other organisations an opportunity to participate in the realisation of this mandate. The power of forming partnerships with NGOs and CBOs cannot be underestimated. The roles

of CBOs and NGOs as providers of essential services to communities in the water sector are acknowledged and strengthened through this programme.

The NGOs and CBOs have a long history of sectoral involvement in addressing the basic needs of marginalised groups. Most of these organisations often suffer from organisational weaknesses which

inhibit their impact, including isolation from each other and from policy-makers, an inability to argue for appropriate interventions, and an inability to disseminate and accumulate knowledge. In empowering women they are strengthening departmental capacity with regard to implementing its mandate. Women constitute a greater percentage of the South African population and their power can be a very strong force to reckon with. The aiding and support of these structures at national, regional and even international, levels is not only appropriate but essential.

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**OBJECTIVES**

1. To develop a strategy to disseminate information and put forward a positive image of empowered women to serve as examples and role models.
2. To showcase the variety of women-initiated water projects, and expose innovation and sustainable solutions to water management.
3. To share best practices in water conservations and water care.
4. To develop and maintain partnerships and share skills,

knowledge and experience.

5. To recognise women organisations which support the following national objectives on water:
  - Water conservation and management
  - Access and delivery
  - Poverty alleviation
  - Public awareness
6. To encourage women and women groups to be more active in the water sector.
7. To encourage greater community involvement by all in water management.
8. To encourage private and public organisation in water to promote a greater role for women.

**CATEGORIES**

There are four categories:

- Category 1: Adopt-a-river
- Category 2: Education and awareness
- Category 3: Water conservation and demand management
- Category 4: Community development

**Prizes:**

- First Prize = R100 000
- Second Prize = R50 000
- Third Prize = R20 000

**RURAL DEVELOPMENT APPROACH**

Water related projects are identified in all the rural villages of provinces of South Africa. These projects are supposed to be women initiated or managed. Preference is given to those that are comprised of more than one woman and benefitting more than one household. Each winning project should use 40% of the winning towards the stipend of members and 60% towards the development and strengthening of the project.

The award-giving ceremony is held in a rural village, not towns or townships. Guests of honour are women villagers. Usually after such an event a lot of villagers enquire about starting their own projects. Poor women-headed households in those villages receive rainwater harvesting tanks for access to water and food production at a family unit scale.



**water affairs**  
 Department:  
 Water Affairs  
 REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

## COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS

# Changing roles, shifting thinking



The system which plays to the gender stereotype of predominantly women providing community care needs to be altered to emancipate women as part of its core structure. Government has committed itself to this end through progressive gender policies.

By Melanie Roberts and Nicola Stuart-Thompson

The incorporation of 'lay health workers' (LHWs) such as Community Health Workers (CHWs) within the broader health system is a common phenomenon, particularly in developing countries where health systems are burdened by severe shortages of staff and the inequitable distribution of this staff (Lehmann & Sanders, 2007). In South Africa this has been aggravated by high levels of HIV/AIDS and the need for care. With most health professionals in South Africa existing within the private sector and in urban areas, the rural poor are left even more vulnerable (Daniels et al, 2012). The effectiveness of the CHW, however, is limited by the context in which they are accepted and recognised by their peers. This article draws upon experiences of gender discrimination against CHWs - the vast

majority being rural women – in order to better understand the environment in which these individuals work and offer some insight into how this might be improved in the future.

The mandate for gender equality in South Africa is clearly enshrined in the constitution as well as well as additional departmental documents. In addition to this framework, South Africa is signatory to the main international and regional conventions and agreements relating to gender equality and the protection of women. Despite the "building blocks for a gender equitable society" being in place, there remain substantial challenges in translating this into substantive improvements on the ground. (Commission for Gender Equality, 2011)

A system of lay health workers took root in South Africa during the early

1990s, primarily in response to the HIV and AIDS crisis in the country. During this period lay workers received basic but specialised training from various NGOs and FBOs (Schneider & Lehmann, 2010). They carry out a broad range of tasks, such as palliative care, counselling, health promotion and treatment support, which are necessary to bridge the gap between the rural poor and the health system.

In 2000 the government, in response to an increasing demand for health care, introduced a grant system to support 'home and community based care' (Department of Health, 2001). The increasing need, and inevitable reliance on lay health workers, particularly in poor rural areas, has resulted in a steady escalation of individuals working in this capacity (Schneider & Lehmann, 2010). The CHW system has thus evolved from a relatively small numbers of specialised CHWs working under the guidance of NGOs, to a relatively large number of more general non-professionals tasked with new forms of service provision. In 2003 the government passed the Community Care Givers policy framework, which recognised lay workers as regular employees and made provision for a minimum stipend (Department of Health, 2003). Furthermore, during the course of the reorganisation of the primary health system in South Africa, CHWs are intended to become part of the system (Department of Health, 2011). Government has thus become the primary funder and driver of this system over the past decade, and it is therefore necessary to ensure that the system develops within the framework of gender equality set out in the aforementioned agreements and legislation.

CHWs straddle the line between community helpers and health care professionals. As community members, they are flexible, approachable and part of the social structures and stereotypes, providing care to their neighbours and peers; but this is a fine line to balance upon, as the professional system to which they contribute is poorly regulated and lacks support. These women have been empowered in their roles as health care workers, but they deal with discrimination and uninformed

community reaction to them on a daily basis. Ensuring effectiveness and efficiency of their work necessitates a support system which understands and recognises these tensions and identifies appropriate measures of alleviating these additional burdens.

### **A Community Health Worker Perspective:**

CHoiCe Trust, an NGO based in Limpopo Province, carried out a study in 2011 with 12 CHWs in order to identify gender issues in the external environment between caregivers and patients and between caregivers and the community. The study was shared with over fifty stakeholders (including caregivers) in gender workshops, and the findings were discussed and unanimously confirmed by participants based on their own experiences.

From the interviews, the following key aspects arose:

- **Male patients do not talk openly to CHWs:**

The female CHWs discussed difficulties in working with male patients who will not discuss their health problems with the CHWs. This is most extreme with the younger CHWs, who feel that they may be trusted more when they are older.

- **Female CHWs lack the authority to tell male patients what to do:**

One CHW shared that this was because “they have the power. We grew up knowing that men take the decision; a woman cannot say anything.”

- **CHWs are not trusted with confidential information:**

There is the general feeling that women ‘gossip’ and therefore cannot be trusted with sensitive patient information. The CHWs talked about the ‘secrets’ of the patients and the fact that male caregivers are trusted more not to tell other community members about the health details of the households they visit.

- **The CHWs face rumours being spread about them:**

The issue of rumours about their role arose in different interviews. The CHWs shared that there are some community members who distrust them because they are always seen with sick people, with one CHW stating that she

is worried that when a patient dies, “they will say you killed him because the patient is bedridden. They might think I came with muti.” Another fear is with regards to rumours being spread about the women working with male patients, as “it is because he is a man and he is not mine so people may talk.”

- **Bathing male patients is a challenge:**

Despite having received some training on how to bath bedridden or very ill patients, CHWs struggle with the nakedness of male community members. Some of this is a difficulty experienced by the CHW herself, as she feels uncomfortable seeing a male’s penis if he is not her husband; some of the difficulty is that male patients will not permit the female caregivers to bath them as they are uncomfortable with being seen naked by the women; and some difficulty is with regards to what other people, such as patient families, feel about having the male patient being seen naked by a non-family member.

- **CHWs sometimes fear for their safety:**

Caregivers discussed that working with male patients when they are alone in the house or when the CHW has to see them in some form of undress makes them fear for their safety. One CHW shared that she will always help a male patient to dress outside of his house so that she is protected, and another shared she feared that even bedridden patients “has(ve) feelings, he might rape me one day.”

The concerns and issues faced by the predominantly female caregivers are crucial to recognising and understanding community systems for the effective implementation of a community-based health approach. Incorporating these workers into a system which provides them with support and works to empower them and the community for reduced gender discrimination is a central aspect of moving forward into professionalised service.

The CHWs are also able to identify gender issues which restrict their ability and their reach, and which thereby significantly reduce the impact of the community-based system on its intended beneficiaries. The CHWs discussed that young men are least likely to engage with home-based

carers for their services, and the CHWs often rely on women within the house to notify them of health issues or to provide them with information relevant to the provision of care services. When they work with female patients, they are more open about telling the CHWs about their issues, and even rely on them for emotional support. They further noted that female family members of patients are resources of household care, while their male counterparts are not supportive. One carer shared that “most of the time I work where there is a female patient, because the husband cannot be able to do everything for his wife, but if the husband is sick most of them are supported by their wives.”

Their contribution towards gender understanding around prevention of HIV/AIDS is also key. The CHWs reported that they try to dedicate most of their time in engaging with men around prevention, but that they struggle to get the message across. A carer found that the men often tell her that “women are the ones who need to be taught about HIV – that is where we have a problem. But we tell them that HIV does not infect a man or a woman only, but it infects both of us. Sometimes we even go for the second time and the third time for him to understand.” This information is pivotal in designing a prevention programme which is best received by the community and which brings about behavioural change.

### **Moving Beyond Care**

Community spirit, compassion, care and dedication are all qualities that are associated with the origins of the CHW system, and while these are admirable, the purpose and scale of this system have changed, and as such how we proceed needs to be reconsidered. Many theorists and practitioners question whether home based care, as currently undertaken and envisaged by the state, shifts the responsibility of care onto the households and the women with those households (Daniels et al 2012). Morrell and Jewkes (2011) ask whether enough is being done to engage men in care work. Research suggests that when men engage in this form of

work it challenges the gender norms by showing that men can play a role in an area of work generally regarded as the responsibility of women – thus demonstrating alternative masculinity. Challenging ideas of hegemonic masculinity will however take time and is not necessarily an inevitable result. Creating a space for a wider societal process in which values and identities are able to shift – eventually allowing for a more equal distribution of labour – depends on “moving beyond a stereotypical caring function and possessing sufficient systems knowledge and moral authority” (Schneider & Lehmann 2010: 65).

The CHWs should be seen as professionals, and as such the fieldworkers should be afforded the privilege and respect that accompanies an understanding of this by their peers. This will ensure that their work is recognised as a service and not as a lay function provided by a volunteer with little authority and health knowledge. To this end, appropriate planning should be taking place in establishing routes and households for visits by caregivers, and there should be key referral persons identified for the reporting of unsafe situations or situations in which the caregivers felt threatened in any way. The referral system itself should be known amongst the community, presenting yet another layer to the professionalism of the LHWs as the clear entry-point into the formal primary health sector.

The professionalisation of the sector would further contribute towards increasing the power of the women providing the service. The current lack of clear roles and responsibilities has resulted in a generally poor level of “voice and power” as a collective (Daniels et al, 2012). The tasks undertaken by CHWs are physically, emotionally, socially and economically stressful – and are often performed with minimal support. The health workers “who are not adequately cared for may deliver a less than adequate service” (Daniels et al, 2012). This is therefore not sustainable, especially given the increasing role of CHWs. Who better than these individuals to highlight the weaknesses in the system, and to advocate improvements?

“The concerns and issues faced by the predominantly female caregivers are crucial to recognising and understanding community systems for the effective implementation of a community-based health approach.”

The lack of clear roles and responsibilities also means that the quality of the service cannot be guaranteed. The longer this situation exists with fragmented services, differing levels of training and reporting challenges, the more the sector will be compromised. Recent moves towards standardising the requirements and conditions of the work will go a long way towards ensuring a quality service which is guaranteed as a government deliverable towards a healthier community.

### Conclusions: Striking the balance

The CHW system is dominated by women who work in challenging environments. This article explored the dynamics of the situation in order to contribute to a wider understanding of the gender discrimination faced by these workers and to promote a more effective health care system for the future. Resources are often restricted even as the burden of disease continues, making it even more essential that services provided within the community are most accessible and effective.

Home-based care emerged amongst the NGO sector as a solution of health care services delivered directly to vulnerable beneficiaries who struggle with accessing formal health care. It started out as a small-scale response which was designed within a set geographic area based on the needs of the particular beneficiaries in question and at the dictate of the NGO providing the service. It has evolved and expanded over the years to feed into formal government systems, and

is in the process of being formally incorporated.

The current movements with the re-engineering of primary health care are positive developments for the professionalisation of caregivers creating the space for better monitoring and support and ultimately an improved working environment. However, Lehmann and Sanders (2007) warn against CHWs being utilised as a panacea for weak health systems, emphasising that “large-scale CHW systems require substantial increases in support for training, management, supervision and logistics”.

While professionalisation of CHWs and all that that entails is essential, it is imperative to note that this shift in scale and structure necessitates a corresponding shift in thinking. The system which plays to the gender stereotype of predominantly women providing community care needs to be altered to emancipate women as part of its core structure. Government has committed itself to this end through progressive gender policies. Ensuring that this comes to the fore in the current re-alignment will be key to establishing an empowered profession which uplifts women and men in the community while providing a quality service to vulnerable community members for the prevention and alleviation of the burden of disease in South Africa.

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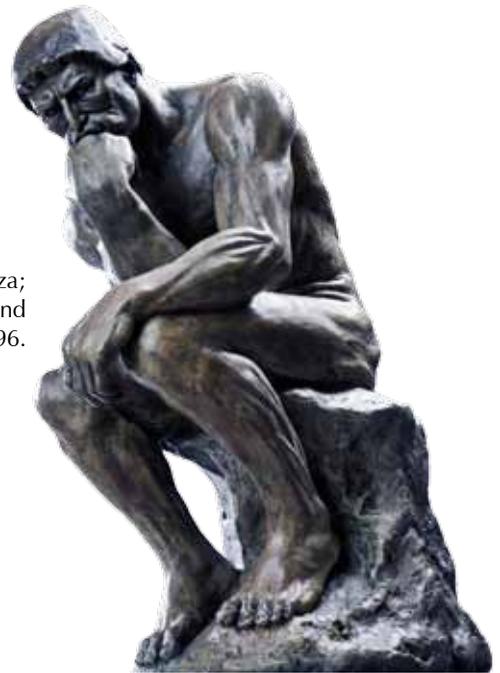
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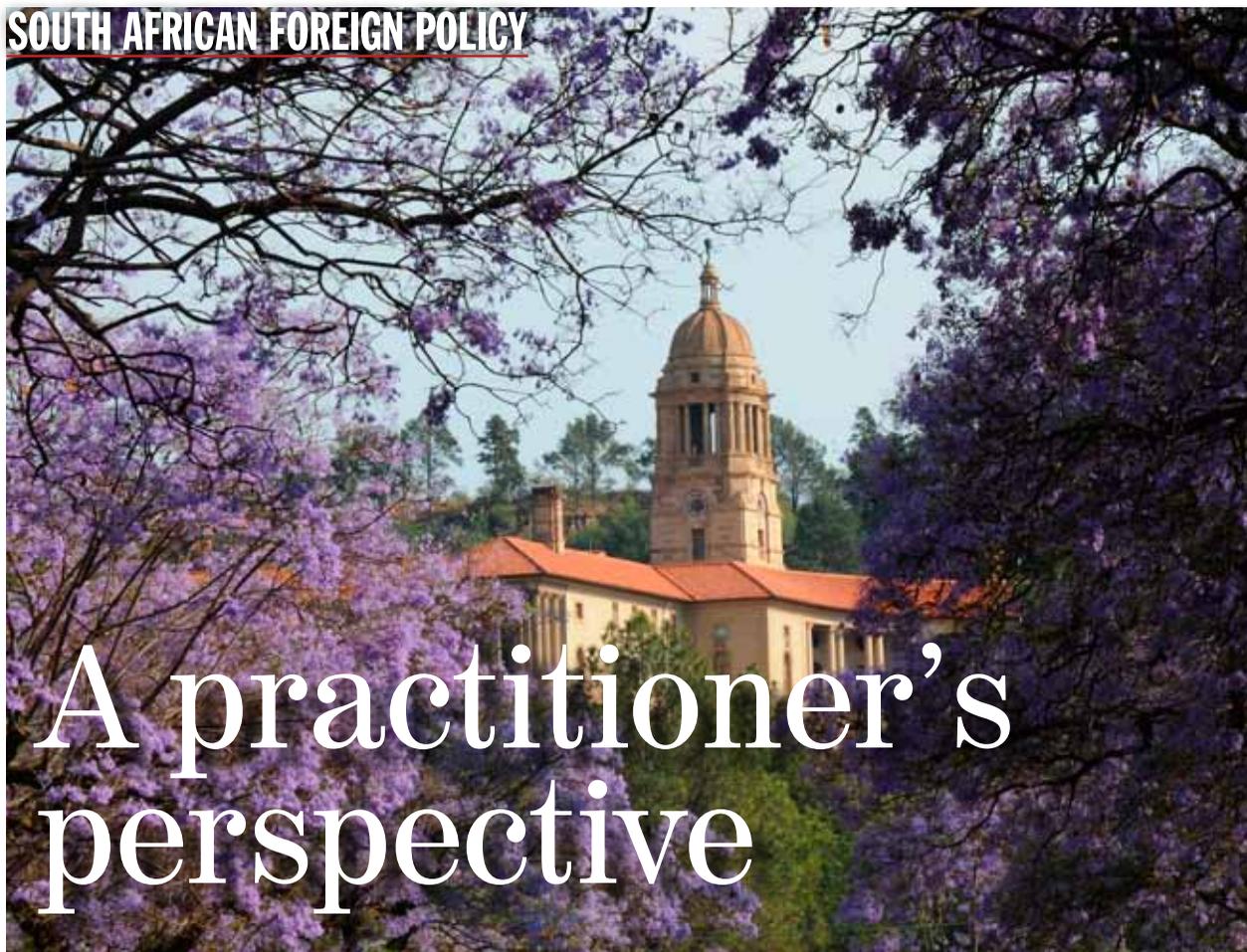
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## SOUTH AFRICAN FOREIGN POLICY



# A practitioner's perspective

Young people have much to learn from listening to these narratives, discussing, thinking and reading about the way we reached the positions adopted today.

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By Petunia Mpoza

The 27th of April 1994, marked a turning point in South Africa's political and social history. For many South Africans this date marked the end of apartheid and the beginning of a new 'rainbow nation'.

However, questions about the turning point are still asked, especially by the so called 'born free' generation, born post-1994, some of whom only know that uTata Nelson Mandela was the first black President, sharing a Nobel Peace Prize with F.W. de Klerk. Yet there are many people, amongst them scholars, researchers, historians, commentators and activists, who

have experienced, if not shared and recorded, the history of events leading to the abolition of apartheid and the process leading to South Africa's current positioning in international relations and its participation in global affairs. Young people have much to learn from listening to these narratives, discussing, thinking and reading about the way we reached the positions adopted today.

The Young People in International Affairs Symposium (YPIA) aimed to analyse South Africa's past successes and failures by unpacking the present quandaries within the context of

charting the country's path of socio-economic development and foreign relations on the continent and internationally. The symposium, which was held in conjunction with the Monash Africa Centre, hosted at Monash South Africa, had the theme *South African Policy: A Practitioner's Perspective*.

Contributors to the dialogue included Ambassador Victor Zazeraj (Former South African Ambassador to Chile and Poland), Dr Essop Pahad, (Former Minister in the Presidency), Ambassador Thomas Wheeler (Former South African

Ambassador to Turkey, Former Chief Director: Latin America and the Caribbean) and Ambassador Lindiwe Zulu (President Zuma's International Relations Adviser).

Dr Scott Firsing, the Founder and President of YPIA and senior lecturer in International Studies, gave direction by making mention of 'different views' and 'disconnect' within the context of South Africa's pubertal democracy and its foreign policy which to any individual would raise further enquiry about the institutions that best represent our foreign policy. Ambassador Zazeraj's approach to the discussion focused on the 1980s, ten years before the release of uTata Nelson Mandela and the unbanning of the ANC and other progressive organisations. His narrative centred on the times of Pik Botha, who served as Foreign Minister in the last years of the apartheid era, remembered by the speaker as a liberal politician within the then ruling National Party and the Afrikaner community, whose foreign policy rested fundamentally on the security of the regional environment. Ambassador Zazeraj gave prominence to the role of Mr. Botha in our Foreign Policy, concluding that it was one which was liberal in nature and strategically executed in time for a transition in South Africa.

As accounts and constructions continued, the former Minister in the Presidency, Essop Pahad, disagreed with the previous speaker's perspective. He explained the ANC's negotiations with South Africa during Pik Botha's leadership, as well as the main elements of the foreign policy of the administrations of former Presidents Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki. The attention of the audience was drawn to the foundations already in place in light of the international policy of the African National Congress (ANC) in union with other members of the alliance, namely, the South African Communist Party (SACP), who played a pivotal role in infusing amongst our people a deep sense of Internationalism and International Solidarity; as well as the Congress of the South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and its affiliates such as the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM).

It was against the backdrop of the existing international affairs department before it came to power that the ANC developed its 'African Agenda'. This prioritised the well being and security of other African countries; an agenda that further continued as the African Renaissance during Thabo Mbeki's tenure: one that both witnessed and participated in the transition of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to the African Union (AU)

**“It was against the backdrop of the existing international affairs department before it came to power that the ANC developed its 'African Agenda'. This prioritised the well-being and security of other African countries; an agenda that further continued as the African Renaissance during Thabo Mbeki's tenure.”**

which was inaugurated in Durban 2002; and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Both were important milestones in the process of creating a unified continent politically and economically, further complementing the ideals of the ANC and a working Foreign Policy.

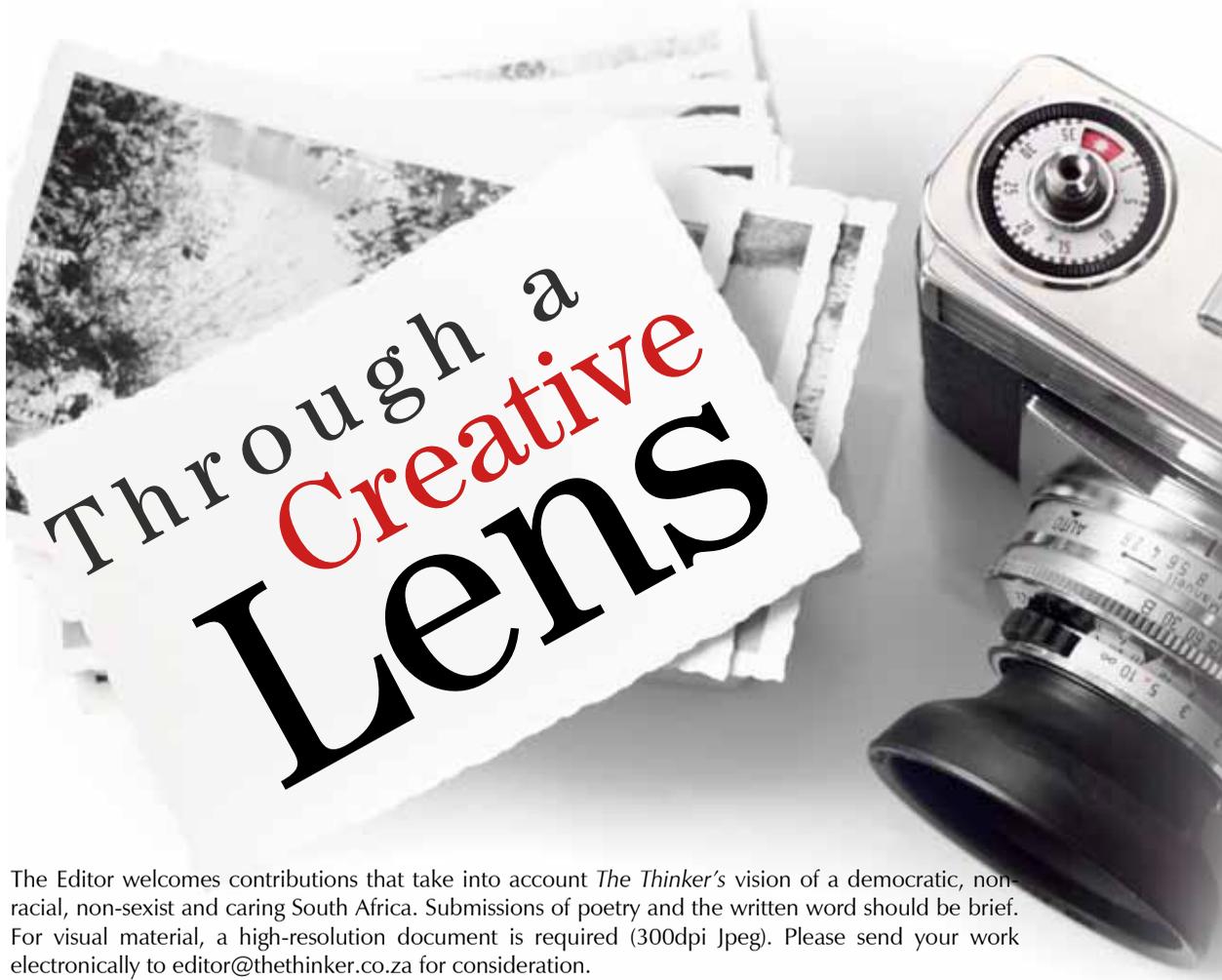
Was it working? Is it working? As simple as it may sound Ambassador Wheeler consulted the April 2012 DIRCO budget vote and the May 2011 South African White Paper to best answer this question in relation to the current foreign policy, starting from 1994. He creatively and critically looked at both documents and shared his findings, from a series of strategy documents accessible from the DIRCO website, to the Minister of International Relations and Co-operation Maite Nkoana-Mashabane's consultative

leadership style towards the consolidation of the document titled the 'White Paper'. From his tone, both documents were commendable. However, he highlighted weaknesses in both documents, and made it clear that future hindrances moving ahead lie in implementation. He also raised the importance of South Africa's international image both as a host to other diplomats and as the appointer and manager of our own diplomats abroad.

Under the same theme, current SA foreign policy, Ambassador Zulu systematically worked her narrative from a point of perception as she compared and contrasted the presentations by Ambassador Zazeraj and Dr Pahad, also as a means of highlighting Dr. Firsing's question of disconnection. As she continued, she candidly shared with the audience important documents to consult in light of the upcoming ANC policy conference, namely: the *ANC Strategy and Tactics* document as well as the policy document on International Relations. With a firm tone she explained South Africa's continued campaign in support of Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma and justified the motivations for this, one of them being the principle of rotation. Before she concluded she shared her concerns over peace, security and stability in the continent, stressing that this shall remain a priority on the national agenda.

Commenting on the role of business, Ambassador Zazeraj further shared how South African foreign policy impacts on industry. He explained that the government had done excellent work as they had opened the economy to the rest of the world and they had created numerous opportunities for the private sector by signing trade agreements. However, the unfortunate part was that due to poverty and inequality South Africa still has to rely heavily on foreign investment.

The event effectively provided an open platform for interactive and candid dialogue between former diplomats and the attendees; safe to say, it was thus the unheard narratives of the past that made the foreign policy not so foreign.



The Editor welcomes contributions that take into account *The Thinker's* vision of a democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and caring South Africa. Submissions of poetry and the written word should be brief. For visual material, a high-resolution document is required (300dpi Jpeg). Please send your work electronically to [editor@thethinker.co.za](mailto:editor@thethinker.co.za) for consideration.



Bridget Pitt has occupied herself with a range of pursuits in her life, including political activism, teaching, painting, poetry and writing. Previously we have published some of her intensely moving poems, and a short piece on the art of writing. In this issue we reproduce two poems from a new series she is working on. Bridget writes:

“They are part of a series I am doing which combines poetry and art. I've called the series *Earth Laments*, and it is essentially a commentary on the age old tragedy that while most of nature sustains itself through a complex and highly tuned collaborative endeavour, humans consistently seem determined to disrupt the balance of this, even when their own continued survival is at stake, and even though of all species they are best equipped to perceive and understand it. This is a tragedy in the most classic literary sense, when the main protagonist is doomed through lack of foresight, hubris, or some inner compulsion to bring about his/her own destruction. The artwork and the poetry is interwoven, and ideally should be shown together - particularly in the case of ‘Salvation swims towards us.’”



This painting was based on a photograph of a man trying to douse a huge oil –pipeline fire that decimated his community in Nigeria

### Salvation swims towards us

Ash falls like snow  
 On we the damned  
 Who stand knee-deep  
 in sombre grief.  
 In the yellow glare of oil-fed flares,  
 The vultures fly in widening gyres  
 Or pick the meat from splintered bones  
 Of shattered hope and shattered homes

Black gold  
 They call it  
 Those soft skinned men in hard machines  
 Who, like bloated leeches, drain earth's veins  
 Of every dark and viscous drop.  
 And though each drop exhorts the price  
 Of countless lives (plant, man and beast)  
 It feeds but metal moving parts  
 Of tills and tanks and armoured cars  
 Of whining jet planes dropping death

And chokes all living breath

But in some distant ice blue seas  
 Some cobalt canted crisp white seas  
 Our salvation swims: with splayed webbed paws  
 It carves an arc through ice clipped waves  
 Its silent ripples spreading wide  
 Refracted through the crystal tides

A mass of fur and muscled claw  
 So powerful, huge, yet dwarfed again  
 By vast unbroken heaving plains –

As crumbling ice shelves crack and yield  
 to the slick and slide of fractured reefs  
 that shrink, and sink like melting stones,  
 The polar bear swims on,  
 Alone

Salvation swims towards us  
 With weary strokes, and fading strength

In widening seas that grant no rest.  
 It meets a tiny swirl in plastic blue:  
 A pail of water – almost through  
 It glistens in that last sweet flow  
 Splashed to cool a ravaged brow

Salvation drowns, the fires burn,  
 And still the twisted drills will turn...  
 Until we lift our smoke-screened eyes  
 Raise our dripping, oil-flecked snouts  
 Crack our hard-shelled shrivelled hearts  
 And let life's streams flow free again  
 from hand to paw; from leaf to skin.

For if we don't, each dying bear  
 That sinks beneath our blank-faced fear  
 Will pull us down through sunless depths  
 Until we join in breathless death  
 Until our bones slide with theirs  
 In the suck and sigh of empty tides  
 Beneath the ice chilled air.



# Woman of the 21st Century

By Nozibele Qutu

**A**BAFAZI, Vroue, Women of the continent and nation, we salute and honour you!

The strength, determination, resilience and persistence of women has come to the surface over the past few years. The steady progress achieved is truly remarkable and the journey continues. VIVA ABAFAZI, VIVA women! In the new democracy, women from all walks of life have been empowered, uplifted, and motivated from different cultural, religious and political beliefs. The place of women in the post-apartheid society is both influential and important as women continue to display acts of bravery and unity.

After decades of demonstrations and protests, women have managed

to break borders and boundaries in education, business and leadership roles. We have managed to become engineers, accountants, scientists, entrepreneurs, politicians, doctors and even presidents. Who would have thought this possible? Yes, it has become a reality. We are able to perform with diligence and excellence in senior positions in the corporate world of boardrooms and still come home and take on the role of nurturing mothers who lead households, bearing in mind we do this in high heels not forgetting the lip gloss and blush.

Yes, while we celebrate and acknowledge the revolution of women being free, unfortunately there are those who are stuck in the rigid, might I mention, "ICE AGE" old way of

women being barefoot and pregnant in the kitchen and having no career and opinion – this is the 21st century! This is still the battle us women deal with in society today. The notion of not being good enough for a particular position such as "CEO" or "Minister", says who? President Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson of Liberia and President Joyce Banda of Malawi are examples that inspire us. We can be anything we dream of being.

The young pregnant teenage girl who is forced to drop out of school while the father continues without any distraction in his schooling career; the women who are abused and silenced: – we fight for you!

Women, the battle continues, we fight it with intelligence, education, diligence, competence and ambition; and we rise above it all and display our strength. We have indeed worked hard in earning our stripes. It's not a battle of the sexes, but a battle of equality. It is a battle against oppression, inequality, violence and abuse. Today we have the right to vote, to be free, to equal employment and educational opportunities, the right to choice and the right to social and political equality. In essence, women's rights are human rights.

Never in the course of history has it been a better time to be a woman. I am proud. As a young Xhosa woman of the South African democracy I am educated, empowered, opinionated and the world is my oyster. I embrace each and every moment and opportunity! We were seen as powerless. The tables have turned and we are powerhouses loaded with potential.

I know the women of the past, the women of the 21st generation and those in the future will agree when Beyonce asks, "Who run the world? GIRLS!" Fight for your rights, embrace your femininity, refuse to be looked down upon, speak up, and be confident. Live with that tenacious spirit in you. Here is to the woman of the past, present and future. Let's change the world with what we have!

Amandla Awethu!

The Editor welcomes unsolicited submissions to the Readers' Forum and encourages those who would like to discuss or debate contentious issues to use this space. Please keep word count to no more than 800 words and note that some pieces might be edited for length. Send your contribution to: [editor@thethinker.co.za](mailto:editor@thethinker.co.za).

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