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Higher Education

Women at the helm: How women vice-chancellors are shaping South African higher education

As South Africa marked 70 years since the historic Women's March of 1956, women are leading some of the country's most important universities with purpose, courage and accountability, while opening possibilities for those who will follow

JOHNATHAN PAOLI

Seventy years after thousands of South African women marched to the Union Buildings in one of the defining acts of courage in the country's history, women are leading some of South Africa's most important institutions.

Today, women lead nine of the country's 26 public universities, carrying responsibility for institutions that educate hundreds of thousands of students, manage billions of rands in public and private resources, drive research and innovation, and help shape the country's future.

Among them are women leading universities that have achieved clean audits, an important measure of sound governance and institutional accountability. Other women-led institutions have also produced strong audit outcomes.

But audit results tell only part of the story. Behind those outcomes are women making decisions about students, institutional culture, research, innovation and the role universities should play in society. Their experiences also reveal something more personal: how they lead, what has shaped them and what they hope their presence at the top will make possible for those who follow.



Vice-Chancellors Thenjiwe Meyiwa of the University of Mpumalanga and Puleng LenkaBula of UNISA are among the nine women who lead 26 of South Africa's public universities. Photos: Facebook and Eddie Mtsweni

As South Africa commemorated the 70th anniversary of the Women's March of 9 August 1956, their stories offer a contemporary picture of women exercising leadership in institutions central to the country's intellectual, social and economic future.

Leadership as public responsibility

At Nelson Mandela University (NMU), Vice-Chancellor Professor Sibongile Muthwa leads an institution that has produced a strong audit outcome, providing an important measure of institutional accountability.

Muthwa's leadership, however, is rooted just as firmly in what a university contributes to the society around it.

Her reflections on the women of 1956 offer insight into the qualities she associates with leadership.

"Their courage, their determination and unity remain among the defining moments in our nation's journey towards justice, freedom and equality," she said during the Eastern Cape's Women's Day commemorations.

Courage and collective responsibility also feature prominently in the way Muthwa describes NMU's identity as an African university.

Addressing first-year students at the beginning of the 2026 academic year, she placed their education within a wider continental purpose.



Leadership as public responsibility

"We recognise the responsibility we have as an African university to make sure that our education carries the aspirations of our continent. We are committed to educating students who will be compassionate, courageous ambassadors of a better and compelling continent and champions of an equitable world order," she said.

It is an ambitious view of what higher education should produce.

Universities award qualifications, but Muthwa's vision places equal emphasis on the kind of citizens who emerge from them, graduates equipped to participate in society, confront its challenges and contribute to a more equitable future.

That responsibility starts with recognising the circumstances in which students enter higher education.

NMU received more than 272,000 applications for approximately 8,500 first-time entering student places this year, illustrating both the demand for university education and the expectations placed on institutions to

create meaningful opportunities for young people.

"We understand that transitioning to university can sometimes be bewildering and that students experience different kinds of challenges," Muthwa said.

Supporting students through those challenges is part of a wider philosophy in which access to university is only the beginning. The real test is whether students are given the opportunity and support to succeed once they arrive.

In that sense, institutional accountability and social responsibility are closely connected: a well-run university must ultimately translate its resources, systems and academic capability into better outcomes for the people it exists to serve.

Leadership grounded in service

Professor Thenjiwe Meyiwa's leadership journey has unfolded differently.

Higher Education



Ambitious outlook: Vice-Chancellor Sibongile Muthwa of Nelson Mandela University says it is "committed to educating students who will be compassionate, courageous ambassadors of a better and compelling continent and champions of an equitable world order". Photo: Facebook

As Vice-Chancellor of the University of Mpumalanga, she is helping steer one of South Africa's youngest universities at a point when much of its identity and future direction are still being shaped.

Her own experiences as a black woman navigating higher education have influenced the leader she has become.

"As a black woman in higher education, I often found that I had to demonstrate my competence repeatedly while simultaneously earning trust in spaces where executive leadership was not always expected to look like me," she said.

Those experiences did not diminish her ambitions. They prompted her to deepen her capabilities across scholarship, academic management and institutional strategy.

Meyiwa describes a leadership philosophy anchored in Ubuntu, evidence, purpose and service.

"My resilience has always been anchored in faith, purpose, and the understanding that leadership is ultimately about service. Research teaches patience, evidence-based decision-making and intellectual humility, all qualities that are invaluable when leading complex institutions," she said.

The distinction matters. Authority comes with the office of Vice-Chancellor. Leadership, in Meyiwa's telling, comes from understanding the purpose of that authority and whom it is intended to serve. She also inherited an unusual institutional canvas.

The University of Mpumalanga is barely more than a decade old, and Meyiwa speaks appreciatively about

the foundations laid by the women who helped build it.

"I'm very fortunate to have a good grounding in a university that has been built from scratch by a woman. It was a golf course. And there's been some writing about this, that she turned the golf course into a university," she said.

Where the relative youth of an institution could be viewed as a limitation, Meyiwa sees it as an opportunity to experiment.

"The fact that it is a new university means it also has the youthfulness and energy, and it also has this path of, 'You know what? We can do things boldly with energy because we are actually growing,'" she said.

That willingness to build boldly is evident in the university's response to economic changes.

Its Centre for Continuing Learning and Executive Education has introduced programmes in areas such as artificial intelligence, climate-smart agriculture, entrepreneurship, governance, financial management, and women in leadership.

Yet Meyiwa repeatedly returns to the people at the centre of the institution.

"It should be and must be measured by how we impacted people. People start with the students. Without students, you won't have a university," she said.

Her concern includes students caught in the "missing middle" — those whose family incomes exclude them from some forms of financial assistance yet remain insufficient to cover the full costs of higher education.

The impact of her leadership also carries a more personal dimension.

Seeing women occupying the highest offices of universities can change what younger women and girls imagine for themselves.

"It is dawn because it is a demonstration and evidence of the fact that women do, can, and are intent on leading well," Meyiwa said.

She puts the importance of representation more simply through the eyes of a young woman looking at someone occupying a position she might once have considered beyond her reach:

"Oh, that one looks like me, so I could be in that position someday."

It is, Meyiwa says, ultimately about "opportunity and possibilities".

And therein lies one of the less measurable effects of leadership: one woman's achievement can make another woman's ambition seem possible.

Opening new frontiers

Professor Puleng LenkaBula presides over an institution of a very different scale and history.

The University of South Africa (UNISA) is one of the continent's largest universities, serving more than 400,000 students and producing more than 50,000 graduates annually.

UNISA has also produced a strong audit outcome under LenkaBula's leadership, achieving an unqualified audit opinion while pursuing an ambitious agenda in access, research, technology, and innovation.

Leading an institution of that scale presents a distinctive challenge.

UNISA has a long history and an identity closely associated with open and distance learning. At the same time, it must prepare students for an economy being reshaped by technology and new forms of work.

One of its recent investments illustrates that changing landscape.

The university has acquired a 20-hectare airport that it intends to use as a training and research hub for aviation, drone technology and advanced digital systems.

"This 20-hectare airport will give our students a unique opportunity to apply their studies in practice and gain skills that are in high demand in the aviation and engineering industries," LenkaBula said.

She has described the facility as a "launchpad for future innovators", opening opportunities for practical and technical learning alongside the university's established open and distance education model.

The development also says something about LenkaBula's approach to an institution with such a long history: preserving its access mission does not mean remaining confined by traditional definitions of how that mission should be delivered.

The same ambition is evident in UNISA's growing scientific partnerships across the continent.

Its collaboration with the University of Namibia on the Africa Millimetre Telescope project is part of efforts to strengthen African research capacity and participation in global knowledge production.

LenkaBula describes the project in terms that reveal a larger ambition for African higher education.

"The Africa Millimetre Telescope is not simply a scientific instrument; it is an expression of Africa's intellectual ambition," she said.

"Through this partnership, we are strengthening African-led research infrastructure and ensuring that our continent contributes meaningfully to global knowledge production."

The emphasis on African-led research is important.

It speaks to a view of universities on the continent as producers of knowledge rather than institutions principally consuming ideas, technologies and research generated elsewhere.

As a Black woman in higher education, I often found that I had to demonstrate my competence repeatedly while simultaneously earning trust in spaces where executive leadership was not always expected to look like me. — Vice-Chancellor Thenjiwe Meyiwa of the University of Mpumalanga

Through postgraduate development, scientific infrastructure and continental partnerships, that philosophy seeks to place African scholars and institutions more firmly within global knowledge networks. For a university historically associated with expanding access, the question is no longer simply how many people can enter higher education. It is also about which new intellectual, scientific, and technological spaces the institution can help them enter.

What leadership makes possible

Women occupying nine of South Africa's 26 vice-chancellor positions represents progress, but it does not mean the barriers confronting women in senior leadership have disappeared.

Meyiwa's experience of repeatedly having to demonstrate her competence is a reminder that reaching a position of authority and being readily accepted in that position are not always the same thing.

Representation therefore matters in ways that cannot easily be captured in institutional performance reports.

A young woman walking across a university campus, seeing another woman occupy its highest office, encounters a different picture of who

can lead. A young academic considering her own future sees a path that previous generations of women had far fewer opportunities to follow.

Yet these women also demonstrate that there is no single model of women's leadership.

Muthwa places African purpose, students and public responsibility at the centre of her thinking.

Meyiwa draws on Ubuntu, service, resilience and the freedom to build boldly.

LenkaBula is taking an institution synonymous with distance education into new territory in aviation, technology and African-led scientific collaboration.

Their institutions differ in history, scale and mandate. So do the challenges confronting the women who lead them.

What they share is responsibility for universities whose success matters far outside their campuses.

Clean audits and other strong audit outcomes are important in a sector entrusted with substantial public and private resources. They provide evidence of institutional discipline and accountability.

But sound governance derives its real value from what it enables an institution to do — educate students, produce knowledge, develop skills, advance research and expand opportunity.

That is also why the 70th anniversary of the Women's March provides a fitting moment in which to reflect on the women leading universities today.

The circumstances confronting today's vice-chancellors are vastly different from those faced by the women who marched to the Union Buildings on 9 August 1956. Their experiences should not be conflated.

What connects the generations is something more enduring: women exercising agency, accepting responsibility, challenging assumptions about where they belong and helping shape the society around them.

Meyiwa captures the intergenerational power of that visibility when she imagines a younger woman looking at someone in leadership and thinking:

"That one looks like me, so I could be in that position someday."

Seventy years ago, thousands of women marched together to insist that they had a voice in determining South Africa's future.

Today, women are exercising that leadership in different spaces, in council chambers, lecture halls, laboratories and across university campuses.

Their responsibility now is not merely to occupy those spaces, but to lead them well and widen the possibilities for those who follow.

Seventy years after the historic Women's March, women are helping to shape the institutions that will educate, inspire, and prepare the generations who will build South Africa's next chapter.

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Higher Education

Women vice-chancellors: Shaping SA's future

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

'Heart-centred leadership'

Professor Hester Klopper has brought a combination of academic experience, institutional leadership and a strong focus on research and innovation to the University of the Free State (UFS), where she became the first woman to serve as Vice-Chancellor and Principal in its 122-year history.

She was formally inaugurated as the university's 15th Vice-Chancellor and Principal in June that year.

The university was among the 15 public universities that achieved clean audits in the latest sector results, while its most recently published detailed annual audit report found no material non-compliance with legislation and no significant deficiencies in internal controls.

Klopper's appointment marked a significant milestone for a university that had operated for more than a century without a woman at its helm. But she has repeatedly sought to shift the focus away from the symbolism of being the first woman towards the responsibility of creating opportunities for those who follow.

During UFS's Women's Month programme, Klopper argued that representation alone was insufficient if it did not translate into influence and opportunities for others.

"Women must have the opportunity to influence decisions, lead authentically, and create opportunities for other women. Do not measure your influence only by how far you have come. Consider who is coming with you," she said.

Klopper's leadership agenda is centred on transforming the institution into a research-led, student-centred and regionally engaged university while preparing it for a higher-education environment increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence and rapid technological change.

Her inaugural address, "Walking Together with Purpose: Unlocking Excellence to Lead Change", set out a vision of an institution that would be more innovative, globally relevant and firmly rooted in Africa.

Klopper has also challenged universities to rethink how they operate in an era in which technological development is outpacing traditional educational systems.

Her approach includes strengthening research, encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration and creating new mechanisms to support academics and innovation.

At UFS's inaugural Multi-, Inter- and Transdisciplinary Research Conference in August, she argued that increasingly complex social problems



Leading with purpose: Professor Hester Klopper is the first woman to serve as Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of the Free State in its 122-year history. Photo: Supplied

could not be solved by academic disciplines working in isolation.

She described multidisciplinary research as adding different perspectives, interdisciplinary research as integrating them and transdisciplinary research as going beyond disciplinary boundaries to address real-world problems.

Klopper has described "heart-centred leadership" as combining purpose, clarity, empathy and courage.

"Creating psychologically safe environments where students challenge ideas, researchers pursue ambitious discoveries, and staff innovate without fear is core to this philosophy," she said.

During Women's Month, Klopper highlighted gender-based violence and intimidation as issues that universities must confront if women are to participate fully in academic and professional life.

"We need to make sure that, no matter where we find ourselves across our campuses, we are in a space that is safe and free from any possibility of gender-based violence, assault, or intimidation," she said.

Transform, modernise, optimise

At Walter Sisulu University (WSU), Dr Thandi Mgwebi began her tenure as Vice-Chancellor and Principal with a similarly strong emphasis on transformation, institutional renewal and the developmental role of higher education.

The university's financial governance has been an important part of its institutional renewal, with the university having made significant progress from the difficult audit outcomes of previous years.

WSU was among the nine public universities that received unqualified

audit opinions with findings in the latest sector audit results. While its financial statements were not materially misstated, shortcomings were identified in areas such as compliance, performance reporting, or internal controls that required management attention.

The outcome is significant for the incoming VC, who took over an institution that has made progress in strengthening its financial governance but still needs to address outstanding audit findings and embed stronger controls across the university.

"Integrity, excellence, respect, and Ubuntu must be visible in how we work, teach, and engage with one another." — Dr Thandi Mgwebi

Mgwebi assumed office at the beginning of the year, returning as an alumna with extensive experience in higher education leadership, research, innovation and international partnerships.

"This appointment is deeply humbling and profoundly meaningful to me. I return not just as a Vice-Chancellor, but as an alumna whose life was shaped by this institution and by the values it stands for," she said.

"My leadership is about stewardship and impact with a focus on strengthening the university so that it can fully serve current and future generations."

Her leadership agenda is built



Extensive experience: Dr Thandi Mgwebi, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of Walter Sisulu University in the Eastern Cape, has positioned her tenure as an attempt to combine institutional renewal with the university's social mission. Photo: Supplied

around three words: transform, modernise and optimise.

For Mgwebi, these are not abstract slogans but practical priorities intended to improve student success, modernise infrastructure and systems, and strengthen institutional efficiency and accountability.

A key element of her approach has been rebuilding trust through consultation.

Mgwebi has stressed that leadership cannot be imposed from the top and that engagement with students, staff, unions, the council and external stakeholders must result in tangible changes.

"Trust is built through consistency, openness, and follow-through. For me, listening and consultation are not symbolic; they are essential to effective leadership. Consultation must be meaningful, not performative, and feedback must inform decisions," she said.

Student-centred approach

Her student-centred approach was particularly evident in her 2026 academic opening address, when she placed students and the Student Representative Council ahead of university leadership and external stakeholders in her formal acknowledgements.

"This is an acknowledgement of the primary constituency in the mission that binds us all as a WSU community," Mgwebi said. "It is to the students that the message of this university opening address is principally aimed."

Mgwebi has also highlighted the enormous pressure facing South Africa's universities as demand for higher education continues to outstrip institutional capacity.

WSU received more than 500,000 applications for the 2026 academic

year but could accommodate only 7,401 first-year students.

"Every student admitted here is not merely enrolled; they are selected. They carry with them the hopes of families, communities and a nation in need of skills, knowledge and leadership," she said.

For Mgwebi, WSU's response must involve rethinking how higher education is delivered, particularly through technology and hybrid learning.

During her opening address as VC, she called for a university capable of expanding its reach beyond traditional campuses and responding to the needs of rural and underserved communities.

"Teaching and learning do not occur in isolation; they are enabled by systems, infrastructure, services and attitudes," she said. "When any part of this ecosystem fails, students suffer, and when students suffer, the institution fails its mandate."

She has also insisted that institutional culture must be reflected in everyday behaviour, rather than remaining confined to strategic documents.

"Our values are not decorative; they are behavioural commitments that define who we are. Integrity, excellence, respect, and Ubuntu must be visible in how we work, teach, and engage with one another," Mgwebi said.

Her leadership has been framed against WSU's broader developmental role in the Eastern Cape, with a particular focus on research, rural development and innovation.

Mgwebi has positioned her tenure as an attempt to combine institutional renewal with the university's social mission: using WSU's academic resources not only to produce graduates but also to address the problems confronting the communities it serves

Technology



Mind expanding: Matric students attend a digital skills training course at the Kgalema Motlanthe Foundation. Photo: Supplied

Kgalema Motlanthe Foundation offers digital skills training for matriculants

SIMON NARE

The Kgalema Motlanthe Foundation is continuing its drive to empower young and disadvantaged people with digital skills and recently enrolled a group of matriculants for a five-week artificial intelligence (AI) training course.

The programme is part of the foundation's broader ambition to establish an accredited digital skills institution.

The course is designed to expose students to opportunities in the digital space as technology continues to evolve rapidly.

The foundation's chief executive officer, Gugu Motlanthe, said South Africa was playing catch-up as the rest of the world moved ahead in adopting new technologies.

In mid-August, Motlanthe welcomed 42 students from schools in Johannesburg and Soweto to the foundation's premises in Houghton Estate, where they are undergoing five weeks of digital skills training.

Welcoming the students, Motlanthe reminded them that where they start in life does not necessarily determine their future.

She encouraged them to take advantage of the opportunities available to them and make something of their lives.

The students will receive practical training in game development, robotics, sketch programming, and podcasting and will receive certificates upon completion.

As full-time Grade 12 learners, they will attend classes on weekends, with the programme providing hours of training equivalent to a school week.

Motlanthe told the students that AI was the future and that acquiring relevant digital skills was essential to their



Looking ahead: Gugu Motlanthe, CEO of the Kgalema Motlanthe Foundation, says the foundation's broader ambition is to establish an accredited digital skills institution at its premises in Johannesburg. Photo: Supplied

future career paths.

"These may sound like extracurricular activities, but they are much more than that," she said. The world is changing very quickly. Technology is changing how we communicate, work, operate our businesses, and solve problems.

"Artificial intelligence, robotics, coding, and digital communication [were thought to] belong somewhere in the distant future. [But] the future has already arrived, and we are basically playing catch-up."

Future leaders

Motlanthe said young people, as future leaders, should become creators, developers, innovators and entrepreneurs.

"We have chosen these activities because we have seen how gifted young people are when they are given an opportunity.

want you to fall forward so that when you eventually succeed, you play it forward," she said.

Motlanthe urged the learners' parents to teach their children to "fall forward" rather than backwards, saying young people needed a fallback plan as they navigated their careers.

She said young people could not make the journey alone and that even gifted children needed adults to identify their talents and nurture them.

"Our educators can teach, parents can encourage, but ultimately, learners, you must walk through that door yourselves. This is your opportunity.

"Do not simply learn how to use technology. Learn how to create with it. — Gugu Motlanthe, CEO of the Kgalema Motlanthe Foundation"

"So, over these five weeks, I challenge each of you: do not just attend; participate. Do not simply learn how to use technology. Learn how to create with it. Do not compare yourself with the learner sitting next to you. Compete with the person you were yesterday.

"By the end of these five weeks, I hope that every one of you will be able to say, 'I discovered something I did not know. I learned something I could not do before. I created something that I'm proud of'.

"And perhaps somewhere in these classrooms, there is a future software developer, a robotics engineer, a game

developer, a broadcaster, an entrepreneur, or perhaps you will create a career that does not even exist yet.

"That is why we are here, not simply to tell you to dream big, but to give you some of the tools, training, and opportunity to begin turning those dreams into something real," she said.

The foundation offers a hybrid learning model combining classroom theory with hands-on practical laboratory training. Its curriculum was developed in partnership with the Graphic Design Centre and is supported by the Arab Gulf Programme for Development.

The programme offers training in robotics and STEM, computer coding, virtual experience and gamification, multimedia podcasting, drone technology and artificial intelligence.

The AI bootcamps include specialised workshops focused on coding chatbots and developing technology solutions to real-world problems such as cyberbullying.

Speaking to *Inside Education* during the welcoming ceremony, Motlanthe said the foundation's long-term goal was to establish a fully-fledged accredited institution at its Houghton Estate premises to equip young people with digital skills.

She said this would begin with expanding the premises, a process that had faced resistance from some neighbours in the estate who opposed the construction of the foundation's facilities.

Motlanthe said the project had evolved significantly since it began in 2018 as a girls' bootcamp.

"We have managed to register it as an institution. We want to build a digital skills centre at the back. It has gone through many processes, and we have secured funding. That is the dream: to have a digital skills centre that young people can come to," she said.

Advertorial



Brighter future: CETA's proposed future model recognises that the built environment is changing rapidly, with a variety of new technologies increasingly shaping the sector. Photo: Vecteezy.com

Moving from crisis to renewal

A year after taking charge of CETA, Administrator Oupa Nkoane can point to progress in stabilising an institution that had been weighed down by governance, financial and operational challenges. But his bigger ambition is to reposition CETA around the skills South Africa needs to deliver its infrastructure programme — and ensure that training translates into jobs and economic opportunity

CHARMAINE NDLELA

When Oupa Nkoane was appointed Administrator of the Construction Education and Training Authority (CETA) in August 2025, his immediate task was to stabilise an institution grappling with serious governance failures, weaknesses in financial management, and operational challenges. CETA had recorded four consecutive qualified audit opinions. Outstanding discretionary grant commitments stood at R1.4 billion against annual discretionary grant income of about R500 million, while total commitments had reached R2.7 billion. Internal controls had weakened, liti-

gation exposure was rising and labour relations were strained.

The administration was therefore expected to restore governance, strengthen financial and operational controls, enforce accountability and rebuild institutional stability.

A year later, the turnaround remains a work in progress, but there are measurable signs of change.

There is also a bigger question emerging from the intervention: what should a properly functioning CETA deliver for South Africa?

It is a question Nkoane believes cannot be separated from the country's infrastructure ambitions.

Speaking recently at the UNISA Graduate School of Business Leadership's Distinction Dialogue,



Road to recovery: CETA Administrator Oupa Nkoane has brought to CETA an understanding of both the institutional challenges facing the organisation and the enormous opportunities presented by South Africa's infrastructure pipeline. Photo: Eddie Mtsweni

Nkoane argued that South Africa cannot pursue infrastructure development at scale without simultaneously building the skills required to deliver it.

CETA's footprint spans the construction skills value chain — from engineers and project managers to artisans, technicians, and occupations that support activity on construction sites.

That places the authority in a strategically important position: developing people who can help build, operate and maintain the infrastructure on which economic growth depends.

But, as Nkoane told the gathering, that requires a CETA that is "properly governed, properly structured, properly capacitated" and properly led.

Repairing the institution

Much of the first year has consequently been spent fixing CETA's internal machinery.

By March 2026, six months into the intervention, 23 of the 35 activities contained in CETA's four-phase recovery framework had been completed, with the remaining 12 in progress.

A permanent Chief Financial Officer had been appointed after almost two years of acting financial leadership. Key oversight structures, including the Audit and Risk Committee and Clean Audit Task Team, had been reconstituted, while more than 20 ICT-related internal audit findings had been resolved. Salary negotiations had also been concluded as part of efforts to stabilise labour relations.

More recent progress is reflected in CETA's latest audit process. Nkoane says the authority completed the process on time and within budget for the first time in five years, while recording fewer audit findings and reducing the areas of qualification from five to four.

“It's our core mandate to deliver, to nurture, capacitate, and develop a whole set of skills that will then be ready-made, fit for purpose, and mainstream them into the economy. — CETA Administrator Oupa Nkoane”

The result does not mean that CETA's audit challenges have been resolved. Four qualification areas remain. But against the position inherited by the administration, Nkoane regards the improvement as an important measure of progress.

He has also made implementation of the post-audit action plan and consequence management central to the recovery effort.

Speaking at the UNISA dialogue, Nkoane acknowledged that this has involved difficult decisions, including disciplinary processes. His position is that institutional renewal cannot be achieved without accountability.

Alongside governance and financial controls, the administration has had to manage internal conflict, stabilise labour relations and restore an organisation capable of delivering on its mandate.

Advertorial



Job ready: CETA wants skills development to be planned around real projects and real labour-market needs. Photo: Vecteezy.com

Seven Skills Centre projects were also reported to be underway across KwaZulu-Natal, North West, Northern Cape and the Western Cape, with the Development Bank of Southern Africa serving as implementing agent.

But stabilising the institution is only part of the turnaround Nkoane wants to leave as his legacy.

From training numbers to jobs

The second part involves changing how CETA thinks about impact.

Skills-development institutions have traditionally been assessed heavily on indicators such as enrolments, programme completions and expenditure against targets. Nkoane wants CETA to pay greater attention to what happens after a learner has been trained.

Did the learner enter a workplace? Did the qualification lead to employment? Did an artisan become certified? Did an emerging contractor progress? Did the investment in skills respond to demand in the economy?

"It is not necessarily about the numbers that we have achieved in the scorecard, but it's about the numbers that have gotten the jobs through a work-integrated process," Nkoane told the UNISA gathering.

That thinking is beginning to influence the scale and nature of the programmes CETA wants to support.

Nkoane has spoken about moving away from piecemeal skills interventions towards larger programmes built around real economic activity, workplace learning and employment opportunities. It is here that infrastructure becomes particularly important.

Rather than train people and then search for opportunities to absorb them, CETA wants to get closer to major projects where investment is already creating demand for particular skills. The V&A Waterfront provides one of the clearest examples.



Looking up: CETA will train workers in a wide range of construction industry disciplines to fill a host of workplace opportunities. Photo: Vecteezy.com

Skills meet infrastructure at the Waterfront

CETA is taking a lead role in the development of a multi-disciplinary Skills Development Node linked to the V&A Waterfront's planned Granger Bay expansion in Cape Town.

The proposed development represents a R24 billion infrastructure pipeline over approximately 15 to 20 years, with the construction phase expected to create about 27,000 jobs.

For skills development, the attraction is obvious: a long-term infrastructure project provides a live workplace around which training can be planned.

Instead of separating the classroom from the eventual workplace, skills requirements can be identified against actual projects, learners can gain practical exposure, and employers can participate directly in developing the

people they may need.

The model also creates room for collaboration across SETAs. The V&A Waterfront is an economic precinct encompassing construction, retail, hospitality, tourism, food, and other activities, enabling coordination of skills interventions across sectors rather than approaching each sector independently.

CETA's proposal positions the Waterfront as a proof point for a model that could be replicated at other economic and infrastructure nodes if successful.

The principle is straightforward: start with where investment and jobs are expected to emerge, and build the skills pipeline around that demand.

Taking the model to other infrastructure projects

The Waterfront is not the only major infrastructure environment on

CETA's radar.

Nkoane told Inside Education that CETA plans to expand the approach through a proposed partnership with Airports Company South Africa (ACSA), using airport infrastructure projects as platforms for skills development, workplace learning and contractor development.

The proposed three-year programme targets 2,250 beneficiaries through a combination of TVET workplace placements, apprenticeships, short skills programmes, recognition of prior learning and contractor and enterprise development.

Current plans envisage R118.9 million in CETA funding and R21 million in ACSA co-investment, creating a programme valued at almost R140 million.

The proposal remains to be implemented, but its design reinforces the direction emerging under the administration.

Taken together, the Waterfront initiative and the proposed ACSA programme seek to bring skills development closer to the infrastructure projects that generate demand for those skills. Training and workplace experience are planned as part of the economic opportunity created by investment, rather than as separate interventions running alongside it.

Rethinking CETA beyond 2030

The same thinking is shaping CETA's contribution to the debate about the future of the SETA system.

The current SETA landscape runs until March 2030, and government has signalled substantial reforms to skills development. CETA's response is not simply to argue for preservation of the institution in its current form.

Its post-2030 policy position proposes transforming CETA into a Built Environment and Infrastructure Skills Development Authority, with a mandate aligned more closely to the full infrastructure lifecycle — from planning and design through construction, commissioning, operations, maintenance and renewal.

The proposal also changes the measures by which the institution would judge its effectiveness. Completed occupational qualifications, artisan certification, professional registration, workplace absorption, contractor progression and demonstrable contribution to infrastructure delivery would become more important indicators of success than expenditure and enrolment alone.

At the centre of the policy position is a compelling proposition: every major infrastructure investment should leave South Africa with two assets — the physical infrastructure delivered and a stronger national base of artisans, technicians, professionals, contractors and enterprises capable of building and maintaining the next generation of infrastructure.

The policy paper does not suggest waiting until 2030 to test that proposition. It recommends using the years leading up to the new institutional dispensation to pilot infrastructure-linked models, deepen employer partnerships, strengthen governance and data systems and build evidence about what works.

Projects such as the Waterfront — and potentially the proposed ACSA programme — therefore have significance beyond their individual beneficiary numbers. They provide an opportunity to test whether major infrastructure investments can simultaneously become platforms for developing the country's skills base.

Five more months to finish the job

Nkoane's original 12-month term as Administrator has now expired, but Higher Education and Training Minister Buti Manamela has extended it by a further five months, until January 2027.

The extension provides additional time to complete outstanding work, including key leadership appointments, such as a permanent Chief Executive Officer, and the governance structures that will ultimately assume responsibility for CETA after the administration.

That may prove to be one of the most important parts of the intervention.

“Major infrastructure projects should leave behind two forms of value — the infrastructure itself and a stronger pool of skilled South Africans.” — CETA Administrator Oupa Nkoane

Turnarounds built around an individual administrator can unravel once that person leaves. The longer-term test is whether stronger systems, leadership, and accountability become deeply embedded enough to survive the transition back to normal governance.

There is unfinished business. CETA still has audit qualification areas to address. Some of the large infrastructure-linked initiatives remain at proposal or early implementation stage. And the shift from measuring training activity to demonstrating employment and economic outcomes will ultimately have to be supported by evidence.

But the first year has begun to establish a clearer direction.

The initial priority was to repair the institution — strengthen governance, restore financial and operational discipline, address audit findings, and stabilise the organisation. The next challenge is to ensure those gains endure while demonstrating that a better-run CETA can deliver better outcomes.

If the institution can more deliberately connect skills investment to infrastructure projects, workplaces, and employers, and demonstrate that learners are progressing into jobs, professional practice, and enterprise, the legacy of the administration may ultimately be measured by more than the institution it repaired.

It may also be measured by whether CETA became better at preparing South Africans to build the country.

DG's Corner

Educating and empowering the girls who'll shape SA's future

MATHANZIMA MWELI

Women's Month gives South Africa an opportunity to celebrate the women who have shaped our democracy and our communities. For those of us entrusted with educating the next generation, however, it must also prompt a more important question: what are we doing today to ensure that the girl sitting in a South African classroom has every opportunity to become the woman who will shape our country tomorrow?

The empowerment of women does not begin when they enter the workplace. It begins much earlier — in our homes, communities and, critically, in our schools.

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A girl's future must be determined by her ability and aspirations — not by outdated assumptions about what women should or should not do. — Mathanzima Mveli, Director-General, Department of Basic Education

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For the basic education sector, this means looking at the entire journey of a girl through schooling: whether she can attend school with dignity, whether she is safe, whether she can participate in sport, whether she is encouraged to enter science and technology, whether vocational and occupational pathways are genuinely open to her, and whether she can see women occupying positions of leadership in the system educating her.

This is particularly significant in a sector in which women are not only the majority of educators but increasingly occupy important leadership positions. At national level, the sector is politically led by the Minister of Basic Education, Siviwe Gwarube, and Deputy Minister Dr Reginah Mhaule. Across provinces, districts and schools, women serve as MECs, heads of department, district directors, principals, teachers and specialists.

That representation matters. A girl who sees a woman leading a school, managing an education district, or shaping national education policy receives an important message: leadership is also a space where she belongs.

But representation at the top must be matched by opportunity through-



Role model: The journey of young footballer Nobahle Mdelwa provides a powerful example of how a girl's future must be determined by her ability and aspirations, writes Mathanzima Mveli, Director-General of the Department of Basic Education. Photo: Instagram

out the system.

One of the most basic requirements is ensuring that girls can participate in schooling with dignity. Menstrual health remains an education issue because when a learner does not have reliable access to menstrual products, appropriate sanitation or information, something entirely natural can result in discomfort, anxiety and lost learning time.

The government's sanitary dignity interventions, together with partnerships involving civil society and the private sector, therefore have significance beyond the provision of sanitary products. They are about protecting a girl's dignity and her uninterrupted participation in education. Our ambition should be uncomplicated: no girl should miss school because she is menstruating.

The same principle of participation must extend into the classroom and into the skills that will define the future economy.

Initiatives such as African Girls

Can Code expose young women to coding, robotics, artificial intelligence and digital skills. These programmes are important because they challenge the persistent idea that technology, engineering and innovation are predominantly male spaces.

Technology creators

When a girl learns to code, she should not simply celebrate the acquisition of a technical skill. We should recognise that she is beginning to imagine herself differently — as a programmer, engineer, entrepreneur or innovator capable of creating the technologies South Africa will need.

This is also why diversifying learning pathways is so important.

There should be nothing unusual about a girl choosing electrical technology, engineering, agriculture, automotive studies or another technical or occupational field. Equally, she should be able to pursue coding, science, hospitality, the arts, entrepreneurship or an academic pathway.

Across South Africa, there are thousands more young girls with similar potential. Some will excel in football, netball, athletics, rugby and other sporting codes. Others will discover their abilities in laboratories, coding clubs, workshops, classrooms and cultural activities.

Our responsibility is to ensure that those opportunities exist and that girls are encouraged to take them.

Yet none of these opportunities can be meaningful if girls do not feel safe.

Keep girls safe

Protecting girls from sexual harassment, gender-based violence, exploitation and abuse remains fundamental to their educational participation. Through the National School Safety Framework and the broader work undertaken with provinces, schools, law-enforcement agencies, and social-sector partners, we must continue to strengthen environments in which girls can learn without fear.

This responsibility cannot rest with women alone. Men and boys must be active participants in building a culture that respects the dignity and equality of women and girls.

Ultimately, our ambition must extend beyond simply ensuring that girls are enrolled in school. South Africa has made important progress in educational access.

The next frontier is ensuring agency, participation and opportunity.

- A girl must be able to code.
- She must be able to build and design.
- She must be able to choose vocational and occupational subjects.
- She must be able to compete on the sports field.
- She must be able to manage her menstrual health without sacrificing learning time.
- She must be safe.
- And she must be able to lead.

Somewhere in a South African school today, a future scientist is sitting in a classroom. A future artisan may be entering a workshop for the first time. A future software developer may be discovering coding. A future Banyana Banyana player may be kicking a football on a school field. And a future principal, Director-General or Minister may simply be a young girl discovering that her voice matters.

Our task is to ensure that her circumstances and gender never become limits on her ambition. That is perhaps the most meaningful way in which the basic education sector can honour Women's Month: not only by celebrating the women who have led us, but by deliberately creating the conditions for the girls who will lead South Africa next.

Mathanzima Mveli is Director-General, Department of Basic Education

Higher Education

Time for a reset of the post-school education system

BUTI MANAMELA

My first year in office has given me an opportunity to reflect on why this is the right time for a fundamental reset of South Africa's post-school education and training (PSET) system. The challenges facing universities, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges, community colleges, Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) and student funding institutions are systemic and require a coordinated response.

I recently addressed the Distinction Dialogue, hosted by the National Press Club at the University of South Africa Graduate School of Business Leadership under the theme “Resetting the PSET sector: Governance and the Road Beyond Administration”. The discussion provided an opportunity to reflect on what has gone wrong in the sector and what needs to change to ensure public investment delivers meaningful outcomes.

The dialogue took place as the administrations of the Services SETA, the Construction Education and Training Authority (CETA), and the Local Government SETA (LGSETA) approached their transition or end points in August 2026. The College of Cape Town had also submitted its six-month administration report as part of a two-year administration period, while the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), placed under administration in May, had reported to Parliament on its first three months before a High Court ruling suspended the administrator's operation.

These interventions must be understood in the context of the broader challenges facing the PSET system. While I do not believe these challenges constitute a crisis, they require a systemic response and a clear plan for transforming TVET and community colleges.

The integrated data system is particularly important. The government needs to know when students enter the PSET system, what benefits they receive, what they are being trained for, and what happens to them afterwards. It's a project that is quite ambitious, but we're very much committed to integrating the data systems, which we believe will give us better insight into the system and solve several problems.

We must also ask whether NSFAS, in its current form, remains the best model for funding students. We need an optimal and sustainable way to

provide financial support.

The department achieved only 49% of its planned targets in the 2024/25 financial year, despite spending 99.1% of its final appropriation. That has to change. These figures are not simply statistics. Every missed target affects a person — a student who did not receive an allowance, someone who did not receive a certificate, or someone who lost an opportunity to complete their education and enter the workplace. Money has to go into outcomes.

Sustainable student funding

We must also confront the sustainability of universities, as student funding pressures and debt threaten institutions if they are not addressed. The financial pressure on NSFAS has grown significantly since the implementation of fee-free higher education in 2018, with the current shortfall estimated at about R15 billion, compared with R13.5 billion the previous year. Additional funding for student support has implications for the wider education and training system, as the government has had to reprioritise funding from the National Skills Fund and SETAs.

The urgency of developing a sustainable student funding model cannot be underestimated. We should not simply focus on fixing NSFAS's immediate problems but consider what a completely redesigned funding system should look like. “We need to go to ground zero with regard to NSFAS while we are fixing what currently exists.”

The ultimate objective is simple: students must receive funding on time, institutions must be paid on time, and students must have access to safe and adequate accommodation.

Skills linked to employment

The second major priority is skills delivery, with the skills revolution expected to become the spine of the department's work. Every rand spent on training, whether by a SETA, TVET college or a university, should ultimately contribute to employment.

I am calling on SETAs, the National Skills Fund, and employers to expand work-integrated learning so students can gain practical workplace experience, and I am engaging businesses to open their workplaces to apprentices and students. By the start of next year, I would like to have signed up 100 major employers for work-integrated learning opportunities.

The PSET system should also allow students to move between different types of institutions. A student should

be able to enter through a community college, continue, where appropriate, through a TVET college, and eventually enter a university.

The rationalisation of SETAs is also inevitable because the current system is duplicative and inefficient. SETAs should cooperate on basic services while maintaining their focus on the industries they are mandated to serve. This work should begin before the expiry of the current licences in March 2030.

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The time has come to reset PSET so that every rand invested delivers meaningful outcomes and every student has a genuine pathway towards a productive future. — Minister of Higher Education and Training Buti Manamela

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Strengthening TVET and community colleges

TTVET and community colleges need to become more visible and better understood as essential parts of the PSET system. South Africans generally understand the role of universities, but there is less public understanding of what community and TVET colleges are intended to provide. Modernisation cannot simply mean new buildings and improved infrastructure — it must also include programmes that respond to economic and community needs.

I am reminded of young people who started an agricultural enterprise after losing their jobs during the Covid-19 pandemic. They undertook short, modular skills programmes and subsequently contributed to their local economy while creating opportunities through internships and apprenticeships. This demonstrated how different institutional types can contribute to local economic development when skills programmes respond directly to community needs.

A reset PSET system must cater for people across different age groups and provide multiple pathways through education and training. The department has conducted an extensive diagnostic of TVET colleges to de-



Daunting task: Minister of Higher Education and Training Buti Manamela told the Distinction Dialogue that changes were needed in the PSET sector to ensure public investment delivers meaningful outcomes. Photo: Eddie Mtsweni

termine the challenges facing the sector, though we must be careful not to draw broad conclusions from individual cases. We also need to understand the requirements of TVET lecturers, who require both technical knowledge of the subjects they teach and an understanding of teaching theory, and the department must provide the necessary support.

Stronger institutions and leadership

Our reset must also address the financial sustainability of universities. Student debt and inconsistent funding remain significant challenges, while historically disadvantaged institutions continue to experience inequalities within the university system. Beyond funding, differentiation and institutional sustainability require continued attention.

Governance and leadership development are equally important. The government has been discussing a possible institute for governance and leadership to help people appointed to councils and other structures understand their responsibilities, including legislation, policy, institutional mandates, and stakeholder roles. Leadership development should extend beyond senior management to student leaders, trade unions, and others who influence the sector's direction. The

department has worked with UNISA on a programme for senior TVET executives, which should be expanded to include community education and training colleges.

A system focused on outcomes

South Africa faces widespread unemployment, with millions of young people not in employment, education or training. The PSET system therefore has to address the weak relationship between training and employment. The next phase of the department's work must move from individual interventions towards structural changes across the system.

The objective is not simply to administer institutions but to build a coherent PSET system that is financially sustainable, properly governed, responsive to students' needs and connected to the world of work. It is a daunting task, but it needs to be undertaken.

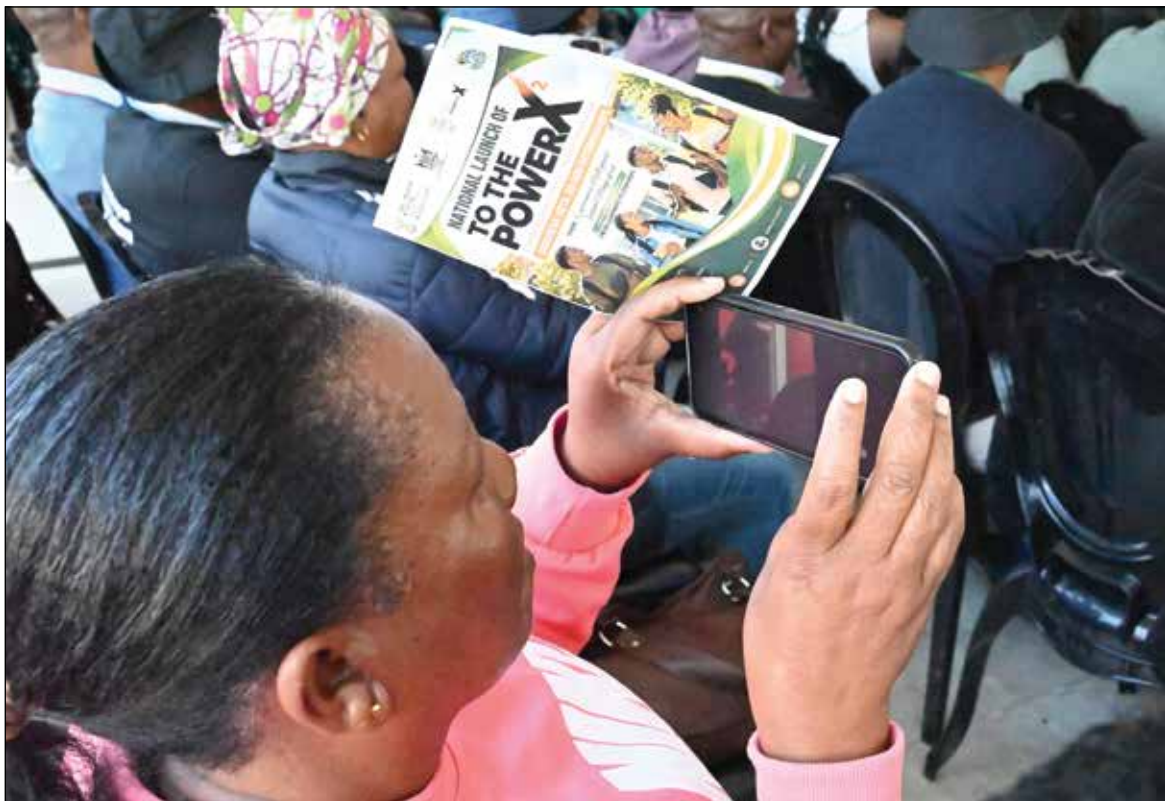
The time has come to reset PSET so that every rand invested delivers meaningful outcomes and every student has a genuine pathway towards a productive future.

Buti Manamela is the Minister of Higher Education and Training. This is an edited version of an address he gave at the Distinction Dialogue.



Advertorial

Services SETA turnaround unlocks billions for skills and youth opportunities



Attentive audience: Beneficiaries and family members at the launch of the Power of X² internship programme. Photo: Eddie Mtsweni

Administrator Lehlogonolo Masoga says the institution is stabilising and gradually returning to its former strength

CHARMAINE NDLELA

Services Sector Education and Training Authority (Services SETA) Administrator Lehlogonolo Masoga says the organisation is undergoing a major turnaround, with billions of rand previously locked in commitments now being unlocked to fund education, skills development and employment opportunities for young South Africans.

In an exclusive interview with *Inside Education* following the launch of the SETA's Power of X² internship programme, Masoga said stabilising the organisation's operations and restoring its efficiency had been central to his administration, with the ultimate goal of returning Services SETA to its former strength.

He said much of the turnaround work had taken place behind the scenes, particularly around governance, but that its impact was now becoming visible through the scale of programmes and investments being rolled out.

"Those are the things that you may not see with the naked eye. But I'm happy because we have managed to turn around the institution from a governance perspective," he said.

Masoga revealed that the Services SETA had previously been sitting on

about R3.4 billion that could not be used because of locked-in commitments.

"Now we have unlocked that money. And that is why we are able to spend this money to make a difference in the lives of our people," Masoga said.

The latest commitment is the R2.9 billion Power of X² programme, which aims to place 20,000 unemployed university and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college graduates into structured workplace learning over 24 months.

Masoga's plans extend beyond the internship programme. The Services SETA has already invested about R1.3 billion to support students, including R800 million for TVET colleges and R500 million for universities.

The organisation has also committed funding to skills and innovation initiatives, including partnerships with universities. Among these is a partnership with the University of Cape Town to establish a research centre focused on developing skin products designed to find solutions to African problems.

The Services SETA is also partnering with Wits University, where it has invested about R84 million in a technology-driven incubation facility to develop ICT-focused intrapreneurs.

Masoga said a further R90 million had been invested across the coun-

try's nine community colleges, while another R2.5 billion is earmarked for new training initiatives.

However, he cautioned against viewing the turnaround as complete. The Services SETA has "started a process" to stabilise the institution through new internal controls, policy reviews, and efforts to change its organisational culture.

"Turning the corner is a process. It is not an event," Masoga said, stressing that the reforms needed to be sustained to ensure the organisation remained on a sound footing.

"When governance processes are in place, it becomes easier to initiate these initiatives that touch the lives of ordinary people and make a difference in their lives," he said.

The next phase of the turnaround will include strengthening the organisation's leadership structures. The Services SETA is in the process of appointing a CEO, CFO and executive management team, while Masoga said the organisation also needs a competent board to provide long-term strategic direction. "The Services SETA of yesterday cannot be the Services SETA of tomorrow," he said.

The organisation has also initiated two research projects to understand both its own impact and the broader service economy. One study will assess the long-term impact Services SETA has had over the past 25 years, while another will examine what constitutes the country's service sector.

Masoga said this was important because the boundaries of the sector, which stretches from banking to policing, are not always clear, despite services being embedded across almost every part of the economy.

"Everywhere else across the value



Test of success: Delivering his keynote address at the launch, Minister of Higher Education and Training Buti Manamela said the success of the initiative would ultimately depend on whether it moves graduates from qualifications into meaningful work. Photo: Eddie Mtsweni

chain in the economic sector, there is service; everywhere you go, there is service, so that is why our sector becomes one of the largest in the economy also in terms of contribution to GDP," he said.

Defending the SETA model

Masoga pushed back strongly against calls to shut down SETAs, arguing that scrapping the institutions would ultimately hurt poorer South Africans while benefiting large businesses.

"Closing the Services SETA would not help anyone. It would disadvantage the poor and benefit big business. I don't think that's the direction that this country wants to take because that approach is not transformational; it's a more elitist and selfish approach," he said.

While acknowledging that the SETA model could be reviewed to improve efficiency and effectiveness, Masoga rejected calls to dismantle the institutions altogether. "When you say let's shut down, I don't think that's fair; we need the SETAs," he said.

Bridging the education-to-employment gap

Lunched at the Mahikeng Hotel School in the North West under the theme "Experience Multiplied. Impact Magnified", the R2.9 billion Power of X² programme seeks to bridge the gap between education and employment by providing graduates with practical workplace experience, mentorship and industry exposure, while creating a pipeline of skilled workers for employers.

Delivering his keynote address at the launch, Minister of Higher Education and Training Buti Manamela said the success of the initiative would ultimately depend on whether it moves

graduates from qualifications into meaningful work.

"The test begins after today, and it is a simple test. Does this programme take a young person who has completed a qualification, place them in real work under proper supervision, and move them into employment or enterprise?" Manamela said.

He said South Africa could no longer treat access to education as the end goal when many qualified young people remained locked out of the labour market because they lacked workplace experience.

"A young person can complete a qualification and then spend years being told they lack experience, without anyone explaining how experience is acquired if no employer provides the first opportunity," he said.

Manamela said the programme would mobilise approximately 3,000 employers nationally, including government departments, municipalities, public entities, state-owned companies, private businesses and small enterprises. An initial cohort of 1,000 placement-ready graduates has also been made available to Premier's offices in all nine provinces.

He called on employers to open their workplaces to graduates and provide meaningful work, capable mentors and opportunities to gain practical skills.

"Employers cannot remain at the end of the skills pipeline, waiting to receive a finished product. They must become co-producers of skills, helping design programmes, mentoring young people and considering them for available positions," Manamela said.

He warned that placements should not become a revolving door where young people repeatedly enter public-



Advertorial



On track: Speaking at the launch of the Power of X² internship programme, Masoga said the Services SETA had started a process to stabilise the institution through new internal controls, policy reviews, and efforts to change its organisational culture. Photo: Eddie Mtsweni

ly funded programmes without progressing into employment. "A young person must leave with more than a line on a CV," he said.

Manamela also highlighted the importance of strengthening the TVET sector and ensuring that young people gain both theoretical knowledge and practical workplace experience. He said South Africa needed skills across sectors, including the digital economy, services, finance and logistics, as well as occupational trades such as plumbing, electrical work, welding, mechanics and other technical occupations.

From internship to employment

Following the launch, Manamela and Masoga addressed the media and provided further details on implementation.

Manamela told the 20,000 participants who will benefit from Power of X² to approach their internships as an opportunity to prove themselves to potential employers.

"To the 20,000 graduates watching, treat this as a job because it's basically an audition for a job. It's more than an interview," Manamela said.

He urged graduates to arrive on time, perform their tasks diligently and listen to their mentors. "You've been let into the workplace to experience what it means to be working," he said.

He said graduates should use the opportunity not only to gain experience but also to identify possibilities for permanent employment, entrepreneurship or further study. Manamela also challenged companies to open their workplaces as training spaces.

"What's one thing you want companies to do differently after today? Well, let's open up our workplaces as learning spaces," he said.

Factories, offices, hotels, kitchens and other workplaces could all provide valuable learning environments for young graduates, he said.

Manamela acknowledged that the programme was being launched against a backdrop of high graduate unemployment, which he linked closely to weak job creation. "We don't obviously want to give false hope, but I think what is important is that this is an internship; it's an intervention facilitating full-time employment," he said.

"The fact that a graduate is unemployed is not their fault. It's because the economy has not been producing jobs." He acknowledged concerns about what would happen to graduates who complete the 24-month programme but are not offered permanent employment.

He said that even if a graduate were not immediately absorbed, workplace experience would improve their chances of securing employment when opportunities arose.

"If they're not absorbed, at least they'll be exposed and will stand a

better chance when there is employment available," he said.

He added that the programme had been designed to ensure graduates could be considered for employment opportunities arising within participating workplaces.

Masoga addressed concerns around stipends, assuring prospective interns that funding had already been secured.

"The money is available, and we have appointed a competent project management team that will assist us in disbursing those funds to ensure every learner receives their stipend on the agreed payment date," he said.

He said the Services SETA had strengthened its implementation systems before launching the programme. "We wanted to tighten all the requirements before launching. We're ready now to deliver smoothly," Masoga said.

Each intern will receive a laptop when reporting for duty, which will become their property after completion of the 24-month programme.



Inspired: Bokamoso Shame, a beneficiary of the programme and a BA in Communication graduate, urged fellow beneficiaries to approach the opportunity with discipline, dedication and a willingness to learn. Photo: Eddie Mtsweni

The Services SETA will also use an electronic dashboard to monitor attendance, placements and employment outcomes.

"We have an electronic system that allows us to monitor every learner daily. We've done extensive preparation to ensure we don't repeat the mistakes of the past," Masoga said.

He warned graduates to be vigilant against scams and stressed that no applicant should pay anyone to gain access to the programme.

Masoga said the programme would ultimately depend on cooperation between the Services SETA, employers and graduates.

"This work we're doing is a partnership between three parties. It's ourselves as the Services SETA, the employers and the graduates. We have to work together to make sure that this programme is a success," he said.

Call for more opportunities

North West MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development Madoda Sambatha called on the government and SETAs to consider creating another 20,000 opportunities for young people who do not secure places at universities and other institutions

of higher learning, allowing them to take part in skills programmes.

Speaking at the launch, Sambatha said more than three million young people in South Africa are not in employment, education or training, with young women bearing a significant burden of the country's unemployment crisis.

He said the problem was particularly acute in the North West, despite the province's mineral wealth.

"Our province continues to experience the most localised joblessness and economic inactivity despite its mineral wealth. Having mineral wealth is not the trophy. How mining is done becomes the trophy," Sambatha said.

He argued that mineral wealth must be accompanied by investment in mineral beneficiation, agriculture and manufacturing to generate broader economic opportunities.

Sambatha also highlighted the experience gap facing young people entering the labour market, saying education outcomes do not always

Sambatha said the Services SETA had previously been one of the country's biggest SETAs before experiencing serious challenges but expressed optimism that the organisation was moving towards its former capacity.

He said it had the potential to enrol more than 100,000 learners a year if properly led and directed and praised efforts to restore the institution.

Sambatha called for SETAs to consider setting targets for programmes similar to Power of X², with numbers reflecting according to their capacity, budgets and resources.

The Power of X² should not be viewed as a one-off intervention, he said, but as a model that could be expanded to reach significantly more young people.

Beneficiaries welcome opportunity

Among the beneficiaries is Bachelor of Arts in Communication graduate Bokamoso Shame, who described the programme as a significant opportunity for young South Africans with qualifications who often find themselves locked out of the labour market due to a lack of experience.

Speaking on behalf of beneficiaries across the country at the launch, Shame said the initiative had allowed graduates to move beyond the classroom and demonstrate the value of the knowledge and skills they had acquired through their studies.

"As the youth of this country, I stand with so much pride that this government really cares about us," he said.

He said the Services SETA's investment also sent a message that young people are capable of contributing meaningfully to both the public and private sectors.

"So where you stand as a young person, know that infinite possibilities and these opportunities are for you," he said.

For Shame, the internship is a chance to build professional confidence, gain exposure and understand how his qualification can be applied in the workplace. He urged fellow beneficiaries to approach the opportunity with discipline, dedication and a willingness to learn.

"I'm more than grateful for what the Services SETA has done for me. We are inspired because we want to get into those boardrooms and make a difference. Thanks for this opportunity," he said.

For 30-year-old Lesego Chakane from Alabama, Klerksdorp, in the North West, who holds a short programme qualification in office administration, the opportunity comes after a difficult search for employment following the completion of her qualification.

Chakane said that despite having completed her studies, one of her biggest challenges had been the demand for previous workplace experience, but being selected as a beneficiary brought a strong sense of relief and excitement.

"I was so happy to be selected for this programme considering that North West has a high unemployment rate, especially for graduates," she said.



Happy to be selected: Lesego Chakane holds a short programme qualification in office administration and said the opportunity comes after a difficult search for employment following the completion of her qualification. Photo: Eddie Mtsweni

Teacher's Corner

Dlamini Zuma: From barefoot schoolgirl to Cabinet minister

Education was the weapon that shaped her journey

SIMON NARE

Former Cabinet minister Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma began her schooling journey with a humiliating lesson: she arrived at high school barefoot because her family could not afford a new pair of shoes.

What could have been a source of shame became a motivation “I was the only one in the whole school without shoes — the whole school — and obviously they were laughing at me,” Dlamini Zuma told Inside Education in an interview.

After passing primary school, Dlamini Zuma approached her father, a primary school teacher, expecting him to buy her a new pair of shoes to start high school, as she had outgrown her only pair. Instead, he told her there was no money for shoes. The little money he had was needed for exercise books and pens. “And I said, ‘But how am I going to go to school without shoes? Am I supposed to walk to school barefoot?’ He said, ‘Yes, that is what you are going to do. I just don’t have money,’” she recalled. “My father always told me that education is the only weapon that no one can steal from you, and as a woman, if your husband dies, you would not need to stay [with in-laws] for a plate of food,” she said.

As the eldest child, she was also expected to set an example for her siblings. So, when classmates laughed at her shoes — or the lack of them — she decided to respond through her schoolwork. “I then decided, when they were laughing, that I was going to fix them. I am going to study very hard so that, in the first test, I do better than them and their shoes. And that is what I did. And then I said, ‘Hmm, what did your shoes do for you?’

A difficult path to medicine
Dlamini Zuma wanted to become a lawyer and had selected subjects with that career in mind. Her father,

however, wanted her to become a doctor. She eventually followed his wishes, only to discover during a visit by a school inspector that she had not taken the subjects required to study medicine.

The solution meant starting again. She was advised to attend a new college in the area, where she would have to spend three years doing matric because she needed mathematics and science — subjects she had not previously taken.

The prospect was daunting. She feared that spending three years in matric would lead schoolmates to assume she had failed.

Again, her father gave her a simple answer. He just said to me, ‘So what if they think you failed! You know you have not failed, so why do you care what other people think? You know you didn’t fail!’”

Dlamini Zuma says she was not a top academic achiever but consistently did enough to progress to the next grade. She was also active outside the classroom, participating in debating and drama.

Education and the road to exile after matriculating at Amanzimtoti Training College, Dlamini Zuma faced another difficult decision as she prepared for university.

She was determined to become a doctor but grew concerned after seeing students fail and drop out of medical school, so she created a fallback plan and enrolled in a BSc at the University of Zululand, majoring in zoology and botany, before beginning her medical studies at the University of Natal.

At the University of Zululand, she joined the inaugural South African Students Congress. She became involved in underground ANC activities through SASCO’s outreach programme, which took her to neighbouring countries, including eSwatini.

After she was identified as an active political student, she had to evade apartheid security forces. She was arrested on a minor trespassing charge and, after appearing in court, decided



Key lesson: Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma’s message to learners is that education is the most important thing in their lives and that they must take advantage of the opportunities available to them. Photo: GCIS

to leave South Africa, crossing illegally into Botswana.

Her political activism changed the course of her education, forcing her into exile before she could complete her medical studies. But education remained central to her life.

While in exile in eSwatini, she worked at Mbabane Hospital as a paediatric officer to complete her medical practice and later continued her studies in the United Kingdom before returning to South Africa.

In the democratic government led by former President Nelson Mandela, she became the country’s first minister

of health.

“Education developed me because it gave me tools to analyse; it also gave me information that helped me analyse situations and also to be able to work and look after my family,” she said.

‘Teachers are very important’

Dlamini Zuma holds teachers in high regard, describing them as the second most important influence on a child after parents.

“Teachers are very important, not only in class but also in society,” she said.

Growing up in a village, she said, teachers were among the most respect-

ed people in the community.

For Dlamini Zuma, education was never simply about passing examinations or obtaining qualifications.

It was a means of building independence, developing critical thinking and creating the ability to shape one’s circumstances.

The barefoot girl who feared facing her classmates ultimately became a doctor, an anti-apartheid activist, a Cabinet minister, and one of the most prominent women in South African public life.

Her journey remains anchored in the lesson her father taught her: education is a weapon that cannot be taken away.

My Favourite Teacher Q&A with Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma

Who was your favourite teacher?

I did not have one particular favourite teacher because I changed schools so often. I attended eight primary schools, so I never stayed at one school long enough to develop that kind of attachment. I did, however, have a particular liking for my chemistry lecturer.

Which school did you attend when you matriculated?
I matriculated at Amanzimtoti Training College.

What were your favourite subjects at school?
I loved science, particularly chemistry and biology.

Did your favourite subjects influence your choice of career?
My career path was largely influenced by my father, who wanted me to become a medical doctor.

Why are teachers so important to society?
After parents, teachers are the most important people in shaping a child. They play a very important role in society because they can positively or negatively influence children.

What advice do you have for learners today?
My message to students is that education is the most important thing.

Education and skills allow you to earn a living, get a job or even create jobs. It is very important to have education and skills. That is what I would say to them. They must take advantage of the opportunities available to them.

What advice would you give teachers?
Teachers must understand their position in society and their position in the classroom. They can influence children in one way or another, so they must behave appropriately and encourage learners appropriately. They must make children love education. They must not cause children to lose interest in or the desire to attend school.

Gender-based violence

What must change to prevent SA’s girls from being harmed?

Their freedom should not depend on their ability to anticipate every danger

ANZIO JACOBS
& SNEKE ALUTA

Every August, South Africa celebrates the strength of its women. We speak of resilience, courage and sacrifice. We praise women for holding families and communities together under difficult circumstances.

These tributes are well-intentioned. Too often, though, we celebrate women and girls for carrying burdens that should never have been placed on them.

Through the Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund’s Girl Power Project Against Violence, we engaged more than 17,000 women and girls in the 2025/26 financial year. They speak about unsafe streets and transport, harassment at school, violence in their communities and abuse in digital spaces.

There is another, less visible burden in these accounts. From an early age, girls are made to feel responsible for preventing the violence that may be inflicted upon them.

They are told to be careful about where they go, what they wear, how they speak, whom they trust and what they share online. They learn to change their routes, restrict their movements and constantly assess the behaviour of others. Their safety becomes something they are expected to manage.

When harm occurs, attention too easily turns to the girl’s choices. Why was she there? Why did she trust that person? Why did she share the photograph? Why did she not report it sooner?

We should rather be asking: Who created the conditions in which this harm was possible? Which adult, institution or system failed to act? And what must change to prevent another child from being harmed?

The girls participating in the Girl Power Project show remarkable insight into the dangers around them. They understand power, coercion and risk with a sophistication no child should need to acquire so young.

However, a girl who knows how to avoid danger is not necessarily empowered. She may simply have learned that the systems around her cannot be trusted to protect her.

We cannot place a girl in an unsafe environment, teach her how to navigate it, and call the outcome “empowerment”. The responsibility must extend beyond the child.

children surveyed identified schools as their main source of support, highlighting the critical role of teachers and schools.

Through Safe to Learn, teachers are equipped to safeguard children and appropriately refer incidents. In Delft, Child Protection Forum partners strengthened duty-bearing capacity and access to statutory services. In Lusikisiki and Thaba Nchu, multi-sectoral Child Protection Forums have also been revived to protect women and children together.

The same pattern is increasingly visible in digital spaces. Online platforms offer young people opportunities to learn, connect and express themselves, but they can also expose girls to harassment, coercion, stalking, threats and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images. Once again, the dominant response is often to tell girls to be more careful: strengthen privacy settings, share less, block offenders and stay away from certain spaces.

Digital safety

A child should not carry the primary responsibility for making a global digital platform safe. Technology companies must make child safety a fundamental part of product design. Harmful content must be reported and removed quickly. Perpetrators must face meaningful consequences. Parents, teachers and children need reporting mechanisms that are accessible, responsive and easy to understand.

The test should not be whether a girl behaved cautiously enough. It should be whether the systems surrounding her did enough to protect her.

When institutions fall short, women frequently fill the gap. Mothers monitor devices and worry about journeys to and from school. Female teachers become counsellors and first responders. Women-led community organisations support survivors, educate families and intervene where formal systems have failed.

However, women should not have to endlessly compensate for failures in public safety, education, justice, and technology. Nor should we praise them for their strength while leaving the conditions that demand such strength unchanged.

That is why Women’s Month must be more than a celebration of resilience. It must also be a demand for accountability.

Honouring women means properly supporting the people and organisations doing the work of protection. It means ensuring that schools have functioning safeguarding systems, that survivors can report violence without being blamed or dismissed, and that institutions act before harm occurs — not only after a tragedy attracts public attention.

“A girl’s safety is not a reward for being vigilant, obedient, or resilient. It is her right and our collective responsibility. — Anzio Jacobs & Sneke Aluta”

Most importantly, it means listening to girls. The Girl Power Project does not treat girls simply as victims or beneficiaries. It recognises them as people with knowledge, opinions, and the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives. Their voices help us understand not only where danger exists but also how our responses continue to place too much responsibility on those most at risk.

Girls should certainly be encouraged to know their rights, use their voices and claim their power. But their freedom should not depend on their ability to anticipate every danger.

This Women’s Month, let us celebrate courage. But let us also ask why so much courage is required simply to move through the world. A girl’s safety is not a reward for being vigilant, obedient, or resilient. It is her right and our collective responsibility.

Anzio Jacobs & Sneke Aluta are with the Child Safety and Protection Unit at the Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund. An edited version of this article was first published by Sowetan

The girls participating in the Girl Power Project show remarkable insight into the dangers around them. They understand power, coercion and risk with a sophistication no child should need to acquire so young, the authors write. Image: Vecteezy.com



Higher Education

SA’s top-class universities: A global story of excellence and impact

WILLIAM BALOYI

South Africa has built a world-class higher education system that has become a strategic national asset. Our universities are not only recognised among the best globally; they are centres of excellence that drive innovation, strengthen the economy, develop highly skilled graduates and contribute to global knowledge creation.

The growing international recognition of our universities is a story worth celebrating. It reflects the enduring vision of a society where education, knowledge and opportunity are powerful drivers of transformation and progress. This vision was central to the legacy of Nelson Mandela, who recognised education as one of the most important tools for empowering people and building a more equal society.

Today, the strong performance of South African universities in respected global rankings is more than a source of national pride; it reflects the country’s intellectual capital, capacity for innovation and ability to compete on the global stage.

As the country works to accelerate inclusive economic growth and create sustainable opportunities, the achievements of its universities serve as a powerful reminder that investing in knowledge is ultimately an investment in the nation’s future. This is a story of excellence, innovation and national capability.

It reflects the quality of scholarship, research and graduates that South Africa continues to produce, while demonstrating how universities are advancing practical solutions to some of the country’s most pressing development priorities, from energy security and public health to food security, climate resilience and the future of work.

International rankings consistently place our universities among the world’s leading institutions. The University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) has emerged as Africa’s leading university in the 2026 Centre for World University Rankings.

This recognition reflects the uni-

versity’s excellence in research, educational quality, faculty performance, and graduate employability, reinforcing the important role that South African universities play in advancing knowledge, innovation, and development across the continent and beyond.

The University of Cape Town (UCT) continues to receive global recognition for its academic excellence and research impact. In major international rankings, including the 2026/27 US News & World Report Best Global Universities rankings and the QS World University Rankings 2027, UCT is recognised as one of Africa’s highest-performing universities, reflecting its strength in research reputation, academic excellence, international collaboration and graduate outcomes. Together, these achievements demonstrate the depth of excellence within South Africa’s higher education sector and the ability of multiple institutions to compete among the world’s best.

Groundbreaking research

The impact of South Africa’s universities is perhaps best demonstrated through the groundbreaking research they produce, including the work of Wits University public health leader and vaccinologist, Professor Shabir A Madhi, who has been recognised with one of the world’s leading infectious disease honours.

Professor Madhi will receive the 2026 Maxwell Finland Award for Scientific Achievement, a recognition that not only reflects hard work and dedication but also affirms the global significance of South African research in combating some of the world’s deadliest childhood diseases and pandemic threats.

Across the country, revolutionary breakthroughs are emerging through South African research as scholars develop practical solutions to some of the world’s most pressing challenges.

At the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), researchers are leading Africa’s first HIV cure trial, which has shown promising results in enabling some participants to remain virally suppressed without lifelong



New insights: Revolutionary breakthroughs are emerging through South African research as scholars develop practical solutions to some of the world’s most pressing challenges. Photo: Vecteezy.com

antiretroviral therapy, a significant milestone in the global fight against HIV. UKZN researchers are also advancing innovative solutions to improve water quality through cutting-edge chemistry research to remove harmful pollutants from wastewater.

“International rankings consistently place South African universities among the world’s leading institutions.” — William Baloyi, Deputy Spokesperson of the South African Government

Similar contributions are being made at Stellenbosch University, where researchers are advancing work in areas such as renewable energy, agriculture, biotechnology and health sciences. The university’s efforts to develop innovative agricultural technologies, improve food security, and advance sustainable energy solutions demonstrate how research can respond to national priorities while addressing global challenges.

Collaboration with industry

Through collaboration with industry, government and international partners, Stellenbosch University continues to translate scientific knowledge into solutions that support economic development and improve livelihoods.

South Africa’s commitment to impactful research is equally evident at the University of Pretoria (UP), where researchers are making significant contributions in fields including veterinary science, agriculture, engineering and artificial intelligence.

Through the development of solutions that strengthen food security, improve animal health, support disease prevention and advance technological innovation, UP demonstrates how higher education institutions can play a vital role in strengthening communities and building a more resilient economy.

The University of Cape Town is also contributing to solutions for one of South Africa’s most pressing challenges: energy security. Through its Energy Systems Research Group, UCT is conducting groundbreaking research that combines modelling, policy analysis and field-based studies to support evidence-based decision-making on energy transitions in South Africa and the broader region. This work assists policymakers, industry and communities in identifying pathways towards a more sustainable and reliable energy system.

UCT-led researchers have also made important advances in cancer research by studying how cancer cells change in ways that allow them to avoid detection by the immune system. This research could contribute to the development of new cancer treatments, early detection methods and vaccines, while demonstrating how South African scientists are contributing to global efforts to better understand and fight complex diseases.

Open and distance learning

The University of South Africa (UNISA) adds another important dimension to this story by demonstrating how open and distance learning can expand South Africa’s research capacity. In 2025, UNISA produced more than 550 doctoral graduates, highlighting the important role of accessible higher education in developing advanced skills, strengthening research capacity and producing the next generation of scholars and innovators.

Each doctoral graduate represents

new knowledge, innovation and future leadership that can contribute to South Africa, the continent and the world.

The global recognition of South Africa’s excellence in higher education will reach another milestone when the University of Cape Town (UCT) hosts the Times Higher Education World Academic Summit from 29 September to 1 October 2026, marking the first time this prestigious gathering will be held on African soil.

Co-hosted with the University of Bristol, the summit will bring global leaders in higher education, research, policy, business and civil society to South Africa. It is a historic platform to showcase Africa’s contribution to global knowledge and to place South African scholarship at the centre of debates about inclusive, sustainable and future-ready societies.

As South Africa reflects on the remarkable achievements of its universities, we are reminded that education has always been at the heart of building a better society. Nelson Mandela understood that education is a powerful tool for transformation, one that unlocks human potential, expands opportunities and empowers generations to shape their own futures.

Today, South Africa’s universities are carrying this legacy forward. They are not only producing graduates and advancing knowledge; they are solving complex challenges, driving innovation and contributing to the development of a more inclusive and competitive nation.

Their achievements demonstrate that South Africa has the talent, creativity and intellectual capacity to make meaningful contributions to the world.

The success of these institutions is the success of South Africa itself.

Baloyi is the Deputy Spokesperson of the South African Government

Education News

Top achievers recognised at national excellence awards

CHARMAINE NDLELA

Top schools, districts and education leaders were honoured at the 12th National Education Excellence Awards, with the Department of Basic Education recognising achievement in academic performance, school leadership, learner support and innovation across the basic education sector.

Held in Sandton, Johannesburg, in July under the theme “Strong Foundations, Strong Futures”, the awards recognised performance in the 2025 National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations and highlighted the contributions of educators, school leaders, governing bodies, parents and communities to improving learning outcomes.

The Department also highlighted a milestone achieved in the 2025 NSC examinations, when, for the first time, all 75 education districts recorded pass rates of at least 80%. Special ministerial recognition was given to this collective achievement.

The awards were hosted in partnership with Canva Africa, which has also partnered with the South African Council for Educators on initiatives to expand educators’ access to the Canva for Education programme, training, digital skills, and classroom resources. Canva Africa Lead Bianca Sibiyi said the initiative aims to strengthen digital teaching and learning through practical resources for educators.

Delivering the keynote address, Deputy Minister of Basic Education Dr Reginah Mhaule described the awards as a national affirmation of the resilience and commitment of South Africa’s education sector.

“Today is far more than an award ceremony; it is a national affirmation that despite immense challenges in the sector and government as a whole, South Africa’s education system continues to rise because of the commitment, professionalism and unwavering dedication of those gathered here today,” she said.

Drawing on her own experience as a former teacher, Mhaule paid tribute to educators, principals, district officials and communities who continue to support learners despite significant challenges. She reflected on the disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, when many learners endured rotational timetables and interrupted curriculum coverage.

“Yet they emerged stronger because of our educators and district leadership,” she said, praising districts that have embraced professional learning communities, evidence-based decision-making, collaborative leadership

and continuous improvement. “Our best-performing districts and schools have shown us that excellence is not accidental; it is intentional.”



Well done! Proud winners at the Department of Basic Education’s 12th National Education Excellence Awards — (from left) ZA Magagula, LS Maseko, Peter Magagula, VR Shabangu and Chukudu Manyabeane. Photo: DBE/Facebook

and continuous improvement. “Our best-performing districts and schools have shown us that excellence is not accidental; it is intentional.”

Mhaule also acknowledged the role played by partners including the Education Labour Relations Council, the National Education Collaboration Trust, teacher unions, NGOs, development partners and philanthropic organisations. Closing her address, she reminded recipients that excellence is an ongoing journey. “You are not simply recipients of awards. You are custodians of our nation’s future,” she said.

District and school honours

Johannesburg West Education District took first place in the Bachelor-pass category, followed by Umlazi Education District in KwaZulu-Natal and Tshwane South Education District in Gauteng. Speaking to *Inside Education*, Chief Education Specialist for Institutional Support and Partnerships in Johannesburg West, Strini Naidoo, said the award represented far more than examination statistics.

“For us, the results are not just a percentage. It’s about the children’s lives that we are changing and the impact we’re having on families,” he said, adding that the district measures success not only through pass rates but also by increasing Bachelor passes and distinctions.

Naidoo attributed the district’s success to strong collaboration among teachers, principals, officials, governing bodies, parents, community or-

ganisations, the SAPS, the Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department and other stakeholders, and said the long-term strategy extends beyond Grade 12 intervention. “We’re putting systems in place across all grades so that learner support becomes sustainable,” he said.

“Our best-performing districts and schools have shown us that excellence is not accidental; it is intentional.” — Deputy Minister of Basic Education Dr Reginah Mhaule

The Eden and Central Karoo Education District received first place for Excellence in District Leadership and Management, ahead of Joe Gqabi Education District in the Eastern Cape and Lejweleputswa Education District in the Free State. District Director Jewel Jonkers described the recognition as validation of the district’s Vision 100 strategy, grounded in values-driven, learner-centred and data-informed decision-making. “This recognition is a milestone, not a destination,” he said.

Metro Central Education District was recognised for excellence in district support for primary learning outcomes, followed by uMgu-

ngundlovu Education District and Mangaung Metro Education District for strategies strengthening Grade R practices and reading outcomes from Grade R to Grade 6.

Mpumalanga received national recognition after Thandanani Primary School placed third nationally for School Upkeep and Maintenance, following earlier provincial recognition for cleanliness and environmental stewardship. The Mpumalanga Department of Education said the award affirmed that “excellence begins with taking pride in schools”.

Dannhauser Primary Full-Service School was named the country’s leading full-service school, followed by Trio Primary Full-Service School and Mandela Park Full-Service School. In the primary facilities category, Jonguhlanga Primary School took top honours, with Floradene Primary School and Thandanani Primary School also recognised. Mvenyane Secondary School won the secondary facilities category, ahead of !Xunkhwesa Combined School and Vredendal Secondary School.

Gateway subjects and district size

Districts were also recognised for participation and achievement in gateway subjects. Tshwane South Education District took first place in Accounting, ahead of Ehlanzeni and Nkangala Education Districts, both in Mpumalanga. Gauteng Department of Education spokesperson Onwabile Lubhelwana said the district’s success was built on sustained

teacher development and support from the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants, alongside healthy learner competition and QR-code learning booklets.

Tshwane South also took first place in Mathematics, ahead of Metro North Education District in the Western Cape and Johannesburg North Education District. Lubhelwana said changing learner attitudes towards the subject played a central role, with subject advisors training teachers and experienced educators mentoring novices from Grade 9.

Cape Winelands Education District took first place in Physical Sciences, followed by Tshwane South and Metro North.

Among districts serving up to 400 schools, Johannesburg West took first place, followed by Tshwane South and Johannesburg North. Among those serving more than 400 schools, Pinetown Education District secured first place, ahead of Ugu and uMkhanyakude Education Districts. Sarah Baartman Education District was named South Africa’s Most Improved District, ahead of John Taolo Gaetsewe and Bohlabela Education Districts.

Quintile winners

Outstanding public secondary schools were recognised across the five school quintiles, allowing schools in broadly comparable socioeconomic circumstances to compete.

In Quintile 1, Magotshwa Secondary School secured first place, followed by Highveld Secondary School and Macingwana Secondary School. Mshadza Secondary School topped Quintile 2, with Moreko Secondary School second and Xolilizwe Secondary School third. The Centre of Science and Technology claimed top honours in Quintile 3, ahead of Den-dron Secondary School and Soqhayisa Senior Secondary School. Menzi High School led Quintile 4, followed by Potchefstroom Gimnasium and Hoërskool Middelburg. In Quintile 5, Anton Lembede MST Academy was named the top performer, with Hoër Meisieskool Bloemhof and Westerford High School taking second and third place.

Closing the ceremony, Department of Basic Education Director-General Mathanzima Mweli challenged districts not to become complacent after achieving record-breaking results, urging top-performing districts to strive towards an NSC pass rate exceeding 90%.

“True excellence is measured not by surpassing others, but by continually surpassing yesterday’s achievements,” he said.

Travel

South Africa: Your summer holiday starts here

SIMON NARE

Summer is rolling into South Africa, and after a punishing winter, the country is ready to exhale. As temperatures rise and holidaymakers begin planning their escapes, there is little need for a boarding pass or passport. Some of the country's most spectacular destinations are waiting just a road trip away.

From Cape Town's sandy white beaches, giant granite formations and dramatic mountain backdrops to Durban's warm Indian Ocean, golden shores and vibrant skyline, South Africa offers an extraordinary variety of holiday experiences.

Then there is the iconic Kruger National Park, with its vast savannas, winding rivers and dense bushveld, where mornings can begin with elephants gathered at a waterhole and end beneath a sky crowded with stars.

It is little wonder that South Africa remains one of the world's most sought-after tourist destinations. As tourism continues its recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, the message for locals is simple: stop dreaming about faraway destinations and hit the road this summer.

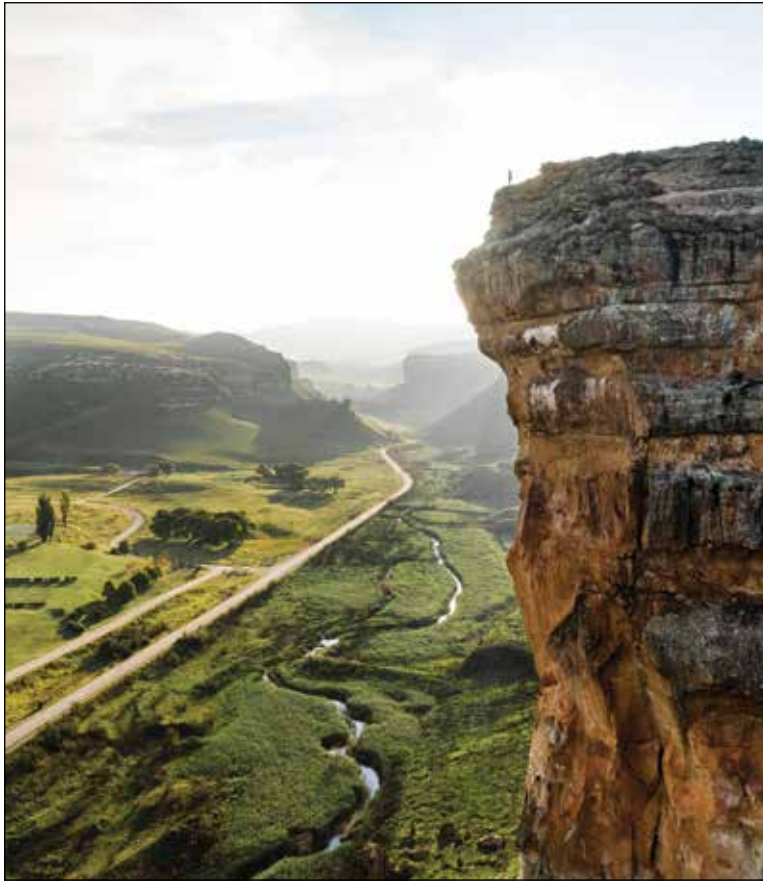
From sunrise surf in Jeffreys Bay to vineyard sunsets in Stellenbosch; from the rugged cliffs of the Wild Coast to Big-Five mornings in the Lowveld; and from the towering sandstone cliffs of the Golden Gate Highlands National Park to the country's beaches, mountains and bushveld, the perfect getaway may require nothing more than a full tank, a long weekend and good company.

Kruger: the ultimate reset
Spanning almost two million hectares, the world-renowned Kruger National Park is a vast wilderness where every drive can reveal something unexpected.

One moment you may be watching elephants at a waterhole; the next, you are following a dusty track into a quieter corner of the park, discovering community-run camps, local guides and landscapes far removed from the crowds.

Kruger is home to the Big Five, but summer temperatures can be intense. Choosing the right time for game drives is essential, particularly if you are hoping to see as many animals as possible.

South African National Parks spokesman JP Louw told Inside Education that SANParks offers a range of permanent discounts, seasonal promotions and loyalty rewards to encourage South Africans to explore



the country's national parks. These include concessions for senior citizens and discounts for registered travel groups and stokvels at selected parks.

SANParks also runs annual and seasonal promotions, including National Parks Week, when South African citizens can access free day entry to most national parks, usually during a week in September.

There are also periodic last-minute specials, with discounts of up to 50% on selected accommodation, camping and wilderness trail openings.

Holiday closer to home
South African Tourism is also encouraging locals to explore the country through its domestic tourism campaign, "Gimme Summer that Sho't Left", which promotes a lordable local travel through discounted accommodations, flights and outdoor activities.

Travellers are encouraged to book early, particularly during the busy summer period. Some wildlife lodges also offer reduced rates to local residents, including discounts on game drives, luxury accommodation and wilderness experiences. And there is plenty beyond the country's best-known destinations.

Mountains meet the Lowveld
Mpumalanga is packed with spectacular landscapes and less-explored destinations — a province where mist can roll over the escarpment early

Happy holidays: South Africans can enjoy a variety of great holiday destinations at home, ranging from the sunny beaches of Durban, the Kruger National Park, the magnificent Blyde River Canyon and the Golden Gate National Park. Photos: South African Tourism

in the morning, and within minutes the landscape can transform completely.

One moment you are driving along a tarred road; the next you are standing at Graskop's God's Window. Perched on the edge of a dramatic escarpment, God's Window offers sweeping views over the Lowveld.

The Panorama Route is made for road trips, winding along the Drakensberg Escarpment and offering one spectacular stop after another. The region is famous for its waterfalls, deep valleys, dramatic rock formations and expansive views. It is also home to the Blyde River Canyon, its cliffs cloaked in subtropical vegetation.

Limpopo's secret garden
Magoebaskloof has become something of a secret garden for travellers looking beyond the usual tourist circuit. If Kruger is the headline attraction, Magoebaskloof is the footnote many visitors wish they had read first. You do not end up in Magoebaskloof by accident. You turn off the N1, climb into the mist and watch the temperature drop. Suddenly, pine forests, waterfalls and tea plantations



replace the surrounding bushveld.

One day can be spent zip-lining through indigenous forest; the next tubing down the Letaba River, tasting craft beer at Zwakala Brewery, visiting the organic cheese farm at Wegraakbosch or hiking to Debegeni Falls.

The bushveld on pause
For those who want to get even closer to nature, the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve offers another compelling escape.

Covering about 650,000 hectares in Limpopo, the biosphere is recognised as the only savannah biosphere reserve in Southern Africa.

No crowds are competing for the perfect photograph. Instead, there are red rocks, fever trees and the constant sound of cicadas.

It feels as though the bushveld has pressed pause, despite being only about two and a half hours from Johannesburg. The Waterberg occupies a sweet spot between adventure and relaxation. Visitors can spend the morning on a walking safari with a tracker who can read the smallest signs left by wildlife, cool off beside a pool in the

afternoon and head out on an evening game drive as the stars emerge.

You don't have to go far
South African Tourism's Sho't Left campaign makes a simple argument: summer is the perfect time to escape city life without necessarily leaving the country. "You don't need to travel far for an exotic experience; Mzansi has it all — game drives, beaches and more," the campaign says.

It highlights the country's road network and domestic airline connections as making local travel accessible, while encouraging South Africans to experience the country's combination of bush, beach and mountains.

"Bush, beach and berg — Mzansi has it all," the campaign says, pointing to everything from sunny hikes and warm fires to mountain escapes and wildlife experiences. But there is a catch. Summer and the festive season are among the busiest travel periods, and affordability can be a major barrier for local holidaymakers.

South African Tourism therefore recommends considering off-peak travel, particularly from mid-January onwards.

Women's Month

A special edition to honour the pioneering women who marched for freedom in 1956 and those who are now making their mark on the economy, education, justice, entertainment and sport

The day 20,000 women marched on Pretoria

MARTHA EVANS

At daybreak on 9 August, 1956, Helen Joseph collected Lilian Ngoyi and Sophia Williams, and together they drove through the streets of Pretoria, passing women singing freedom songs. "We felt extremely excited and relieved," Williams recalled. The organisers' hard work had paid off: the women had not let them down.

By 8am, groups had begun to gather around the base of the Louis Botha monument close to the Union Buildings. "There was no space," Ruth Mompati recalled, "there [were] women everywhere. It was something."

Women had also come from everywhere: Annie Silinga and Elizabeth Mafekeng travelled up from Cape Town; Dorothy Nyembe, Fatima Seedat (Rahima Moosa's identical twin sister) and Fatima Meer led a delegation from Natal; and the Port Elizabeth contingent included prominent leaders such as Frances Baard, Lillian Diedericks and Florence Matomela.

The numbers would surely have been higher were it not for banning restrictions and travel complications. The women's dress added to the multiracial, multicultural spectacle. Members of the nursing profession wore their smart white uniforms; many Indian women, following Moosa's lead, were adorned in brightly coloured saris; Ngoyi and others wore the newly designed green and gold Women's League regalia, many of the blouses sewn by Ngoyi herself; churchgoers wore their manyano uniforms; and others dressed in more traditional attire — long skirts, with doeks or berets on their heads.

These sartorial choices formed part of the protest strategy, emphasising the women's affiliations as well as their contributions to society as nurses, mothers and workers. Joseph recalled that although white women were relatively few, there was still sufficient participation to create the impression of diversity and solidarity.

Joseph recalled that although white women were relatively few, there was still sufficient participation to create the impression of diversity and solidarity.

Joseph recalled that although white women were relatively few, there was still sufficient participation to create the impression of diversity and solidarity.

Children on their backs

Almost as a reminder of whom they were protesting for, several women also had young children on

their backs. Some nannies even reportedly brought their white charges. The placards also emphasised the impact the pass extension would have on family life: "Passes mean broken homes" and "Passes mean destitute children."

Mompoti and Bertha Mashaba had been tasked with receiving the protestors and arranging and counting the women's petitions as they arrived. These would be added to those already collected from women who were unable to attend in person. The statement, crafted by the Federation of South African Women, declared their steadfast refusal to accept passes:

"We, the women of South Africa, have come here today. We represent, and we speak on behalf of hundreds of thousands of women who could not be with us, but all over the country at this moment women are watching and thinking of us. Their hearts are with us."

Somehow, the federation had man-

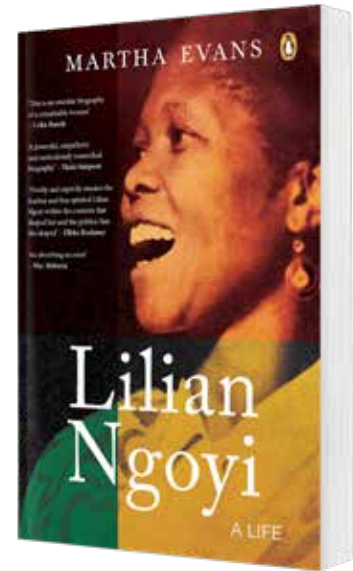
"[All] over the country at this moment women are watching and thinking of us. Their hearts are with us." — Part of the statement by the Federation of South African Women, declaring their steadfast refusal to accept passes, which was printed and distributed at the march

aged to raise enough money to print thousands of copies of the statement. Counting the collected petitions ultimately overwhelmed Mompoti and Mashaba. "We didn't finish counting them," Mompoti later admitted, estimating that the number most likely exceeded 20,000.

Fearing that the police would break up the event, the march leaders grew impatient, and the petitions were eventually handed over to them.



Solidarity: Some of the thousands of women who marched to the Union Buildings on 9 August, 1956. Photo: Facebook



Fearless and free-spirited: The cover of Martha Evans' biography of the anti-apartheid leader and women's rights champion Lilian Ngoyi, one of the four women who led the historic march in 1956.

Shortly after noon, the leaders, Ngoyi, Williams, Moosa, and Joseph, and their deputies, made their way down the central avenue towards the Union Buildings. Women parted for them, forming a long guard of honour before falling in behind them. They walked in a solid column through the gardens, past the war memorial, up the steps and across the terraces to the amphitheatre.

'Mighty roar'

About 2.30pm, Ngoyi and Joseph announced that they would now deliver the petitions to the prime minister's office, eliciting a 'mighty roar' from the crowd, 'which echoed around the buildings'. Before entering, Ngoyi, with sweat running down her temples, felt a wave of fear. This was by far the most expansive and intense protest she had ever led, and it was obvious that Special Branch policemen were out in full force, some even travelling from coastal towns with the demonstrators.

On seeing the size of the gathering,

Ngoyi felt both 'thrilled' and apprehensive as the weight of responsibility dawned on her, making her feel like dropping to her knees. She caught a glimpse of Edith's crying face in the crowd and wondered if she would ever see her daughter again. Then, closely followed by press photographers and cameramen, the four leaders and another five women 'threaded their way slowly through the tightly packed amphitheatre along the verandah'. At the entrance, however, two uniformed door-men barred their way.

No apartheid here

Only white people allowed in here,' one of them announced nervously. 'I see no notice "Europeans Only", Joseph replied. "There is no apartheid here."

After some negotiation, the four leaders and Frances Baard, each carrying a heap of petitions, were granted entry along with a handful of press photographers. Followed by officials and journalists, the women made their way to prime minister JG Strijdom's office, where Ngoyi knocked on the door, only to have his secretary answer with a question, "Didn't you get the letter telling you not to come?" "I did not," Ngoyi replied.

She remembered saying, "The women of Africa are outside. They built this place and their husbands died for this." In another recollection, she claimed she remarked, "The women, mothers and wives of the gold diggers of South Africa are waiting outside to see the prime minister."

"Sorry, he has just left," was the response. The women had no choice but to leave the documents at his door.

Ngoyi noted the resentment she and others felt at Strijdom's dismissive treatment. The march was ten times the size of the previous year's delegation, and the women, from all over the country, had made great personal and financial sacrifices to be there. "We were," she recalled, "very, very angry."

Silent protest

When Ngoyi reappeared on the verandah, she announced to the waiting crowd that a cowardly Strijdom had run away — just as he had done the previous year. This time, however, she called for a silent half-hour protest. The women obeyed, standing in disciplined silence for thirty minutes, some with their arms raised in the Afrika salute.

Several participants remarked on the extraordinary nature of the stillness. "Even the babies stopped crying," women claimed, while Joseph said, "It was such a moving moment of silence."

Afterwards, the women, led by a group from Natal, erupted into song, singing words composed especially for the occasion: "Heyi Strijdom! Wathint' abafazi, wathint' imbokotho uzokufa." The words "Strijdom, you have struck a rock once you have touched a woman" would go on to become the march's legendary slogan for decades.

Maggie Resha remembered Ngoyi concluding the event, her voice echoing "from the walls of the Union Buildings as she cried out: Afrika!" The atmosphere seemed electrified by the power of her voice, and the crowd responded: "Mayibuye!" (May it return!)

The mood at the end of the day was triumphant. Women sang as they dispersed, making their way to bus terminuses and train stations in small groups. By all accounts, the menfolk were full of admiration. "They reached the buses as African men queued after work for transport home," Joseph wrote, "but when they saw the women coming, in their green skirts and blouses, they stood back. "Let the women go first," they said. It was a great tribute from weary men."

• This is an edited version of an excerpt from the biography Lilian Ngoyi: A Life by Martha Evans

Women's Month

Charlotte Maxeke: A legacy of activism and social justice

AKANI NKUNA

A trailblazing anti-apartheid activist and pioneer of women's rights and social justice in South Africa and beyond, Charlotte Mannya-Maxeke remains a towering figure whose lifelong political contributions helped lay the foundation for the democratic South Africa of today.

Born on 7 April 1872 near Fort Beaufort in the Eastern Cape, Maxeke was raised in a family that valued education and the church. Her mother was a teacher, while her father worked as a foreman on road gangs and served as a lay preacher in the Presbyterian Church. She attended primary school in Uitenhage and senior school in Gqeberha (then Port Elizabeth), where she developed an ambition to become a teacher.

Maxeke was also a leader in the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC), the first African woman from South Africa to obtain a Bachelor of Science degree and the first African woman to be appointed as a probation officer.

In 1890, shortly before her family moved to Kimberley, Maxeke and her sister Katy were invited to join the African Jubilee Singers on a tour of Britain. During the tour, the choir was invited to perform for Queen Victoria.

The experience proved transformative. Maxeke encountered students from Wilberforce University in the United States and learned about educational opportunities available to Black students there that were largely inaccessible to Black South Africans. While there, she met Bishop Derrick of the AMEC, who arranged for her to study at Wilberforce University in Ohio.

Maxeke helped create opportunities for other African students to study at the university, including Marshall Maxeke, who would later become her husband.

Her time in the US also influenced the development of the AMEC movement in South Africa. Although she could not become an elder because she was a woman, she served on the missionary committee and was invited to speak on missionary work at

AMEC conferences.

In 1903, Maxeke married Marshall Maxeke, who had by then obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree from Wilberforce. The couple worked together as AMEC missionaries, initially in Polokwane, Limpopo (then called Pietersburg in the Transvaal), and later in Idutywa, Eastern Cape.

Education remained central to the Maxekes' work. In 1908, they established the Wilberforce Institute for the AMEC at Evaton in Gauteng.

Growing influence

As her influence grew, Maxeke was increasingly invited to address public meetings on education, religion and social issues.

Maxeke was a founding member and president of the Bantu Women's League, a forerunner of the ANC Women's League. Her husband had been a member of the ANC from its inception, and she became increasingly involved in the organisation's political work.

After the Maxekes moved to Johannesburg, Charlotte became increasingly involved in social action. She established an employment bureau and worked to address the social problems affecting Black communities in the city.

She was appointed as a probation officer, becoming the first African woman to hold the position. Her work in the courts exposed her to the consequences of family breakdown and the social problems associated with the migrant labour system.

During the 1930s, she continued to address political and social gatherings. In 1935, she attended the All-African Convention in Bloemfontein, where she played a leading role in establishing the National Council of African Women.

Maxeke's activism extended beyond political organisations. She consistently used education, religion and social work as platforms to challenge racial and gender inequality and to expand opportunities for Black South Africans.

Her legacy is therefore not confined to her political activism. She was an educator, church leader, social worker, organiser and advocate for women's rights



Pioneer: Charlotte Mannya-Maxeke led some of the earliest organised resistance against injustice in South Africa, including the first women's protest and the first anti-pass laws march in this country. Photo: Archive

whose work connected struggles for education, racial justice, economic opportunity and political representation.

Maxeke died in 1939, leaving behind a legacy that continues to shape South Africa's understanding of women's leadership and the country's long struggle for freedom and equality.

“*[Maxeke] shaped not only the future of women but also the trajectory of our country, our continent, and indeed the world.*” — Minister in the Presidency Khumbudzo Ntshavheni.

Legacy honoured
To commemorate the 125th anniversary of her graduation, the Charlotte Mannya-Maxeke Institute (CMMI), in partnership with the Presidency, launched the Portraits of Power exhibition at the Union Buildings in Pretoria on 4 August.

The exhibition, which honours Maxeke's legacy and political contributions, was attended by government leaders, diplomats, high commissioners and community leaders.

CMMI Strategic Leader Kimberly Nkuku said the exhibition sought to present Maxeke's life and achievements as a complete narrative, rather than through the fragmented accounts that have often shaped her legacy.

Maxeke was the only woman present at the historic founding of the South African Native National Congress, later known as the African National Congress (ANC), in 1912.

She repeatedly stood out in male-dominated political spaces at a time when women were largely excluded from formal political structures.

Maxeke strongly opposed pass laws restricting the movement of Black South Africans and helped organise anti-pass protests. She also supported protests against low wages on the Witwatersrand and played a role in the formation of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union in 1920.

Role model

Speaking at the launch of Portraits of Power, Minister in the Presidency Khumbudzo Ntshavheni hailed Maxeke's contribution, describing her as a role model whose legacy continues to inspire future generations.

“The 1956 Women's March would not have been possible if Charlotte Mannya-Maxeke had not led the mobilisation and organisation of women to fight for their rights,” Ntshavheni said.

“Maxeke decidedly asserted the need for women's representation in the corridors of power in South Africa ... she shaped not only the future of women but also the trajectory of our country, our continent and indeed the world. It was the leadership of Maxeke that eventually led to the ANC including women in its leadership.”

Ntshavheni said the history of humanity could not be fully told with-

out recognising the role women had played in advancing freedom and human rights.

“We must also acknowledge that the journey to full equality is not yet complete. There remains work to be done to ensure that women everywhere in the world have equal access to opportunities, resources, platforms for leadership and education,” she said.

Ntshavheni described Maxeke as a benchmark from whom the more than 20,000 women who marched on 9 August 1956 drew strength.

“As the only woman who was present when the South African Native National Congress, later known as the African National Congress, was formed in 1912, Charlotte Mannya-Maxeke decidedly asserted the need for women's representation in the corridors of power in South Africa,” Ntshavheni said.

“She went on to become the founding president of two of the most important women-led institutions on the continent, the most popular being the Bantu Women's League, which later evolved into the ANC Women's League in the 1940s.

“It was the leadership of Mme Charlotte Mannya-Maxeke that eventually led the ANC to include women in its leadership.”

“She led some of the earliest organised resistance against injustice, including the first women's protest and the first anti-pass laws march in this country, in Bloemfontein and Winburg. Her life reminds us that courage, conviction and leadership can alter the course of history.”

Women's Month

Williams-de Bruyn: 70 years on, the struggle for women's freedom continues

CHARMAINE NDLELA

Struggle veteran Sophia Williams-de Bruyn has warned that 70 years after she joined thousands of women in a historic march to the Union Buildings against the apartheid pass laws, South African women are still battling gender-based violence, poverty, unemployment and corruption.

Williams-de Bruyn delivered the warning at a commemoration of the historic protest at the Union Buildings in Pretoria on 9 August.

Reflecting on the sacrifices of the women who confronted apartheid, she questioned whether the democratic South Africa they fought for had delivered the country they envisioned.

“Seventy years ago, on the very day, the 9th of August, 1956, 22,000 of us marched to these hallowed grounds, to these Union Buildings, which were then the bastion of apartheid,” she said. “I was only 18 years old then, and many of my compatriots are sadly no longer with us. It has always been an honour to represent the collective leadership of the march and the 22,000 women.”

Williams-de Bruyn said the anniversary should not simply celebrate the past but confront the challenges facing women today.

“But today, as I look at our beautiful country, my heart is heavy. How can we fully celebrate our past victories when our present reality is so deeply disappointing and stressful?” she said.

Her strongest criticism was directed at violence against women and children.

“We fought to banish the past loss, yet today our women are prisoners in their own homes. Gender-based violence continues to cast a dark cloud on our society,” she said. “And every single day I weep for the girl child, the daughters, the mothers and grandmothers who are abused, violated and silenced.”

From factory worker to activist

Williams-de Bruyn's understanding of oppression was shaped by growing up under apartheid and by involvement in trade unions and liberation movements.

Born in 1938 in Villageboard, Port Elizabeth (now Gqeberha), she later left school to work at a textile factory, where she witnessed the difficult conditions workers faced. Colleagues began approaching her to raise concerns with management, and she eventually became a shop steward.

She became an executive member of the Textile Workers Union in Port Elizabeth and developed her political education through interactions with activists including Raymond Mhlaba, Vuyisile Mini and Govan Mbeki. She was also a founding member of the South African Congress of Trade Unions, which preceded COSATU.

Mobilising the women of 1956

In 1955, Williams-de Bruyn was appointed a full-time organiser of the Coloured People's Congress in Johannesburg, working alongside activists including Helen Joseph, Lillian Ngoyi and Rahima Moosa to organise women against apartheid legislation.

The campaign against extending pass laws to women became a defining moment. Williams-de Bruyn recalled how the idea of taking the protest directly to the Union Buildings emerged during discussions among women. The original plan was to remain there for a week, but organisers lacked the resources to accommodate thousands of women, so it became a one-day march.

Mobilisation was carried out without the technology available today. “There were no resources. There was no IT, no phones,” Williams-de Bruyn said. Women relied on meetings, word of mouth, letters and personal networks, raising their own money to



Undaunted: Sophia Williams-de Bruyn, who was just 18 when she marched with thousands of other women to the Union Buildings, said the women's contribution must be honoured every day. Photo: Eddie Mtsweni

travel to Pretoria by selling goods and knitting baby clothes.

By 9 August 1956, women from across South Africa had arrived in Pretoria, some with babies on their backs, not knowing where they would sleep. They gathered at the Union Buildings in an atmosphere Williams-de Bruyn remembered as joyous but disciplined, forming an orderly procession before laying their children on the grass. There was no chaos or shouting; the demonstration was silent and dignified.

“*Fight against poverty and abuse, just like we fought against apartheid. And together let us finish the march we began 70 years ago.*”

Historical accounts generally put the number of participants at about 20,000, although Williams-de Bruyn has referred to 22,000 — women who had sacrificed their time, money, safety and comfort to confront a system that denied them basic freedoms.

An unfinished struggle

Seven decades later, Williams-de Bruyn said that sacrifice cannot be reduced to a ceremonial memory. She used her 2026 Women's Day address to warn that South Africa remains deeply unequal and that poverty disproportionately affects black, young women.

“It is also very disappointing that

democratic South Africa is still the most unequal country in the world,” she said. “The face of poverty and inequality in our country is mainly black, female and young.”

She also criticised the failure to address youth unemployment, particularly as the country marks the 50th anniversary of the 1976 Soweto uprising.

“To see the wealth of our nation stolen by people entrusted with power, while ordinary people starve, while our youth face staggering unemployment, is a profound betrayal,” she said, warning that corruption has consequences far beyond government finances. “When people steal money allocated for education, health, housing and infrastructure, they are in reality stealing education, stealing health and roads.”

Yet she has not abandoned hope, and believes women remain one of the country's greatest sources of strength. “Your courage is the beacon of hope and the light that keeps this country moving forward,” she told women gathered at the Union Buildings.

She challenged political leaders to match the courage of the women of 1956 with honest and accountable leadership. “Cleanse your hands of corruption. Protect our women. Feed our children. Add a moral compass and backbone and match the bravery of 1956 with bold, honest and accountable leadership.”

She called for another march, this time against the problems confronting democratic South Africa: “Let us march forward once more. Not against past loss, but this time against crime and insecurity, poverty, corrup-

tion, unemployment, homelessness, violence and the many, many ills that restrict your future, your safety, your freedom and your prosperity.”

Passing the baton

The woman who stood at the Union Buildings in 1956 as an 18-year-old activist is now 88. Much has changed — the apartheid government is gone, South Africa has a democratic Constitution, and women occupy leadership positions across society. But for Williams-de Bruyn, freedom cannot simply be measured by the political system that replaced apartheid. It must also be measured by whether women can walk safely in their communities, children have access to quality education, young people can find work, and public money reaches those for whom it was intended.

She also called for greater recognition of women whose contributions to the march have been forgotten or insufficiently documented. “This could be your grandmother or any of your relatives,” she said.

“Wathint' abafazi, wathint' imbokodo” — “You strike a woman, you strike a rock” — remains a powerful symbol of the courage of the women who refused to accept oppression as their fate.

Williams-de Bruyn urged younger generations, particularly young women, to continue that struggle. “Do not wait for anyone's permission. Stand up. Use your voice and fight for your future. Fight against poverty and abuse, just like we fought against apartheid. And together let us finish the march we began 70 years ago.”

Women's Month

At the forefront of SA's skills debate

FP&M SETA CEO Dr Felleng Yende is helping to shape the future of skills development, championing a more responsive system that closes the gap between learning, employment and economic opportunity

STAFF REPORTER

Fibre Processing and Manufacturing Sector Education and Training Authority (FP&M SETA) chief executive Dr Felleng Yende is one of the most influential leaders within South Africa's Post-School Education and Training sector, helping to shape the future of skills development in a country confronting a persistent mismatch between the skills people acquire and those required by the economy.

At the heart of that challenge is a difficult contradiction: millions of South Africans remain unemployed and struggle to access meaningful economic opportunities, while employers continue to experience shortages of the skills they need.

For Yende, closing that gap requires more than simply training more people. It requires a skills-development system that is responsive to the economy, closely connected to industry and increasingly focused on where training ultimately leads — employment, entrepreneurship and sustainable economic participation.

Drawing on more than a decade at the helm of the FP&M SETA, Yende has increasingly brought this argument into the national conversation about the future of skills development.

The question underpinning much of her thinking is a fundamental one: Is South Africa developing the right skills for the economy it is building?

From turnaround to sustained performance

Yende's contribution to the national skills-development conversation is grounded in more than a decade of experience leading FP&M SETA through significant organisational change.

When she took over as CEO in 2013, she inherited an organisation facing performance and governance challenges. Over the years, FP&M SETA has strengthened its institutional performance, financial

management and governance, while expanding its contribution to skills development across the diverse industries within its mandate.

Under Yende's leadership, FP&M SETA has built a strong track record of organisational performance and good governance, including back-to-back clean audits, an achievement that reflects the organisation's emphasis on sound financial management, accountability and effective institutional controls.

For Yende, however, institutional performance is about more than achieving targets or favourable audit outcomes. It is underpinned by ethical leadership, accountability and strong governance, principles that also feature prominently in her thinking about how South Africa's broader skills-development system should evolve.

Confronting the skills mismatch

South Africa's skills challenge cannot be separated from its unemployment crisis.

On one side are millions of people seeking opportunities to participate in the economy. On the other are industries looking for the capabilities they require to grow, innovate and remain competitive. Between them



Focused: Dr Felleng Yende is making important contributions to the national skills-development debate. Photo: Eddie Mtsweni

lies a persistent skills mismatch.

Yende's paper, *Adapt or Disappear: Re-engineering SETAs Towards and Beyond 2030*, examines this challenge as part of a broader assessment of South Africa's skills-development architecture.

Her argument is not that South Africa should train fewer people. It is that the country needs to become better at developing the skills the economy actually requires.

As industries change, so do occupations and the capabilities needed

within them. Artificial intelligence, automation and digitalisation are accelerating that transformation, increasing the need for continuous skilling, reskilling and upskilling.

Yende argues that skills-development institutions must therefore become more responsive to labour-market demand and better able to anticipate where industries are heading. Her analysis places considerable emphasis on addressing skills mismatches and strengthening lifelong learning as occupational requirements evolve.

Skills that lead to opportunity

Running through Yende's thinking is another important question: What happens after training?

Access to education and training remains essential. But enrolments, qualifications and programme completions cannot, on their own, tell the full story of whether the skills-development system is succeeding.

The longer-term test must increasingly include whether people



AI future: Yende has emphasised the importance of preparing people for a rapidly changing business environment that includes artificial intelligence and other digital tools. Photo: Vectyeezy.com

Women's Month



Made to measure: The clothing and textile industry is among the 13 FP&M SETA subsectors undergoing transformation under Yende. Photo: Vectyeezy.com

can translate their skills into employment, workplace progression, entrepreneurship and sustainable livelihoods.

That requires stronger connections between the institutions developing skills and the industries expected to use them.

Employers cannot simply be the eventual recipients of people produced by the skills system. They have an important role in identifying emerging skills requirements, creating workplace-learning opportunities and helping to ensure that training reflects economic demand.

This is particularly relevant to FP&M SETA, which operates across 13 subsectors ranging from clothing, textiles, footwear and forestry to furniture, printing, publishing, packaging, pulp and paper industries confronting different forms of technological and structural change.

Yende has consistently emphasised the importance of preparing people for this changing environment. In her previous engagement, she highlighted areas including artificial intelligence, data analysis, cybersecurity and other digital capabilities as increasingly important to the future workplace.

The challenge now is to ensure that the skills system can move at the same pace as the economy it serves.

Adapt or Disappear

The title Yende chose for her paper is deliberately provocative: *Adapt or Disappear*.

Its message applies not only to workers who need to acquire new capabilities for a changing economy but also to the institutions responsible for developing those skills.



Skills match: Yende asks a fundamental question: Is South Africa developing the right skills for the economy it is building? Photo: Vectyeezy.com

Reforming the system from within

Yende has taken those ideas beyond the pages of her paper and into the public policy debate.

In a recent *Sunday Times* article responding to President Cyril Ramaphosa's proposed reforms to the SETA system, she welcomed the prospect of reform rather than defending the status quo.

She argued that an improved SETA model should ultimately produce tangible and measurable results, including stronger employability, economic growth and institutional capability.

Her proposals include addressing duplication and fragmentation, strengthening governance and ac-

countability, improving collaboration between institutions and making better use of technology and shared systems.

Ultimately, she argues, reform should help bridge one of South Africa's most persistent divides — the gap between education and employment.

What makes the intervention particularly significant is that it comes from within the system.

After more than a decade leading a SETA, Yende's argument is effectively that past achievements cannot become a reason to resist future change. Institutions must continually demonstrate their relevance to the economy and to the people they exist to serve.

Leadership beyond the institution

This is perhaps where Yende's leadership story has entered a new phase.

Her record at FP&M SETA demonstrates an emphasis on performance, governance and accountability. Her growing contribution to the national skills conversation, however, looks beyond the performance of a single institution towards the effectiveness of the broader ecosystem.

For South Africa, the stakes are considerable.

A responsive skills-development system can help businesses access the capabilities they require to grow. It can help workers remain relevant as occupations change. And it can create stronger pathways into economic participation for young people, women and communities that continue to experience high levels of unemployment and exclusion.

FP&M SETA's work has incorporated transformation priorities, including women and youth, rural and township development, and unemployment and poverty alleviation.

For Yende, skills development therefore sits at the intersection of education, economic development and social transformation.

The challenge is not merely to develop more skills but to develop the right skills at the right time and create pathways through which those skills can translate into opportunity.

Leadership for the next generation

That contribution carries particular significance in 2026, as South Africa marked the 70th anniversary of the historic Women's March to the Union Buildings.

The courageous women of 1956 helped change the course of South African history and opened pathways for generations of women who followed. Seven decades later, women are leading across virtually every sector of society, shaping institutions, influencing policy, building businesses, advancing knowledge and creating opportunities for others.

Yende is among the women making that contribution within South Africa's post-school education and training landscape.

Through her leadership of the FP&M SETA, her writing and her contribution to the national debate on the future of skills development, she is challenging the sector to think differently about what success should look like and how education and training can translate more effectively into economic opportunity.

Seventy years after women marched to demand a different future, the work of building that future continues, carried forward by women who are leading, challenging established thinking and creating pathways for the generations that follow.

Women’s Month

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka: Fight for women’s freedom is not over

THAPELO MOLEFE

For Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, South Africa’s progress on women’s rights is real, but it is not enough to declare the struggle over.

Seven decades after more than 20,000 women marched to the Union Buildings in 1956, women have greater access to education, political office and professional opportunities.

Yet Mlambo-Ngcuka argues that freedom remains incomplete while women continue to face violence, economic inequality and barriers to leadership.

“We live in a world and society in which women face remarkable obstacles,” she said at the inaugural Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka Annual Lecture at the University of Johannesburg in August.

The obstacles include pay disparities, limited access to senior management and leadership opportunities, and restrictions on basic freedoms and opportunities.

She also pointed to gender-based violence, with women continuing to face rape, murder and harassment.

“As we celebrate the advances we have made as a society and the world, we should always keep in mind that the freedoms we enjoy are incomplete,” she said.

Education the key

Born in 1955 in Clermont, Kwa-Zulu-Natal, Mlambo-Ngcuka began her career in education after matriculating from Ohlange High School.

She earned a bachelor’s degree in arts and education from the National University of Lesotho in 1980. In 1988, she obtained a qualification in gender policy and planning from

University College London, followed by a Master of Philosophy from the University of Cape Town in 2003 and a doctorate in technology and education from the University of Warwick in 2013.

Education was not simply the starting point of her career. It remained central to her understanding of how societies create opportunities, particularly for women and young people.

Between 1984 and 1989, she worked with the World Young Women’s Christian Association in Geneva, focusing on youth development, job creation and development education in Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

She was also the first president of the Natal Organisation of Women



Way to go: “Democracy and freedom are incomplete if a large section of humanity does not enjoy them,” says Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka. Photo: Eddie Mtsweni

and founded and directed the Young Women’s International Programme.

From 1987 to 1989, she was director of TEAM, a development organisation in Cape Town, where she worked with women in informal settlements and African independent churches on economic self-reliance and skills training.

Mlambo-Ngcuka entered Parliament in 1994 and chaired the Public Service and Administration Portfolio Committee.

She subsequently served as deputy minister of trade and industry, minister of minerals and energy and, briefly, minister of arts, culture, science and technology.

In June 2005, she became South Africa’s first woman deputy president, a position she held until 2008.

Her career in government placed her in institutions where women had historically been under-represented. Her later work took her argument for women’s participation beyond South Africa.

Fighting for gender equality

In 2013, she became executive director of UN Women, serving two terms until 2021.

During that period, she became one of the prominent international advocates for gender equality and women’s rights. One of the initiatives associated with her tenure was HeForShe, which sought to involve

men and boys in the fight for gender equality.

“We live in a world and society in which women face remarkable obstacles.”
— Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka

Her position was that equality could not be treated as a matter for women alone. Women needed greater access to economic opportunities, leadership, and decision-making,

while men had to be part of efforts to change the attitudes and structures that reproduced inequality. Mlambo-Ngcuka also repeatedly raised the effect of unpaid care work on women and girls.

Domestic responsibilities, childcare and other unpaid work can restrict women’s ability to study, earn an income or participate in public life.

That issue connects directly to her longstanding emphasis on education.

A girl cannot benefit fully from access to education if social and economic circumstances prevent her from remaining in school. Likewise, formal equality in the work-

place does not necessarily translate into equal opportunity when women continue to carry a disproportionate share of unpaid responsibilities at home.

Mlambo-Ngcuka has consistently pushed the conversation beyond the number of women occupying senior positions.

The University of Johannesburg established the Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka Annual

Lecture this year, with the inaugural lecture held on August 12 under the theme “Women Driving Societal Impact: Legacy, Leadership, and the Future.”

The lecture was held as South Africa marked the 70th anniversary of the 1956 Women’s March to the Union Buildings and was intended to create a platform for intergenerational dialogue on women’s leadership and the role women continue to play in shaping policy, technology, social justice and higher education.

Progress and obstacles

Mlambo-Ngcuka used the occasion to acknowledge both the progress made since 1956 and the work that remains.

“South Africa is a much better place in 2026 than it was in 1956,” she said.

But she also warned that women continue to face serious obstacles, including inequality in pay, access to senior management and

leadership opportunities, and gender-based violence.

That argument has been a consistent part of Mlambo-Ngcuka’s public work. At the Helen Joseph Memorial Lecture at UJ in 2023, she argued that gender equality had to be considered across different areas of people’s lives.

“For every aspect of life – including the cultural, social and economic realms and private, public and political spheres – are spaces where gender equality matters.” She also warned against assuming that progress is permanent.

“We live in a country that in many ways looks vastly different to the one that Helen Joseph encountered. And we live in a country that looks profoundly similar to it, too,” she said.

Her concern is that legal and political gains can coexist with inequalities in people’s everyday lives.

At the same lecture, she argued that the movement for gender equality must continue to renew itself and create space for younger generations.

“It is critically important for our movement [for gender equality] to be one that consistently renews and regenerates itself because it nurtures the ones who are coming after, and honours the life work of those who blazed these pathways before.”

Mlambo-Ngcuka’s career has taken her from the classroom to the highest levels of South African government and then to the United Nations.

She has also returned to education in her current role as chancellor of the University of Johannesburg and through the Umlambo Foundation, which focuses on education and digital literacy.

Her views on women’s progress has remained consistent: access to education matters, economic independence matters, representation matters, and formal rights mean little if women cannot exercise them safely and equally. The 70th anniversary of the Women’s March gave her another opportunity to make that point.

“I hope we can use these annual lectures to issue a clarion call to our society and the world that democracy and freedom are incomplete if a large section of humanity does not enjoy them.”

For Mlambo-Ngcuka, the legacy of the women who marched in 1956 is not simply something to commemorate. It is a standard against which South Africa can measure the lives women and girls are able to lead today.

Women’s Month

Raisibe Morathi skipped Grade 9, broke barriers and earns R69m

THAPELO MOLEFE

For Raisibe Morathi, becoming one of South Africa’s most senior corporate executives was never simply about reaching the top. It was about proving that the ceiling could be pushed higher — and making sure other women could see themselves doing the same.

Raised by a widowed mother in rural Limpopo, Morathi grew up in a family of girls where independence was not optional. Her father died when she was young, leaving her mother to raise the family alone. That experience shaped the resilience that would define her life.

“We knew that if the light bulb is loose, it is one of us who’s going to fix it,” she recalled. “There was no period of waiting for boys to do anything.”

That attitude followed her into the classroom. Morathi excelled academically, completing high school in four years after skipping Grade 9 and entering Grade 10 directly. She went on to study for a BCom at the University of Venda and eventually qualified as a chartered accountant.

But getting there was not straightforward. At the time, her University of Venda degree was not recognised by the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants as a direct pathway to the Certificate in the Theory of Accountancy, and accredited institutions would not accept it when she applied to continue with her CTA. To overcome the barrier, she enrolled at the University of the Witwatersrand, where she had to redo parts of her undergraduate coursework to qualify.

Rather than allowing the setback to derail her ambitions, Morathi treated it as another ceiling to push through.

That philosophy has followed her throughout her career. “I constantly challenge myself at the personal level and at the professional level to keep on being and putting myself in a place where I can surprise myself”

Building the credentials

Morathi’s academic record reflects that determination. After her BCom, she obtained a Higher Di-

ploma in Taxation from Wits University, a Master of Philosophy in Corporate Strategy from the University of Pretoria’s Gordon Institute of Business Science, a certificate in corporate governance from the University of Johannesburg and an Advanced Management Programme from INSEAD.

Her professional career was equally significant. She began as a trainee accountant at Fisher Hoffman in 1991, then moved into banking in 1994 as a structured finance consultant at Nedbank, and later held executive positions at HSBC Investment Bank, African Merchant Bank, the Industrial Development Corporation, and Sanlam.

In 2009, she returned to Nedbank as group chief financial officer, leading a team of more than 900 people, and served as patron of the bank’s Women’s Forum, focused on developing female leadership.

In November 2020, Morathi became Vodacom Group’s chief financial officer. She has since become a prominent figure in corporate South Africa, serving on the boards of Vodacom Group and Safaricom and as an executive director for Vodacom’s telecommunications and fintech businesses.

Her career has brought significant recognition. She was named CFO of the Year by CFO South Africa in 2023 and won the 2024 CFO of the Year award at the CNBC All Africa Business Leaders Awards and was recognised by DealMakers for her role in Vodacom’s 55% acquisition of Vodafone Egypt.

In Vodacom’s 2026 financial year, Morathi’s remuneration package was worth about R69 million before tax, including guaranteed pay, short-term and long-term incentives, dividends and other benefits — reflecting the scale of the position she has reached after more than three decades in corporate life.

But Morathi’s story is not simply about qualifications, titles, awards or a multimillion-rand pay package. For her, success carries a responsibility.

Morathi is particularly passionate about helping young people, and girls in particular, gain access to opportunities that can change the

direction of their lives.

One of the initiatives closest to her is Code Like a Girl, a programme that teaches schoolgirls coding. Morathi said the initiative began with hundreds of girls, grew to thousands, and has now reached more than 100,000, with the goal of reaching one million.

“I constantly challenge myself at the personal level and at the professional level ...”
— Raisibe Morathi

It speaks to something she has repeatedly emphasised: sometimes young people need to see someone like themselves succeed before they can fully believe they can do it too. “Some of them do not need to talk to you, but they just need to look at you on this platform and say, ‘If she can, I can.’” That belief carries particular weight given her own background. The young girl who grew up in rural Limpopo could not have known that she would one day sit in the boardrooms of some of South Africa’s biggest companies.

Learning to ask for help

Morathi believes young women should not be afraid to ask for help. Mentorship has played an important role in her approach to leadership; she encourages people to find coaches and mentors and to speak to someone when they are struggling.

One of the biggest breakthroughs in her own development, she says, was finding the confidence to admit that she did not know everything.

“The confidence to tell someone that I don’t know, the confidence of being able to make myself vulnerable to do something that I may fail,” she said. Mentors, she added, do not necessarily have to be people in formal positions of authority — they can be



Bright spark: Raisibe Morathi excelled academically and is a leading light in the corporate world. Photo: Vodacom

colleagues, friends or simply people who offer another perspective.

Her message is also shaped by the challenges she has experienced as a woman and as a Black professional. Morathi says she has had to prove herself throughout her career, even after decades of experience.

The difference now is that she has more confidence and experience to deal with situations the younger version of herself might have found harder. Rather than letting those barriers define her, she has used them to build resilience.

That resilience has shaped her leadership philosophy. Morathi describes her leadership style as inclusive and says she prefers to focus on “we” rather than “I”.

Her own career has not followed a straight line. Morathi initially wanted to become a banker and spent the first 26 years of her career in banking before moving into telecommunications. Her decision to move away from certain aspects of investment banking was also influenced by family — after having two children, she wanted greater control over her time, as her previous role involved extensive travel.

The move did not derail her career. Instead, the experience she had accumulated became part of what prepared her for the CFO role.

Beyond the balance sheet

Today, Morathi sees her work through a wider lens than corporate performance. She describes her three decades of professional life as focused on improving people’s lives through financial and digital inclusion, citing services such as M-Pesa and Vodapay as examples of how technology can help people who previously had limited access to traditional banking. As technology changes, she believes young people, particularly girls, must be equipped to participate in that future.

From a rural childhood and being raised by a widowed mother in a family of girls to skipping a grade at school, overcoming barriers to professional qualification, becoming a chartered accountant and eventually leading finance at one of Africa’s biggest telecommunications groups, Morathi has repeatedly challenged the limits placed in front of her.

But perhaps the most important part of her journey is what she wants the next generation to take from it. If a young girl can look at Morathi’s journey and think, “If she can, I can,” then her success becomes more than a personal achievement — it becomes an invitation for another generation of girls to push the ceiling higher.

Women's Month

We must deliver measurable change in SA's women's lives

Chikunga calls for accountability on GBVF funding and women's economic empowerment

**LEBONE RODAH MOSIMA
& LEVY MASITENG**

As South Africa marks 70 years since the historic Women's March of 1956, Sindisiwe Chikunga, Minister in the Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, says the country must move beyond commemorating women's struggles and focus on delivering measurable change.

For Chikunga, this means linking government budgets to performance and asking a simple question: what difference has public spending made in women's lives? She says this is particularly urgent in the fight against gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF), women's economic empowerment and public procurement.

In an interview with *Inside Education*, she said: "The greatest tribute we can pay the women of 1956 is to build a South Africa in which women do not have to march simply to demand recognition of their humanity and equality."

The women who marched to the Union Buildings in 1956 were not merely protesting apartheid pass laws, she said. They demonstrated that women were leaders, organisers, decision-makers and agents of social transformation. "Those women confronted a powerful and unjust system because they understood that silence would preserve injustice," she said.

Seventy years later, Chikunga says the responsibility is to ensure those freedoms translate into tangible improvements in women's lives — economic independence, safety from GBVF, and access to healthcare, land, finance, education, digital opportunities and decision-making.

From representation to ownership

Chikunga argues that representation alone is no longer enough; women must have ownership, control and economic power. The government is strengthening mechanisms to measure whether women actually benefit from public spending, including the Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women Index, which tracks

labour-market participation, access to resources, and decision-making.

"Its baseline confirms that the labour market and resources dimension remains one of the weakest, particularly in female ownership of firms, access to credit, and representation in senior economic positions," she said.

Her department is also strengthening the Gender Responsive Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring, Evaluation and Auditing Framework, while the Women's Economic Assembly seeks to move women from consultation into procurement panels, boards of state-owned entities and economic decision-making structures.

"The government has also adopted a policy direction towards ensuring that 40% of public procurement goes to women-owned businesses, and we must now concentrate on implementation, monitoring, and consequences where targets are not met," she said.

Accountability

For Chikunga, accountability comes down to basic questions: who owns the business, who receives the contract and finance, who sits on the board, and who benefits from public expenditure. "That is the level of accountability we need," she said.

She identifies unequal access to economic resources and productive assets as one of the biggest barriers to women's economic independence. A woman cannot become economically independent simply by being encouraged to become an entrepreneur, she said. "She needs access to finance, markets, land, technology, procurement opportunities, skills, networks, and infrastructure."

Government must move away from a model in which women are repeatedly trained but remain disconnected from markets, Chikunga said. "The question should not only be: 'How many women did we train?' It must also be: 'How many received finance? How many secured contracts? How many acquired productive assets? How many businesses survived and grew?'"

How many created jobs? "Women must not only participate in the economy. They must own a greater share of it," she said.

Chikunga says the government must distinguish between political commitments and enforceable statutory obligations when measuring progress. The 50/50 principle remains an important national goal for equal representation, she said, but accountability cannot depend on declarations alone.

The Women's Charter for Accelerated Development, adopted by Parliament in 2021, requires gender considerations to be integrated into government planning, budgeting and legislation. The National Treasury has also established a Gender Responsive Budgeting Task Team with her department and the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation.

"The next step is to make accountability much more visible," Chikunga said. Departments must

“Women must not only participate in the economy. They must own a greater share of it. — Minister Sindisiwe Chikunga”

demonstrate what they budgeted for women, what they spent, who benefited, whether targets were achieved and what corrective action was taken when targets were missed. "The principle must be simple: gender equality must be reflected not only in policy documents but also in budgets, procurement, appointments, and outcomes."

Chikunga identifies unemployment, digital inequality and limited economic opportunities among the biggest challenges facing young women. The National Youth Development Agency provides grants, mentorship, business development, and market linkage support, but access to government procurement remains a major challenge for emerging businesses.

Procurement reforms should address the size of tenders, complicated compliance requirements, payment



Minister Sindisiwe Chikunga says: "Seventy years after 1956, our task is to move from symbolism to structural transformation." Photo: Eddie Mtsweni

delays and limited access to market information, she said. "We need a procurement ecosystem in which small enterprises can enter, perform, get paid on time, build a track record and progressively move into larger contracts."

Are women truly free?

Reflecting on the women who marched in 1956, Chikunga says they would have reason to be proud of South Africa's progress since democracy but would also challenge the country over the inequalities that remain.

"I believe they would be proud that South Africa is a constitutional democracy founded on equality, human dignity and non-sexism; that women participate in Parliament, government, the judiciary, business and civil society," she said.

But she believes the pioneers of 1956 would ask a harder question about the extent of women's freedom today. "Are women truly free if they remain economically dependent, unsafe in their homes and communities, or excluded from ownership and decision-making?" Chikunga asked.

She identifies five urgent areas for the next decade: ending GBVF; increasing women's ownership and control of economic resources; closing gaps in education and digital access; ensuring rural women and women with disabilities are not left behind; and strengthening women's leadership across the economy and public institutions.

GBVF funding must deliver

With GBVF remaining one of the country's most pressing challenges, Chikunga says government can no longer measure success simply by how much money departments spend.

"The classification of GBVF as a national disaster fundamentally changes the level of urgency with which government must respond," she said.

GBVF cannot be treated as the responsibility of a single department, she said, with all relevant departments expected to allocate resources within their mandates. Areas requiring closer monitoring include

departmental GBVF commitments, expenditure against allocations, prevention and response programmes, survivor support services, and the criminal justice response.

"Budget oversight must be linked to performance. If a department receives an allocation for GBVF interventions, we must ask not simply whether the money was spent, but what changed because the money was spent," she said, adding that operationalising the GBVF Council would strengthen coordination and oversight.

Rural women remain a priority Chikunga highlighted the inequalities experienced by women in rural communities, saying access to government services should not depend on where a woman lives. She called for stronger provincial and local coordination, mobile and community-based services, improved digital access and partnerships with local organisations and traditional leadership structures.

Rural women should not be treated only as beneficiaries of government programmes but supported to become producers, entrepreneurs, farmers, employers, investors and asset owners, she said, while also stressing the need to include women with disabilities given the additional barriers they face.

"The restructuring of outreach must therefore be based on a principle of 'no woman left behind' regardless of whether she lives in Sandton, Soweto, Flagstaff, Giyani, Lusikisiki or a remote village in the Northern Cape," Chikunga said.

As South Africa commemorates the women of 1956, Chikunga says the country must move beyond symbolic remembrance and confront the structural inequalities that continue to affect women.

"Seventy years after 1956, our task is to move from symbolism to structural transformation," she said. "We must honour the women who marched by ensuring that women

have economic power, political voice, safety, dignity and ownership." Her message to the country is clear: "We must not only remember the women who made history. We must build a society in which women have the power to make the future."

Women's Month

Zonke joins Tamia for Women's Month celebration of soul and R&B

**CHARMAINE NDLELA
& LEBONE RODAH MOSIMA**

South African soul and R&B powerhouse Zonke took centre stage alongside Grammy-nominated Canadian R&B star Tamia during her Women's Month tour, bringing together two celebrated voices in a tribute to women, music and artistry.

The multi-platinum-selling South African singer-songwriter opened for Tamia during the international R&B star's tour of South Africa from 5 to 10 August in Cape Town, Durban and Pretoria.

For Zonke, sharing the stage with Tamia was more than another major performance. It was an opportunity to celebrate women's influence in the music industry and for two established artists to connect with audiences through their shared love of soul and R&B.

Zonke announced the collaboration on 19 June, expressing her excitement about joining Tamia for the special Women's Month tour.

"I am honoured to be joining Tamia on this special tour and to be part of a celebration that shines a spotlight on the power and influence of women through music," Zonke said at the time.

"Tamia is an artist whose work has touched audiences across generations, and I look forward to sharing the stage with her and creating unforgettable moments for fans across South Africa."

Those moments unfolded on South African stages as Zonke opened for Tamia, who performed some of her best-known songs and celebrated her long-standing connection with South African audiences.

Tamia, who has been warmly received by South African fans throughout her career, reflected on that bond during her visit.

"Thank you for always making me feel so welcome in your beautiful country," she said in a heartfelt message shared on Instagram as she marked Women's Day on South African soil.

The tour formed part of broader Women's Month celebrations and brought a nostalgic R&B experience to audiences.

Tamia performed some of her iconic songs, including *So Into You*, *Stranger in My House*, *Spend My Life With You* and *Officially Missing You*.

For Zonke, the collaboration marked another significant chapter in a career spanning more than two decades.

International collaborations

Known for her powerful vocals, songwriting, and dynamic stage presence, Zonke has previously shared the stage with several international acts. Last year, she co-headlined



Powerhouse: Zonke joined Canadian R&B star Tamia on her Women's Month tour of South Africa. Photo: Facebook



Warm welcome: Tamia treated her South African fans to several of her R&B classics. Photo: Wikipedia

a major Women's Day celebration in Johannesburg alongside Anthony Hamilton and Joe Thomas.

She also recently collaborated with American soul singer Anthony Hamilton on the single *Make Time*, adding

ed woman capable of navigating the competitive music industry.

Zonke later honoured her father with *Viva The Legend*, a track on her acclaimed album *Ina Ethé*.

Her songwriting has also made her an influential figure behind some of South Africa's biggest musical acts.

She has written and co-written songs for artists including Winnie Khumalo, Thebe, TK, Mafikizolo, Theo Kgosinkwe, Don Laka, Black Coffee and Tshepo Tshola, while also collaborating with producers such as Bongo Maffin and Oskido.

Breakthrough album

Her breakthrough album, *Ina Ethé*, established her as a leading Afro-soul and R&B artist and strengthened her reputation for heartfelt songwriting and powerful live performances.

In 2018, Zonke released her sixth studio album, *L.O.V.E*, an acronym for Living Out Various Emotions. The album reached number one on iTunes across all genres following its release and received strong reviews from fans.

She also launched her own concert series, Zonke The Evergreen, which has attracted large crowds and sold out venues across the country.

Her career has extended beyond conventional music stages. One notable performance was at the funeral of struggle icon Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, placing her music within a significant moment of national remembrance.

Zonke has also appeared on the covers of publications including *Destiny*, *True Love*, *Bona*, *Real* and *Equinox*, reflecting her influence beyond music.

She was also featured on Real Donor for Thuthuzela Children's Home in Alexandra township, Johannesburg.

The Tamia tour added another chapter to her career, placing Zonke alongside an international artist whose career has spanned decades and whose music has maintained a strong following among South African R&B audiences.

As Women's Month highlighted women's achievements and struggles across the country, the pairing of Zonke and Tamia celebrated women who have built enduring careers in an industry that demands resilience, reinvention and independence.

For Zonke, who has spent more than two decades establishing herself as a vocalist, songwriter, producer and performer, sharing the stage with Tamia was another testament to her enduring influence.

With *Okó* building momentum towards her upcoming album, Zonke's latest chapter promises to be as ambitious as the career that came before it.

Women's Month

Lindiwe Zulu: Honour the women who fought for freedom

THAPELO MOLEFE

Former Cabinet minister Lindiwe Zulu says South Africa must honour the women who fought for freedom while using Women's Month to confront the challenges women continue to face.

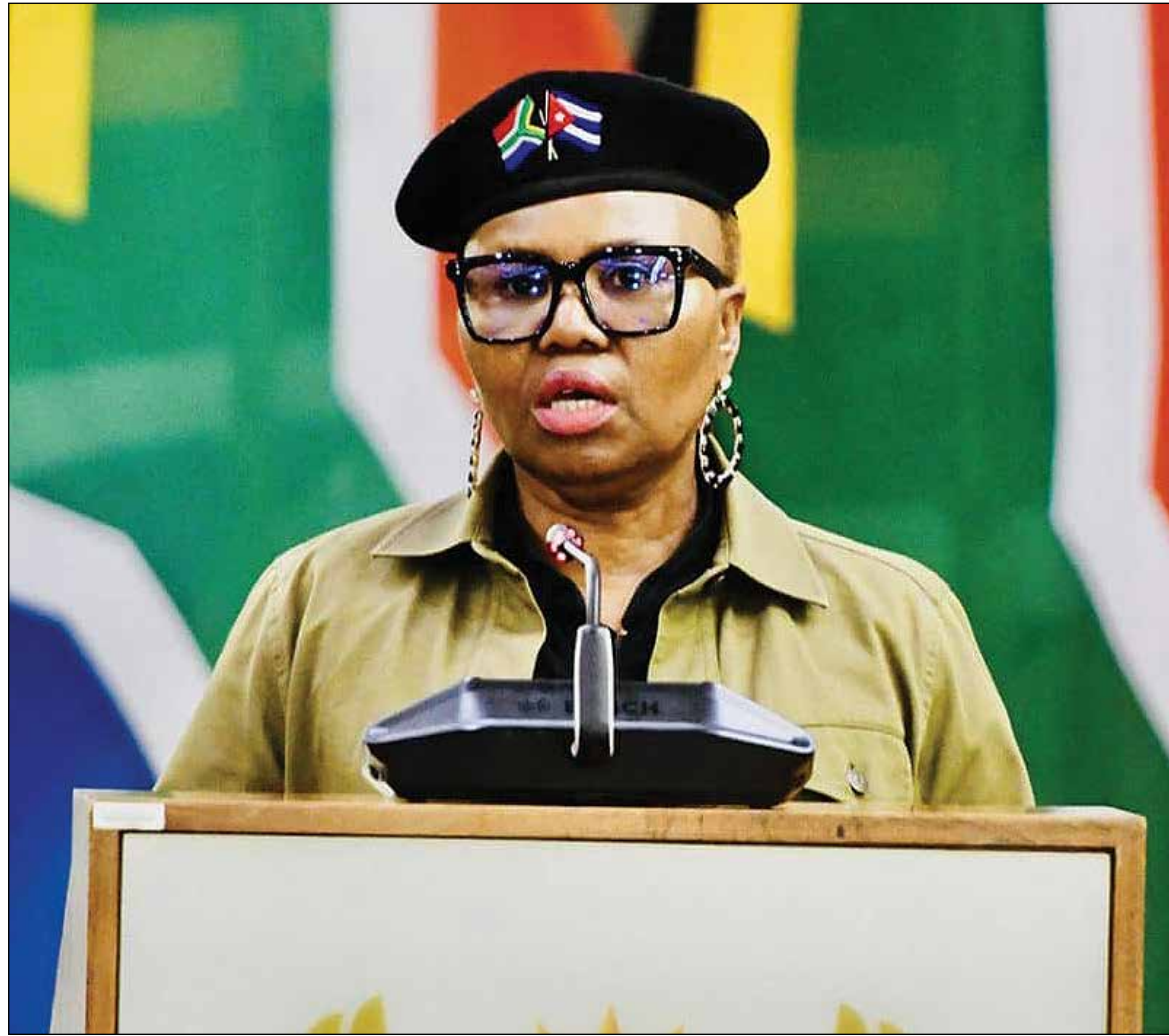
Speaking to *Inside Education*, the African National Congress (ANC) stalwart and uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) cadre reflected on a life shaped by hardship, exile, armed struggle and public service. She urged young women to prioritise education and ensure the sacrifices of previous generations are not forgotten.

For Zulu, Women's Month is not simply about celebrating achievements but taking stock of the work that remains.

"Women's Month means celebrating the achievements but confronting the challenges that still face women."

She said issues such as gender-based violence, the killing and abuse of women must be confronted throughout the year, with men playing a greater role in supporting women.

"This is a month that we highlight those issues, but for me, those issues are something that we are supposed to deal with 365 days," she said.



Pay homage: Lindiwe Zulu believes South Africa must do more to remember women whose stories have been overshadowed by those of prominent political figures, particularly women who died during the liberation struggle. Photo: SAGovernments.com

Long before becoming a Cabinet minister, ambassador and senior ANC leader, Zulu was a young girl growing up between KwaZulu-Natal and Eswatini. Her grandparents, particularly her grandmother, profoundly shaped her life.

Zulu became pregnant at 15 and had her first child at 16, an experience she now describes as one of the biggest mistakes of her youth.

"The young women of today must not find themselves repeating the same mistakes of 50 years ago. They must focus on their education and what they want to become in the future."

Her grandparents refused to give up on her. Her grandmother, who worked as a domestic worker in Johannesburg, insisted that she return to school.

"Had it not been for a very strong woman who was my grandmother and my supportive grandfather, I do not think I would have been where I am today," Zulu said.

That commitment to education later influenced a crucial decision after she joined the ANC in exile. At the time, young people could choose between continuing their studies and joining MK.

"When I joined the ANC, young people had a choice. You could go to school or join uMkhonto weSizwe

and train to fight. Because of my grandmother's commitment to education, I felt I could not disappoint her," she said.

Zulu's political consciousness developed through stories told by her grandparents and encounters with students who fled South Africa after the 1976 Soweto uprising.

"They helped me understand apartheid and why it had to be defeated. They influenced me to join the African National Congress," she said.

Her involvement in the underground struggle had begun even before she fully understood its dangers. She recalled allowing ANC operatives to use her family's post box in Eswatini to receive coded telegrams.

"It was only later during military training that I realised how dangerous that work had been because the apartheid government used letter bombs," she said.

ANC leaders encouraged her to complete her education before joining the armed struggle. She was influenced by women such as Mam Flore in Mozambique and Mam Jobe in Tanzania, as well as the late ANC leader Moses Mabhida.

She later received a scholarship to study journalism in Moscow, then the capital of the Soviet Union, com-

pleting a master's degree before fulfilling a promise to herself by returning to Angola to join MK in 1987.

“Education, education, education. Read as much as you can. Open your minds beyond the classroom and empower yourselves.”
 — Lindiwe Zulu

Exile became one of the most painful chapters of her life.

"The personal sacrifice I made was to leave my children without a mother for 14 or 15 years."

Her grandmother was left to raise the children without knowing where Zulu had gone.

Military life in Angola brought further hardship, including sleeping in tents, travelling through dense forests and witnessing comrades being killed.

"That was a sacrifice beyond what many South Africans can imagine,"

she said.

But Zulu said women in the liberation movement faced two struggles: defeating apartheid and proving themselves within a movement where gender stereotypes persisted.

"There were two fronts. There was the general struggle against apartheid. But for women there was also the struggle of being recognised as just as capable as anybody else."

She said women performed as well as men in military training and underground operations but were often overlooked for leadership positions.

Zulu paid tribute to women, including Gertrude Shope, Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, Baleka Mbete and Brigitte Mabandla, who pushed for women's emancipation to remain central to the liberation struggle.

She also recalled the late ANC president Oliver Tambo's insistence that women's liberation could not be postponed until after apartheid.

Returning home before the 1994 democratic elections was an emotional milestone. Zulu recalled feeling joy at seeing a free South Africa but sadness for comrades who had died in exile and never witnessed the change.

She went on to help communicate the ANC's message during the 1994 elections before serving in Parlia-

ment, in diplomacy, and in Cabinet, including as minister of Small Business Development and later of Social Development.

Among her proudest achievements is helping establish South Africa's democratic institutions.

"We came from the cold. We never knew what it meant to govern, to be legislators or to build democratic institutions."

She also defended the impact of social grants, drawing on her own childhood experience.

"When government can lift people through social grants, I saw what that did for families," she said.

Looking ahead, Zulu believes South Africa must do more to remember women whose stories have been overshadowed by those of prominent political figures, particularly women who died during the liberation struggle.

She recalled a young woman from KwaZulu-Natal who was selected to infiltrate South Africa after military training in Angola. Before she left, Zulu gave her a bag for her clothes. The woman was later killed while crossing between South Africa and Eswatini.

"Those are the women that I would like South Africa to know about, to celebrate them and to thank their families for having let them go."

Zulu welcomed plans by the ANC Women's League to read the names of women who died in exile at Freedom Park, including those who died in Angola, Mozambique and Tanzania.

She said women who returned from exile and helped build the democratic state should also be remembered, including Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Zanele Mbeki and Bathabile Dlamini.

"We must encourage younger women to read about those women, to know about those women, to reach out to them and ask them, 'How did you get to where you are?'" she said.

For today's young women, Zulu's message is rooted in the lesson she learnt from her own childhood.

"Education, education, education. Read as much as you can. Open your minds beyond the classroom and empower yourselves."

Despite South Africa's political and social challenges, including tensions around immigration, Zulu remains optimistic.

"What gives me hope is the people of South Africa. It is their resilience, their love for their country and their potential to unite and focus on what needs to be done to build a better future," she said.

Women's Month

Chief Justice Mandisa Maya: The woman who changed the face of South Africa's judiciary

JOHNATHAN PAOLI

Per aspera ad astra. Fortis femina vincit. ("Through hardships to the stars. A strong woman prevails.")

During Women's Month, the story of Chief Justice Mandisa Maya stands as one of the clearest examples of how resilience, excellence and leadership can reshape institutions that were once almost exclusively male-dominated.

History was made when Maya walked into the Constitutional Court as South Africa's first woman Chief Justice on 1 September 2024. But her appointment represented far more than the breaking of another glass ceiling. It marked the culmination of decades of quiet perseverance, principled leadership and an unwavering belief that the judiciary should reflect the people it serves.

For generations of Black South African women, particularly those from rural communities, Maya's rise to the country's highest judicial office became proof that barriers once considered insurmountable could indeed be dismantled.

Born on 20 March 1964 in St Cuthbert's, a rural village near Tsolo in the Eastern Cape, Maya was the eldest of six children born to teachers Sandile and Nombulelo Maya.

Her upbringing instilled a deep respect for education, discipline and public service long before she entered a courtroom. After her family relocated to Qonce (formerly King William's Town), she completed her schooling before matriculating at St John's College in Mthatha in 1981.

She would go on to obtain a BProc degree from the then University of Transkei (now Walter Sisulu University) in 1986, an LLB from the University of KwaZulu-Natal two years later

and an LLM from Duke University in the United States in 1990.

Yet Maya's journey into the law was anything but conventional.

Before becoming one of South Africa's most respected judges, she worked as a court interpreter and prosecutor, then won a scholarship and joined the Women's Legal Defense Fund in Washington, DC, where she gained valuable international experience advocating for women's rights.

She later returned home to lecture law at the University of Transkei and serve as a legal adviser before practising as an advocate after South Africa's first democratic elections.

Appointed permanently to the Eastern Cape High Court in Mthatha in 2000, Maya was elevated to the Supreme Court of Appeal five years later, becoming the first Black woman ever appointed to that court.

She would later become its Deputy President and, in 2017, its first woman President, another historic milestone in a judiciary still transforming three decades into democracy.

When Maya assumed the role, the institution was grappling with reports of racial and gender tensions, allegations of bullying and strained professional relationships.

Maya has been credited with fundamentally changing the court's institutional culture by fostering collegiality and facilitating transformation.

Seven women judges were appointed to the SCA during Maya's five-year tenure. By comparison, only nine women had joined its predecessor court during the previous century.

Speaking at the South African Judiciary Conference last month in Durban, Maya placed institutional independence at the centre of her vision



Legal pioneer: President Cyril Ramaphosa described Chief Justice Mandisa Maya as "a brilliant legal mind and a trailblazer" when he appointed her in July 2024. Photo: Courtesy of Judges Matter

for the country's courts, arguing that independence must be matched by accountability and public trust.

"The independence of the judiciary is not a privilege. It is a guarantee to the public that the powerful and the powerless stand before the law on equal terms," she said.

Asked in her Judicial Service Commission nomination papers what she considered to be her greatest contribution to the law and the pursuit of justice, Maya pointed not to landmark judgments or senior positions but to the perspective she brought to the bench and her commitment to mentoring women in the judiciary.

"I believe that my experiences as a Black woman from a rural background have provided the judiciary with a critical diversity of thought and valuable insights into a complex, vulnerable and huge component of our society," she said.

"I have over the years encouraged a number of women to make themselves available for judicial appointment and simultaneously nagged various heads of court to give women acting judicial appointments. I have also offered support to those colleagues once appointed, as I believe mentorship of new judges is crucial in strengthening the judicial institution," Maya added.

When President Cyril Ramaphosa announced her appointment in July 2024, he described Maya as "a brilliant legal mind and a trailblazer", saying her judicial record and leadership qualities made her ideally suited to lead the country's judiciary.

Throughout her judicial career, Maya has consistently argued that jus-

tice cannot be separated from the lived experiences of the people who seek it.

One of her most influential opinions came in the 2011 Minister of Safety and Security v F matter involving the rape of a young woman by an off-duty police officer.

While the Supreme Court of Appeal held that the state could not be held liable, Maya dissented. She argued that the inquiry should not end simply because the officer had acted for personal reasons.

Instead, she found there was a sufficiently close connection between his abuse of police authority and the state's responsibility. Her reasoning was ultimately vindicated when the Constitutional Court overturned the SCA's majority judgment and adopted the position she had advanced.

As Deputy Chief Justice, Maya led the development of the judiciary's first formal anti-sexual harassment policy and spearheaded reforms to accelerate the resolution of judicial misconduct complaints.

She has simultaneously remained deeply involved in mentoring women judges through organisations such as the International Association of Women Judges, where she has served in both national and continental leadership positions.

That commitment was perhaps most evident earlier this year when Maya welcomed women judicial leaders from across Africa to Johannesburg for the Second High-Level Meeting of Women Judicial Leaders of Africa.

Her address challenged African judiciaries to confront the structural bar-

riers that continue to prevent women from reaching positions of leadership.

"The persons who serve in this institution mirror the diverse society they serve. Gender representation is not a peripheral concern but a critical factor in the legitimacy, effectiveness, and fairness of our legal institutions," she said.

Importantly, she rejected the notion that representation should be viewed merely as symbolism.

"The importance of gender parity lies in its ability to uphold the principles of fairness and equality within democratic institutions. Representation is not symbolic; it is a substantive requirement for legitimacy," she said.

She argued that women judges bring perspectives shaped by lived experience, enriching judicial reasoning and helping courts deliver more inclusive, responsive decisions.

Maya remains one of a generation of women jurists who transformed South Africa's courts from institutions where women were once almost invisible into spaces where they increasingly shape constitutional jurisprudence and judicial leadership.

During Women's Month, Chief Justice Mandisa Maya stands as more than a legal pioneer.

She has become a symbol of how determined leadership can transform institutions, expand opportunity for others and ensure that justice, like democracy itself, belongs to everyone.

Women’s Month

What Ubuntu teaches us about women’s leadership in higher education

LETLHOKWA GEORGE MPEDI

Every August, South Africa pauses to remember the 20,000 women who marched on the Union Buildings in 1956, refusing to carry passes that reduced them to numbers on a state ledger. This year marks 70 years since that day. Their story is one of collective courage as women from different backgrounds, races and generations gather as a community to defend their dignity.

That understanding that one’s own freedom is bound up with everyone else’s is one of the clearest expressions of Ubuntu South Africa has ever produced. It is also, I would argue, the model our universities need if they are serious about advancing women in higher education.

I have spent much of my tenure as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Johannesburg making a public case for Ubuntu as a working framework for institutional leadership.

Rebuilding trust in South Africa’s public institutions depends on leaders who understand that their legitimacy flows from the collective. In this framing, Ubuntu is understood as an ethic of interdependence, in which an individual’s flourishing and the community’s well-being reinforce rather than compete. It is a relational understanding of people and place, a form of intelligence, and one that African universities are uniquely positioned to bring to bear on the continent’s future.

It is necessary to understand what that framework implies for gender transformation on our campuses, because the two conversations are usually held separately. Women’s leadership in higher education is often discussed in terms of representation. For example, how many women sit in the Senate, how many deans, and how many vice-chancellors?

In fact, UJ is an exemplary case study in this regard. Our chancellor, deputy vice-chancellors, chief financial officer, and registrar are all women, thanks to a deliberate, sustained institutional commitment. These numbers matter enormously, and South Africa still has real ground to cover.

Research on women’s leadership in South African higher education points to a familiar set of obstacles, such as institutional cultures shaped by decades of male-dominated governance, the uneven burden of care work that follows women into senior roles, and mentorship structures that remain thinner than they should be.

A growing body of scholarship treats Ubuntu as an academic framework in its own right, distinct from



Reaching out: Ubuntu is the model South African universities need to adopt if they are serious about advancing women in higher education, writes UJ’s Professor Letlhokwa George Mpedi. Photo: Vecteezy.com

the individualist leadership models that still dominate most Western management theory. Educational researcher Irene Sethodi has described Ubuntu leadership as an African corrective to school and institutional performance models that prioritise individual accountability over collective flourishing.

More pointedly, a 2025 paper in *Frontiers in Education* argues that Ubuntu’s collectivist philosophy stands in direct contrast to the competitive, sole-authorship norms of academic life that disproportionately disadvantage those without access to established networks and mentorship, women foremost among them.

The paper proposes embedding Ubuntu’s principles directly into institutional policy and structure as a mechanism for building the social capital that women, and particularly Black women, are so often excluded from acquiring informally.

But representation, on its own, is not enough. Universities South Africa’s own 2019 figures show that while women make up 54% of university staff nationally, they hold only 27% of senior management positions and 33% of professorships. This is a disparity that only widens the further up an institution one looks.

A decade-on comparison found the picture has moved, but slowly. Women held 23.7% of senior leadership posts across South African higher education institutions in 2014, rising to 39.6% by 2024. That is real progress, but it is also, on reflection, a reminder

of how long progress can take when it is not being deliberately built. Ubuntu thus asks whether the institution’s culture treats its advancement as everyone’s responsibility.

“A growing body of scholarship treats Ubuntu as an academic framework in its own right, distinct from the individualist leadership models that still dominate most Western management theory.” — Professor Letlhokwa George Mpedi.

At UJ, that has meant building new structures. The Women’s Leadership Development Programme, aimed at empowering senior women across academia and support functions, now has an alum network designed to keep past participants connected, mentoring the next cohort rather than simply exiting the pipeline once they reach the top.

Women in senior positions often carry burdens outside the workplace that their male peers do not, and institutions that ignore this are not creating equal conditions, no matter how equal their policies look on paper.

That is an Ubuntu insight as much as a gender-equity one in that it recognises that a woman’s capacity to lead is inseparable from the community of obligations she carries home each evening.

Nationally, South Africa can rightly be proud of its representation of women in Cabinet and Parliament and of the growing number of institutions appointing women into management and executive roles. Higher education has made similar gains. But stigma and stereotypes persist in workplaces that call themselves transformed, and visible progress at the top can mask stalled progress elsewhere.

More than thirty years into South Africa’s democracy, that is not a comfortable thing for a university leader to say about his own sector. But Ubuntu is a refusal to let the collective congratulate itself while some of its members are still carrying more than their share.

There is a lesson here for higher education more broadly. South African universities like to talk about transformation in the language of policy through targets and equity plans. All of that infrastructure is necessary. However, policy alone does not change the reality of women. That requires the kind of cultural response that Ubuntu offers. Leadership is thus seen as stewardship of the collective good, and success is measured by how many can climb. This connects Ubuntu to a wider scholarly conversation about what feminist leadership in universities actually requires.

Professor Letlhokwa George Mpedi is Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Johannesburg

Women’s Month

Tumi Ramokgopa: Breaking barriers, one hurdle at a time

LEVY MASITENG

At just 18, Tumi Ramokgopa is already making her mark among South Africa’s brightest young athletic talents after winning two silver medals at the 2026 World Athletics Under-20 Championships in Eugene, Oregon, United States.

The South African hurdler finished second in both the 100m and 400m hurdles, strengthening her reputation as one of the country’s most promising young athletes.

Ramokgopa clocked 12.96 seconds in the 100m hurdles final, just 0.03 seconds outside her South African Under-20 record of 12.93. The following day, she returned to the track to run a personal best of 55.88 seconds in the 400m hurdles final.

Her double podium finish was historic, making her the first South African athlete to win medals in both hurdles events at a World Championship, according to recent reports.

The achievement also contributed to South Africa’s eight-medal haul at the championships.

But the medals are the latest chapter in a rapid rise that began several years ago.

Born in 2007 and raised in Kempton Park, Ramokgopa attended Prestige College Hammanskraal, where her athletics talent developed quickly.

Formidable

She emerged as a formidable junior athlete in 2023, winning South African and African Under-18 titles in the 100m and 400m hurdles before adding two bronze medals at the Commonwealth Youth Games in Trinidad and Tobago.

By 2024, she was already competing against senior athletes.

At 16, she finished third in the 400m hurdles at the South African Senior Championships and set a South African Under-18 record. She later represented the country

at the African Championships in Cameroon and the World Athletics Under-20 Championships in Lima, Peru.

Her breakthrough continued in 2025. Ramokgopa won the South African senior 100m hurdles title as well as the 100m and 400m hurdles titles at the South African Under-20 Championships.

At the African Under-20 Championships in Abeokuta, Nigeria, she won gold in both hurdles events and set championship records.

She later lowered the South African Under-20 100m hurdles record to 13.15 seconds.

Consistency

Her consistency was equally impressive. Last year, she reportedly won 25 of the 28 races she contested, finishing second in the other three.

She entered 2026 as the South African Under-20 champion in both hurdles events and the senior national 100m hurdles champion.

In March, at the Athletics South Africa Age Group Championships in Germiston, Ramokgopa ran 12.93 seconds in the 100m hurdles, breaking her own South African junior record and becoming the youngest South African woman to break the 13-second barrier in the event.

Fearless

Her coach, George Bradley, has described her as a natural competitor.

“Tumi is fearless, even for big-stage moments. She proved it last year in the 400m hurdles final at the South African Senior Championships. Going into the straight, racing against the Olympian, Zeney Geldenhuys, she went for the win. She finished second, more than a second faster than her previous best time. Her time of 55.90 seconds was one of the fastest in the under-20 athletics in the world in 2025,” Bradley said in a University of Pretoria report.

That fearless approach has also



Fearless: Tumi Ramokgopa is emerging as a symbol of what the next generation of South African women in sport can achieve. Photo: X/Backtrack Sports

been evident in Ramokgopa’s own words.

In a 2024 interview with *The Top Runner*, she spoke about wanting to inspire young people who dream of reaching the highest level, saying she wanted to be “the reason why there’s a change in this world”.

“I accepted what God gave me and took it with passion.” — Tumi Ramokgopa

Her message carries particular resonance during Women’s Month, when South Africa reflects on the progress women have made while acknowledging the barriers that remain.

Ramokgopa is competing in an environment where female athletes continue to push for greater visibility, investment, opportunities and recognition.

Her success therefore represents more than two medals. It offers a visible example of what is possible for young girls who see sport not simply as recreation but as a pathway to excellence and national representation.

The 18-year-old has also shown

little hesitation in competing against older, more experienced athletes.

“It really wasn’t something I was expecting as yet, but sometimes when God gives you something, you don’t reject it. So I accepted what God gave me and took it with passion. I told myself I’m going there to dominate and I’m doing what I can,” Ramokgopa said.

Her ambitions now extend beyond the junior ranks.

Before travelling to Oregon, she had identified the 2026 World Under-20 Championships as an important target. After securing two silver medals, her attention has shifted towards the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles.

In an interview published earlier this year, Ramokgopa described becoming an Olympian as an ultimate goal and said representing South Africa at the Games would be an incredible achievement.

Ambition

For an athlete who has only recently turned 18, the ambition is considerable. But her rapid progression suggests she is comfortable setting targets well beyond the immediate finish line.

Her development has also been supported by her coach, family, school, university and the broader athletics structures around her.

Ramokgopa is now a student-athlete at the University of Pretoria and

competes under the Tuks Athletics banner.

Rapid progress

Her progression from a promising school athlete to a two-time World Under-20 silver medallist has been rapid. Yet she continues to focus on improvement and making the most of every opportunity.

For young South African women watching from athletics tracks across the country, Ramokgopa represents a future that is already taking shape.

She is proof that young women can occupy the centre of sporting conversations, compete on the biggest stages and challenge records once considered out of reach.

As South Africa celebrates Women’s Month, her story forms part of a broader conversation about women claiming space, breaking barriers and challenging expectations.

Ramokgopa’s hurdles may be measured in metres and seconds, but the barriers she is breaking extend far beyond the track.

At 18, with two world junior silver medals already to her name and Los Angeles 2028 firmly in her sights, Ramokgopa is no longer simply a promising athlete.

She is emerging as a symbol of what the next generation of South African women in sport can achieve.

And, judging by the speed of her rise, her biggest triumphs may still be ahead.

Women's Month

What next for the Class of 2026?

NOMFANELO KOTA

In his book *A Time for New Dreams*, Nigerian author and poet Ben Okri writes: "It is in difficult times that the great times ahead are dreamt and built, brick by brick, with maturity and the hope that comes from wise action."

I recall this in acknowledgement of the heavy load carried by the class of 1956, trailblazers who gave us the Women's Charter in 1954, a precursor to the Freedom Charter of 1955.

To our generation, they gave us what Okri calls "intellectual hospitality", the hospitality to ideas, to dreams, to ways of seeing, to new perceptions of how we could be as people. One cannot be blind to the contribution of women in building what is now a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and prosperous society on whose foundations our Constitution stands.

We salute the courage and tenacity of those women who reimagined what it could mean to live in a free, non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and prosperous society. Women like Lillian Ngoyi, Ray Alexander Simons, Florence Mkhize, Dora Tamana, and Hilda Bernstein officially adopted the Women's Charter at the inaugural conference of the Federation of South African Women in 1954.

So, one poses the question as my coach, Thuli Segalo, would ask our Gordon Institute of Business Science cohort — how are we landing in 2026 as women who were handed over the baton by the class of 1956?

To amplify this question, my sister, Madiepetsane Charlotte Lobe, South African High Commissioner to Singapore, in her Facebook post asks, "whether we have fulfilled the promise for which those women marched." In her view, it's a mixed bag.

Lobe asserts that the significance of the 1956 March not only emphasised women's opposition to pass laws but also asserted their political agency. Their actions affirmed a principle that remains relevant today: justice cannot be divided, and freedom cannot be selective.

The spirit of resistance did not end in 1956. It continued through successive generations, in the establishment of the ANC Youth League in 1944, leading up to the 1976 generation of students, young women

and men who refused to be taught in Afrikaans, followed by the "Fees Must Fall Generation," etc.

So, what is the situation of women now, 70 years after the March to the Union Buildings?

According to Statistics South Africa in 2026, women accounted for 93.6% of domestic workers, 94% of pre-primary teachers, 87.2% of nurses and midwives, and 91.9% of social work associate professionals. Despite improved earnings, women's median monthly earnings in 2024 remained about 82% of men's.

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The unequal distribution of unpaid work ... represents a significant structural barrier to women's economic empowerment. —
Nomfanelo Kota

Thus, the data above provide scientific evidence that women spend more time on unpaid household and caregiving activities than men.

Consequently, the unequal distribution of unpaid work also represents a significant structural barrier to women's economic empowerment.

Women with extensive caregiving responsibilities are less able to seek employment, accept full-time work, participate in training or engage in entrepreneurial activities. Young women often interrupt their education or employment to provide care, reinforcing cycles of economic exclusion and intergenerational disadvantage.

The jury is out

Poor Black women since the 1956 March continue to bear the brunt of extreme poverty with limited opportunities exacerbated by low levels of education.

Early this year, on my way to Muldersdrift, I saw a woman carrying a bundle of firewood on her head, just 30 minutes from Johannesburg's economic hub. This cannot be right, not in 2026, with all the resources our country has.

On the economic front, the picture remains grim.



Taking the lead: Prominent South African women business leaders have called for a structural reimagination of corporate environments to mainstream women not as an afterthought, but at the outset of their careers, writes Nomfanelo Kota. Photo: Vecteezy.com

Gender justice without economic growth remains worthless. Leaders like Mpumi Zikalala, Kumba Iron Ore CEO, say enough with symbolic representation. She demands tangible mechanisms to award bursaries to women in our workplaces, improving their chances of upward mobility. Recruitment must be targeted; succession planning should be considered much earlier than at the point of exit; and cultures should be genuinely inclusive, not just in name but in deed.

Her approach shifts the discourse from demanding a seat at the existing table to constructing an entirely larger one.

Business leaders such as Martha Evans, Mpumi Zikalala, Ramasela Ganda and Gina Schoeman all call for a structural reimagination of corporate environments to mainstream women not as an afterthought, but at the outset of their careers, especially in the mining sector.

All these leaders believe that when women are empowered to grow, de-

velop and lead, communities and businesses are stronger for it.

Whose job is it, therefore, to amplify the voices of the Class of 1956 to echo throughout our country beyond the walls of the Union Building?

I believe that, when Frantz Fanon spoke of "each generation discovering its mission, fulfilling it or betraying it" (to paraphrase him), he was referring to our generation, the ones who were handed the baton by the women of 1956.

If we have not defined our generational mission, we may not be able to grasp what the moment demands of us fully.

Women like Florence Matomela and Francis Baard knew their mission.

Women like Ivy Cikizwa Gcina raised their voices in Gqeberha.

As young activists reeling from tear gas and rubber bullets, we knew our mission: to fight for a free South Africa.

Younger women like Yolisa Makhasi, Lumka Oliphant, Vuy-

iseka Mboxela and Nompandolo Mkhathshwa are speaking truth to power, calling for a public service culture that is humane and regulations that not only speak about the principles of "Batho Pele" but also live those values.

Cultural activist Linda Mvusi calls for a generational mission that holds the line against resurgent global racism, sexism, and fascism.

In the words of Patience Banda, the beneficiaries of the struggles led by the women of 1956 must be at the centre of organising our communities, advancing economic freedom, fighting patriarchy and building a society where every woman and girl can live free from fear and in dignity.

Nomfanelo Kota, a veteran communicator, writes in her personal capacity.

Women's Month

SA women face steep climb to STEM leadership

Despite gains in higher education, translating qualifications into long-term careers remains difficult

JOHNATHAN PAOLI

As South Africa celebrated the achievements of women scientists through this month's Women in Science Awards, the country's science and technology sector remains a bitter-sweet landscape of gender inequality.

Women are earning almost half of the country's science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) qualifications and are increasingly entering research and innovation. Yet, they remain significantly under-represented in engineering, information technology, scientific leadership, and executive decision-making.

The contrast has placed renewed focus on efforts to strengthen the pipeline of girls entering STEM, with the government, universities, and the private sector launching a series of initiatives during National Science Month to inspire the next generation of women innovators.

Figures from the National Advisory Council on Innovation show women account for about 46% of all STEM graduates in South Africa, representing substantial progress over the past two decades.

Women have reached near parity in mathematics and the natural sciences, while making up 44% of mathematics and statistics graduates and 41% of graduates in computer and information sciences.

Engineering, however, remains the country's biggest challenge, with women accounting for just 33% of graduates in one of South Africa's most strategically important sectors.

Despite these gains in higher education, translating qualifications into long-term careers remains difficult. Research from the Department of



Aiming high: Some of the more than 100 Grade 12 learners from schools across Pretoria at the inaugural Girls in STEM Programme at the University of Pretoria's Sci-Enza science centre in August. Photo: University of Pretoria/Facebook

Science, Technology and Innovation and others indicates that women remain under-represented in senior research posts, STEM leadership and executive positions, illustrating what experts have termed the "leaky pipeline" — the gradual loss of women as careers progress.

Some estimates suggest that women make up only about 23% of South Africa's STEM workforce, with just 17% holding leadership positions. The disparity extends beyond representation.

Women in STEM continue to earn significantly less than their male counterparts, with research estimating a gender pay gap of around 28%. At the same time, broader labour market data shows women remain less likely to be employed despite constituting more than half of South Africa's working-age population.

These persistent inequalities have prompted renewed government efforts to intervene much earlier in the education pipeline.

Science, Technology and Innovation Deputy Minister Nomalungelo Gina launched the inaugural Girls in STEM Programme at the University of Pretoria's Sci-Enza science centre in August, bringing together more than 100 Grade 12 learners from schools across Pretoria.

The programme, established through a partnership between the Departments of Science, Technology

and Innovation and Basic Education, the University of Pretoria, UNESCO, LOreal South Africa and the National Research Foundation, seeks to expose young women to careers in science while connecting them with mentors and accomplished women scientists.

Addressing the learners, Gina said the initiative represented far more than another education programme.

"Today is the opening of pathways, possibilities and purpose. To the young women in this audience, I want you to know this: science needs you. Africa needs you. The future needs you," she said.

Gina acknowledged that while talent is evenly distributed, opportunities often are not, with many girls continuing to encounter barriers that prevent them from pursuing careers in science and innovation.

"Together, we are creating an ecosystem that nurtures curiosity, unlocks talent and expands opportunity. Through programmes such as this, we are introducing girls to inspiring women scientists and innovators, providing access to mentors and role models, and demonstrating that careers in science are within their reach," Gina said.

University of Pretoria Vice-Chancellor Professor Francis Petersen echoed that message, encouraging the learners to view STEM not as exclusive disciplines but as fields in which they belong.



Questioning minds: Two learners examine an animal's skeleton during the inaugural Girls in STEM Programme at the University of Pretoria. Photo: University of Pretoria/Facebook

plines but as fields in which they belong.

"Science, technology, engineering and mathematics are not subjects that belong to someone else; they belong to you too," he said.

Petersen stressed that women would play a critical role in solving Africa's challenges in healthcare, food security, clean energy, climate resilience and digital innovation.

The University of Pretoria programme forms part of a broader national push to encourage more girls to pursue science before they make crucial subject and career choices. Just weeks before the launch, Gina travelled to the deep rural area of Manguzi in northern KwaZulu-Natal, where more than 1,000 learners attended the area's first-ever STEM Career Expo as part of the department's National Science Month programme.

Featuring demonstrations in artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, virtual reality, agriculture and renewable energy, the event sought to show learners that careers in science and technology were within reach, regardless of where they came from.

The department has also turned its attention to ensuring innovation opportunities extend beyond major cities and universities.

During a visit to the Innovate Durban Living Lab in Cato Manor last month, Gina said innovation ecosystems needed to be embedded with-

in township communities to remove barriers that often prevent young entrepreneurs from accessing support.

"A young innovator should not have to spend money they do not have simply to access advice, guidance and support. Innovation ecosystems must be accessible, inclusive and rooted in communities," she said.

The innovation hub has already registered more than 70 businesses, supported the creation of 51 jobs and attracted R7.3 million in investment, highlighting how science and innovation can drive local economic development while opening opportunities for women and young entrepreneurs.

The government's renewed focus came as South Africa prepared for a series of flagship events celebrating women in science and technology during Women's Month. The department will host its annual South African Women in Science Awards, recognising outstanding women researchers and young scientists whose work contributes to national development.

Alongside the awards, initiatives such as the Womandla Women in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics) Awards continue to showcase women making significant contributions across science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics while encouraging the next generation to follow similar career paths.

Women's Month

Women must carry empowerment beyond Women's Month

Too many women allow their circumstances or society's expectations to determine what they believe they can achieve, says Bulelani Mooi

CHARMAINE NDLELA

Entrepreneur and philanthropist Bulelani "Buli" Mooi has called on women and girls to carry the spirit of empowerment beyond Women's Month, saying confidence, education and a strong sense of identity are critical to overcoming financial hardship and social expectations.

Speaking to *Inside Education*, the founder of Umfazi WomXhosa said too many women allow their circumstances or society's expectations to determine what they believe they can achieve.

"Be proud of who you are. Be proud of where you come from and never let anyone make you believe that your dreams are too big. Your dreams are valid." It is a message shaped by Mooi's own experiences.

Inspired by the spirit of "Abafazi Belizwe" (Women of the Nation), Umfazi WomXhosa aims to create a platform where women can exchange ideas, build partnerships and support one another through the different stages of life.

Grounded in culture, community and empowerment, the organisation celebrates womanhood in all its forms, from motherhood and marriage to leadership, caregiving, mentorship and legacy building. It also focuses on entrepreneurship, financial literacy, wellness, mental health, trauma counselling and cultural identity.

For Mooi, the initiative is ultimately about building a sisterhood in which women are equipped with practical tools to improve their lives and those of the people around them.

"When you empower a woman, you empower a family, a community and the next generation." She also wants women, particularly young girls, to see their cultural identity as a source of strength rather than a limitation.

"Our culture is part of who we are. Knowing where you come from gives you the confidence to know where you're going."

From financial hardship to entrepreneurship

Long before becoming an entrepreneur, motivational speaker and founder of the Bulela Foundation,

Mooi was a young woman from Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape whose dream of studying nearly ended because her family could not afford tertiary education.

After passing matric in 1998, she faced the reality that university was beyond her family's means.

"My mother said to me, 'I'm sorry, my girl. We don't have money to take you to university.' I cried the whole weekend because I thought my future had ended."

“Every girl should leave school believing that she can become a leader, own a business, create jobs and make a meaningful contribution to society. — Bulelani “Buli” Mooi

Instead of allowing disappointment to define her future, Mooi sought a way forward. With help from family members, she moved to Cape Town and worked as a waitress to finance her education.

She completed an office administration course before securing a bursary to study food and beverage management. She later obtained a diploma in the field and a BCom in management and marketing science.

Her qualifications opened the door to a corporate career with companies including Nestlé, Unilever, Motion Business Solutions and Moir's before she moved into entrepreneurship.

Her own experience of overcoming financial barriers has shaped her belief that education remains one of the most powerful tools available to young women.

"Education changes the way you see yourself. It gives you confidence, knowledge and the courage to pursue opportunities you once thought were impossible."

Mooi believes education should not simply prepare learners to pass



Overcoming obstacles: Bulelani Mooi's experience of overcoming financial barriers has shaped her belief that education remains one of the most powerful tools available to young women. Photo: Eddie Mtsweni

examinations. Schools should equip young people with leadership skills, entrepreneurial skills, financial literacy, and the confidence to solve real-world problems.

"We need to prepare learners for life, not just for tests. Every girl should leave school believing that she can become a leader, own a business, create jobs and make a meaningful contribution to society."

She also believes educational opportunities should not depend on a learner's background.

"Talent exists everywhere. What many young people need is someone who believes in them and gives them an opportunity to succeed," she said.

Reclaiming women's identity

As Mooi progressed through the corporate world, she became increasingly aware of the social pressures faced by many young African women.

She noticed that women were often judged by whether they were married, leaving some to feel inadequate if they had not found a husband.

That observation helped inspire Umfazi WomXhosa, which seeks to reinforce women's identities beyond marriage and other social expectations.

"It starts with you. You have to do the work on yourself. You have to celebrate your achievements. Your worth is not determined by whether or not

you have a ring on your finger."

Mooi believes a lack of confidence, rather than a lack of talent, is one of the greatest barriers facing young women.

Many girls grow up believing they are not good enough because they compare themselves with others or absorb society's expectations about what women should become.

"I want every young girl to leave school believing in herself," she said. "Confidence, resilience and self-respect are just as important as academic qualifications because they shape how you see yourself and what you believe is possible."

She urged parents, teachers and communities to nurture girls' confidence from an early age.

"When you know your worth, you stop looking for validation from other people. As women, we have to teach our daughters that they are enough exactly as they are."

Mooi also wants women to move away from competition and embrace collaboration.

Through Umfazi WomXhosa, she hopes to create spaces where women mentor one another, build businesses together and celebrate each other's achievements.

"There is room for all of us to succeed. When one woman rises, she creates opportunities for another woman to rise."

Creating opportunities for others

Mooi's belief in creating opportunities is also reflected in the Bulela Foundation's work.

The foundation has collaborated with organisations, including the 31 Club and the Tshegofatso GBV Organisation, on initiatives that support women and young people, address gender-based violence, and strengthen communities.

It also assists learners with school fees, uniforms, mentorship, access to university, and other educational needs.

"Someone gave me an opportunity when I needed one. I believe it is my responsibility to create opportunities for others."

For Mooi, breaking cycles of disadvantage requires more than individual determination. South Africa must address inequalities between well-resourced schools and those in disadvantaged communities so that a child's future is not determined by where they were born or educated.

She also believes the country needs to confront difficult issues such as gender-based violence and mental health.

"We cannot continue pretending these issues do not exist."

Mooi argues that emotional wellbeing and self-worth are closely linked to the choices women make about their futures.

"When women are emotionally healthy and know their value, they are more likely to make decisions that protect their futures," she said.

Taking culture into the future

At the heart of Mooi's work is the conviction that cultural identity and modern success are not mutually exclusive.

"Our culture is our identity. It reminds us who we are and where we come from," she said. "A woman can embrace her heritage while becoming a leader in business, education or any profession she chooses."

She hopes Umfazi WomXhosa will help women navigate the changing expectations of womanhood while remaining connected to their roots and supporting one another.

Ultimately, Mooi wants her own journey to serve as evidence that difficult circumstances do not have to determine the limits of a person's future.

"I want people to remember me as someone who believed in her dreams and encouraged others to believe in theirs."

Her message to young women extends well beyond Women's Month.

"Never stop believing in yourself. Your circumstances may challenge you, but they do not define you. Dream boldly, work hard and never let anyone tell you that your dreams are too big."

Women's Month

Soweto entrepreneur helps women reclaim township economy, one spaza shop at a time

CHARMAINE NDLELA

As South Africa marks Women's Month, 27-year-old Zinhle Sindane is working to help women reclaim their place in the country's township economy — one spaza shop at a time. The Mpumalanga-born entrepreneur is the founder of the Phiwokuhle Empowerment Foundation (PEF), an initiative aimed at transforming the spaza shop sector through business training, mentorship, compliance support, funding opportunities and technology.

Speaking to *Inside Education* during the foundation's first community engagement in Moletsane, Soweto, Sindane said that Women's Month should highlight the importance of equipping women with the tools and opportunities to build businesses, create jobs, and shape their communities.

"Women's empowerment means creating an environment where women have equal opportunities to learn, lead and make decisions about their own lives. We need women to own businesses, create jobs and become leaders in their communities," she said.

Challenge

For Sindane, the challenge is not simply getting entrepreneurs to open businesses but helping them build enterprises that can survive and grow. PEF supports existing and aspiring spaza shop owners who often struggle to access capital, business knowledge and structured support, providing assistance with compliance, mentorship, financial literacy, funding opportunities and partnerships with government and the private sector.

Sindane also wants township businesses to support local manufacturing by encouraging spaza shops to source

products from South African manufacturers.

"Many township businesses are dominated by foreign-owned shops. We believe it is time for our own people to participate meaningfully in this economy. At the same time, we want to support South African manufacturers by ensuring our spaza shops source products locally," she said.

“We need women to own businesses, create jobs and become leaders in their communities. — Zinhle Sindane

But PEF co-founder Nkululeko Ngobese says the conversation cannot end with calls for foreign-owned businesses to leave townships. South Africans must first be equipped to fill the economic space that could be left behind.

"We are among those who say Abahambe, but there comes a point where we have to ask ourselves what happens after that," Ngobese said. "If foreign-owned businesses leave tomorrow, who will provide bread, milk, sugar and other essentials? If our people are not prepared, that space will simply be occupied by someone else, whether it's large retailers or other interests. Ordinary South Africans will still be left out."

Ngobese said PEF was established in response to the structural challenges facing township entrepreneurs, particularly the lack of access to capital, business knowledge and organised support.

"We are not a charity organisation, and we are not a political party. We



Serving the community: The Phiwokuhle Empowerment Foundation provides spaza shop owners with help with compliance, mentorship, financial literacy, funding opportunities and partnerships with government and the private sector. Photo: Eddie Mtsweni



Motivated: Zinhle Sindane, founder of the Phiwokuhle Empowerment Foundation, urges the government and the private sector to make funding and support more accessible to women entrepreneurs. Photo: Charmaine Ndlela

are looking for people who are serious about business because we have a vision to protect," he said.

Sindane said compliance was an important part of that process. "Registering a business is only the beginning. Many entrepreneurs don't know they also need trading permits, municipal certificates, business bank accounts and other compliance requirements. Without those, they struggle to access funding. We want to guide them through every step so they can build businesses that survive."

Building buying power

One of PEF's key strategies is collective purchasing. Sindane said many small businesses struggle to compete because they buy stock individually and therefore pay more. By buying collectively, entrepreneurs can negotiate better prices, reduce costs and improve competitiveness.

The foundation also wants to bring technology into township retail. Sindane said PEF was working with technology partners to introduce affordable digital payment systems, loyalty programmes and improved retail management practices, with the ambition of turning neighbourhood spaza shops into genuine retail destinations rather than places where customers only buy emergency items.

"We want people to do their monthly

but I believe that once people see the vision, they will support it," she said.

She hopes to establish the first model spaza shop before taking the concept to other provinces and is calling on the government and the private sector to make funding and support more accessible to women entrepreneurs. "Women have the ideas and determination to build businesses, but they need easier access to funding, mentorship and training. If we invest in women, we invest in stronger communities and a stronger economy."

Learning from failure

Aspiring entrepreneurs seeking practical guidance on starting and sustaining businesses, with women making up the majority of participants.

For Mamello Sithole, the session offered a chance to learn from her own experience. She previously owned a spaza shop, but the business failed, which she attributes partly to a lack of management skills. "Today I learned that having a business and managing one successfully are two different things," she said, urging the government to invest in more practical entrepreneurship workshops.

Another participant, Lebohlang Morodi, said business skills could help women achieve greater financial independence. "When women are economically empowered, they become less dependent on men and are able to provide for themselves and their families," she said.

For Morodi, entrepreneurship is also part of the legacy of the women who marched to the Union Buildings in 1956. "They fought for equality and justice. We continue that legacy by persevering, working hard and refusing to stop when something doesn't work. If one business fails, learn from it and try again," she said, adding that she has tried several ventures herself, some of which failed, and came to the workshop to learn how to build something more sustainable.

As Women's Month turns the spotlight on the achievements and ambitions of women across South Africa, Sindane hopes PEF can help shift the perception of entrepreneurship from a means of survival to a vehicle for rebuilding township economies — one built on women running sustainable businesses, creating jobs and helping communities become active drivers of their own economic future.

QUESTION/VRAG 1 [30 MARKS/PUNTE] ANSWER ONLY FULL MARKS			
Q/V	Solution/Oplissing	Explanation/Verduideliking	T&L
1.1.1	Vertical bar graph/ <i>vertikale staafgrafiek</i> . Bar/ <i>Balk</i> /Staa <i>f</i> ; Column graph/ <i>Kolomgrafiek</i> ✓✓A	2A bar graph (2)	D L1
1.1.2	✓MA A = R110 + R11 = R121 ✓CA	1MA adding correct values 1CA Simplification (2)	F L1
1.1.3	✓MA B = R141 – R126 = R15 ✓CA	1MA subtracting correct values 1CA simplification (2)	F L1
1.1.4	Difference/ <i>Verskil</i> R126 – R110 ✓MA = R16 ✓A	1MA subtract lowest from highest 1A simplification (2)	F L1

Q/V	Solution/Opslossing	Explanation/Verduideliking	T&L
1.3.1	✓A Strip Map (Chart)/Strookkaart ✓✓A	2A strip map (chart)	MP L1
1.3.2	Distance in metre/Afstand in meter = $779 \times 1\,000$ ✓MA = 779 000 ✓A	1MA multiplying by 1 000 1A simplifying NPU	M L1
1.3.3 (a)	✓A Ladismith AND/EN ✓A Calitzdorp	1A correct town 1A correct town	MP L1
1.3.3 (b)	The distance from Riversdale to Oudtshoorn/ Afstand vanaf Riversdal na Oudtshoorn = 82 km + 45 km + 53 km ✓MA = 180 km ✓CA	1MA adding correct values 1CA simplification	MP L1
		(2)	
		[30]	

QUESTION/VRAAG 2 [42 MARKS/PUNTE]			
Q/V	Solution/Oplissing	Explanation/Verduideliking	T&L
2.1.1	R4 656,71 ✓✓A	2A correct balance	F L1 (2)
2.1.2	Full date/Volle datum 1 February/Februarie 2019 ✓✓A 01/02/19 01/02/2019	2A full date	F L1 (2)
2.1.3	R1 215,36 ✓✓A	2A correct amount	F L1 (2)
2.1.4	R3 750,00 ✓✓A	2A correct amount	F L1 (2)
2.1.5	FNB electronic payments/ENB elektroniese betaling ✓RT ✓RT R101,99 + R698,01 = R800,00 ✓A	1RT 1 st value correct 1RT 2 nd value correct 1A simplification AO	F L1 (3)

[illegible]

Q/V	Solution/Opslossing	Explanation/Verduideliking	T&L										
2.3.1	Selling price of one photo/<i>Verkoopprys van een foto</i> ✓MA <table><tr><td>R500</td><td>R1000</td><td>R1600</td><td>R2500</td><td>R3000</td></tr><tr><td>25</td><td>50</td><td>80</td><td>125</td><td>150</td></tr></table> OR = R20 ✓A OR/OF R4 000 ÷ 200 ✓MA = R20 ✓A	R500	R1000	R1600	R2500	R3000	25	50	80	125	150	1MA dividing 1A simplification AO	F L1
R500	R1000	R1600	R2500	R3000									
25	50	80	125	150									
2.3.2	Total income received/<i>Totale inkomste ontvang:</i> ✓CA ✓A Income = R20,00 × <i>n</i>, where <i>n</i> = number of photos Income = R20,00 × number of photos <i>Inkomste = R20,00 × n, waar n = aantal foto's</i> <i>Inkomste = R20,00 × aantal foto's</i>	CA from Question 2.3.1 1CA R20,00 1A multiply by unknown	F L2										
2.3.3 (a)	R5,00 ✓A	2A variable cost NPU	F L1										

QUESTION/VRAG 3 [31 MARKS/PUNTE]			
Q/V	Solution/Oplissing	Explanation/Verduideliking	T&L
3.1.1	<u>Legs of ottomans/Pote van ottomans:</u> 2 cubic/kubieke ottomans $\times$ 4 legs/pote $=$ 8 legs/pote $\checkmark_A$ 1 retangular/reghoekige ottoman $\times$ 6 legs/pote $=$ 6 legs/pote 8 + 6 $\checkmark_{MA}$ $=$ 14 legs/pote $\checkmark_{CA}$	1A number of legs 1MA adding 6 legs 1CA total number of legs AO	M L1 (3)
3.1.2	Radius $= \frac{75 \text{ mm}}{2} \checkmark_{MA}$ $= 37,5 \text{ mm} / 3,75 \text{ cm} \checkmark_A$	1MA concept of radius 1A simplification AO NPR	M L1 (2)
3.1.3	Total height/Totale hoogte: 50 cm + 12 cm $\checkmark_C$ $=$ 62cm $\checkmark_A$ OR/OF Total height/Totale hoogte: $=$ 120 mm + 500 mm $=$ 620 mm $\checkmark_A$ $=$ 62 cm $\checkmark_C$	1C converting to cm 1A finding the height AO	M L1 (2)

M L2	Solution/Oplissing	Explanation/Verduideliking	T&L
	Area/Oppervlakte ✓A ✓A $(50\text{cm} \times 50\text{cm}) + (120\text{cm} \times 50\text{cm})$ $2\,500\text{ cm}^2 + 6\,000\text{ cm}^2$ Total Area/Totale Oppervlakte $(10 \times 2\,500\text{ cm}^2) + (2 \times 6\,000\text{ cm}^2)$ ✓M $25\,000\text{ cm}^2 + 12\,000\text{ cm}^2$ ✓M $37\,000\text{ cm}^2$ ✓CA OR/OF 8 square sides/<i>vierkantige sye</i> $\times (50 \times 50)$ $= 20\,000\text{ cm}^2$ ✓A 2 rectangular sides/<i>reghoekige sye</i> $\times (120 \times 50)$ $= 12\,000\text{ cm}^2$ ✓A 2 square sides / <i>vierkantige sye</i> $\times (50 \times 50)$ $= 5\,000\text{ cm}^2$ ✓A Total area to be painted/<i>Totale area wat geverf moet word:</i> $= 20\,000\text{ cm}^2 + 12\,000\text{ cm}^2 + 5\,000\text{ cm}^2$ ✓M $= 37\,000\text{ cm}^2$ ✓MA OR/OF Total perimeter/Totale Omtrek $(50+50+50+50+50+50+50+120+50+50+120)\text{ cm}$ ✓A ✓M $= 740\text{ cm}$ ✓A Total area to be painted/<i>Totale area wat geverf moet word:</i> $= 740\text{ cm} \times 50\text{ cm}$ ✓MA $= 37\,000\text{ cm}^2$ ✓A	1A area 1A area 1M multiplying correct values 1M adding the two areas 1CA simplification OR/OF 1A simplification 1A simplification 1A simplification 1M adding all values 1MA finding total area OR/OF 1A all correct values 1M adding correct values 1A simplification 1MA multiplying correct values 1A simplification	

(5)

Q/V	Solution/Oplossing	Explanation/Verduideliking	T&L
3.1.5	$37\,000\text{ cm}^2 + 10\,000 = 3,7\text{ m}^2 \checkmark C$ Total area to be painted/ <i>Totale area wat gevef moet word</i> $= 3,7\text{ m}^2 \times 2 \checkmark M$ $= 7,4\text{ m}^2$ Spread rate/ <i>sprydingskoers</i> $\frac{7,4\text{ m}^2}{8\text{ m}^2} \times 1\,000 \checkmark M$ $= 925\text{ millilitres/milliliter} \checkmark CA$ OR/OF Spread rate/ <i>sprydingskoers</i> $= 8 \times 10\,000\text{ cm}^2/\ell$ $= 80\,000\text{ cm}^2/\ell \checkmark M$ Amount of paint / <i>aantal verf</i> in $\ell = \frac{37\,000}{80\,000} \checkmark M$ $= 0,4625$ Amount of paint for 1 coat / <i>aantal verf vir 1 deklaag</i> in $\text{m}\ell$ $= 0,4625 \times 1\,000$ $= 462,5 \checkmark C$ Amount of paint for 2 coats/ <i>aantal verf vir twee deklae</i> $= 462,5\text{ m}\ell \times 2$ $= 925\text{ m}\ell \checkmark CA$ OR/OF Total area to be painted/ <i>Totale area wat gevef moet word:</i> $= 37\,000\text{ cm}^2 + (100)^2 = 3,7\text{ m}^2 \checkmark C$ Amount of paint for 1 coat/ <i>aantal ver vir 1 deklaag</i> in ℓ $= \frac{3,7}{8} \times 1 \checkmark M$ $= 0,4625\ell$ Total amount of paint/ <i>Totale aantal verf</i> $= 0,4625 \times 1000 \times 2 \checkmark M$ $= 925\text{ m}\ell \checkmark CA$ OR/OF	CA Question 3.1.4 1C converting from cm^2 to m^2 1M area for 2 coats 1M divide by spread rate 1CA answer in millilitres OR/OF 1M multiplying by 8 1M dividing by 80 000 1C converting 1CA simplification OR/OF 1C conversion 1M dividing by 8 1M area of 2 coats 1CA simplification OR/OF	M L2

Q/V	Solution/Oplossing	Explanation/Verduideliking	T&L
	$8\text{ m}^2 : 1\ell$ $80\,000\text{ cm}^2 : x \checkmark C$ Amount of paint for 1 coat/ <i>aantal verf vir 1 deklaag</i> $x = \frac{1000 \times 37\,000}{80\,000} \checkmark M$ $= 462,5\text{ m}\ell$ Amount of paint for 2 coats/ <i>aantal verf vir twee deklae</i> $= 462,5\text{ m}\ell \times 2 \checkmark M$ $= 925\text{ m}\ell \checkmark CA$ OR/OF Total area to be painted/ <i>Totale area wat gevef moet word</i> $= 37\,000 + 10\,000 \checkmark C$ $= 3,7\text{ m}^2 \times 2 \checkmark M$ $= 7,4\text{ m}^2$ Spread rate/ <i>sprydingskoers</i> in $\text{m}\ell/\ell$ $1\,000 \div 8 \checkmark M$ $= 125\text{ m}\ell/\ell$ Amount of paint/ <i>aantal verf</i> $125 \times 7,4\text{ m}^2$ $= 925\text{ m}\ell \checkmark CA$	1C conversion 1M dividing by 80 000 1M area of 2 coats 1CA simplification OR/OF 1C conversion 1M area of 2 coats 1M dividing by 8 1CA simplification (4)	
3.1.6	Height/Hoogte $= \frac{\text{Volume}}{\pi \times (\text{radius})^2 \checkmark C}$ $= \frac{1\,000\text{ cm}^3}{3,142 \times (6,5\text{ cm})^2} \checkmark SF$ $= 7,53298\dots\text{ cm} \checkmark CA$	1C conversion from litres to cm^3 1SF substitution of radius 1CA simplification NPR (3)	M L2
3.2.1	a) W or White/ <i>Wit</i> $\checkmark RT$ b) SB or Synthetic Brown leather/ <i>Sintetiese bruin leer</i> $\checkmark RT$	2RT correct code 2RT correct code (4)	P L1

Q/V	Solution/Oplossing	Explanation/Verduideliking	T&L
3.2.2	$P(\text{not selecting red material}) = \frac{6}{9} \checkmark A$ $= \frac{2}{3} \checkmark A$ OR/OF $P(\text{not selecting red material}) = 1 - \frac{3}{9}$ $= \frac{6}{9} \checkmark A$ $= \frac{2}{3} \checkmark A$ (3)	1A numerator 1A denominator 1CA simplification OR/OF 1M dividing by 60 1A simplification (2)	P L2
3.3.1	1 inch = $153,6 \div 60 \checkmark M$ $= 2,56\text{ cm} \checkmark A$ OR/OF Alternative solution method: inch : cm 60 : 153,6 $\checkmark M$ 1 : 2,56 $\checkmark A$ 1 inch = 2,56 cm (2)	1M dividing by 60 1A simplification (2)	M L1
3.3.2	Perimeter/ <i>Omtrek</i> $= 2 \times (5\text{ m} + 153,6\text{ cm}) \checkmark RT$ $= 2 \times (500\text{ cm} + 153,6\text{ cm}) \checkmark C$ $= 1\,307,2\text{ cm} \checkmark CA$ OR/OF Perimeter/ <i>Omtrek</i> $= 5\text{ m} + 5\text{ m} + 153,6\text{ cm} + 153,6\text{ cm} \checkmark RT$ $= (500 + 500 + 153,6 + 153,6)\text{ cm} \checkmark C$ $= 1\,307,2\text{ cm} \checkmark CA$ (3)	1RT correct value – 153,6 cm 1C converting from 5 m to cm 1CA simplification OR/OF 1RT correct value – 153,6 cm 1C converting from 5 m to cm 1CA simplification (3)	M L2
		[31]	

QUESTION/VRAAG 4 [17 MARKS/PUNTE]			
Q/V	Solution/Oplossing	Explanation/Verduideliking	T&L
4.1.1	R46 $\checkmark \checkmark A$	2A name of route (2)	MP L1
4.1.2	Number scale OR Numeric scale OR Ratio scale $\checkmark \checkmark A$ <i>Nommerskaal OF verhoudingskaal OF</i> Getalskaal OF Numeriese OF Getalle Skaal OF Syferskaal	2A identifying the scale (2)	MP L1
4.1.3	South West OR SW OR West of South West OR WSW $\checkmark \checkmark A$ <i>Suidwes OF SW OF</i> Wes van Suidwes OF WSW	2A general direction (2)	MP L1
4.1.4	A = 210 km – (62 km + 13 km + 82 km) $\checkmark MA$ A = 53 km $\checkmark CA$	1MA subtracting correct values 1CA simplification (2)	MP L1
4.1.5	Ladismith $\checkmark \checkmark A$	2A correct town (2)	MP L2
4.2.1	Total length / <i>Totale lengte</i> $\checkmark MA$ $= 20\text{ cm} + 229\text{ cm} + 20\text{ cm} + 20\text{ cm} + 229\text{ cm} + 20\text{ cm} \checkmark MA$ $= 538\text{ cm} \checkmark CA$ OR/OF Total length / <i>Totale lengte</i> $\checkmark MA$ $= 2(20\text{ cm} + 229\text{ cm} + 20\text{ cm}) \checkmark MA$ $= 2 \times 269\text{ cm} \checkmark C$ $= 538\text{ cm} \checkmark CA$ OR / OF Total length/ <i>Totale lengte</i> $\checkmark MA$ $= (20\text{ cm} \times 4) + (229\text{ cm} \times 2) \checkmark MA$ $= 80\text{ cm} + 458\text{ cm}$ $= 538\text{ cm} \checkmark CA$ (3)	1MA correct values (4×20) 1MA adding values (2×229) 1CA simplification OR / OF 1MA correct values (4×20) 1MA adding values (2×229) 1CA simplification (3)	MP L2

Q/V	Solution/Oplossing	Explanation/Verduideliking	T&L
4.2.2	$D + 86 + 80 + 86 + D = 260 \checkmark MA$ $2D + 252 = 260 \checkmark M$ $2D = 260 - 252$ $2D = 8$ $D = 8 \div 2 \checkmark M$ $= 4\text{ cm} \checkmark CA$ OR/OF Length excluding D $= (86\text{ cm} \times 2) + (20\text{ cm} \times 4)$ $= 172\text{ cm} + 80\text{ cm}$ $= 252\text{ cm} \checkmark MA$ $2D = 260\text{ cm} - 252\text{ cm}$ $D = 8\text{ cm} \checkmark M$ $= 8\text{ cm} \div 2$ $= 4\text{ cm} \checkmark CA$ (4)	1MA adding all values 1M subtracting from 260 1M dividing by 2 1CA simplification OR/OF 1MA calculating 252 1M subtracting from 260 1M dividing by 2 1CA simplification (4)	MP L3
		[17]	

QUESTION/VRAAG 5 [30 MARKS/PUNTE]			
Q/V	Solution/Oplossing	Explanation/Verduideliking	T&L
5.1.1	TGA – team/ <i>span</i> ✓✓RT	2RT correct tea (2)	D L1
5.1.2	Range/ <i>Omvang</i> = 9,625 – 9,100 ✓RT = 0,525 ✓CA	1RT reading correct values 1CA concept of range (2)	D L1
5.1.3	Mean/ <i>Gemiddeld</i> ✓RT $= \frac{9,100 + 9,250 + 9,300 + 8,650 + 9,100 + 9,050 + 8,750 + 9,050 + 8,300 + 9,200}{10}$ = 8,975 ✓CA	1RT correct values 1M concept of mean 1CA simplification NPR (3)	D L2
5.1.4	✓RT A = 36,425 – (9,300 + 9,100 + 9,225) ✓M = 8,800 ✓A	1RT correct values 1M adding and subtracting 1A simplification (3)	D L1
5.1.5	36,425 ✓✓A	2A correct mode (2)	D L1
5.1.6	✓A $\frac{3}{5} \times 100\%$ ✓A = 60% ✓CA	1A numerator 1A denominator 1CA percentage NPR (3)	P L2
5.1.7	<i>Quartile / Kwartiel</i> 2 ✓RT $= \frac{9,375 + 9,400}{2}$ = 9,3875 ✓A	1RT arranging or correct values 1M dividing by 2 1A simplification NPR (3)	D L2

Q/V	Solution/Oplossing	Explanation/Verduideliking	T&L
5.2.1	Fifty two million nine hunderd and eighty two thousand. $\checkmark \checkmark A$ <i>Twee en vyftig miljoen negehonderd twee en tagtig duisend.</i>	2A amount in words (2)	D L1
5.2.2	Increase in population/ <i>Toename in bevolking</i> (2015-2016) $\checkmark RT \checkmark M$ $56\,020\,718 - 54\,901\,943$ $= 1\,118\,775$ $\approx 1\,120\,000 \checkmark R$	1RT correct values 1M subtracting 1R correct rounding (3)	D L1
5.2.3	Annual population growth/ <i>Jaarlikse bevolkingstoename</i> (2015) $\checkmark SF$ $= \frac{54\,901\,943 - 53\,947\,998}{53\,947\,998} \times 100\%$ $= 1,768\%$ $\approx 1,8\% \checkmark CA$	1SF substituting 54 901 943 1SF substituting 53 947 998 1CA simplification NPR (3)	D L2

Q/V	Solution/Oplossing	Explanation/Verduideliking	T&L																				
5.2.4	Estimated total population and annual growth from 2013-2017 <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Year</th><th>Population (Number of people)</th><th>Population growth (in percentage)</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>2013</td><td>52 982 000</td><td>1.8</td></tr><tr><td>2014</td><td>53 947 998</td><td>1.9</td></tr><tr><td>2015</td><td>54 901 943</td><td>1.9</td></tr><tr><td>2016</td><td>56 020 718</td><td>2.1</td></tr><tr><td>2017</td><td>56 521 948</td><td>0.9</td></tr><tr><td>2018</td><td>57 725 606</td><td>2.1</td></tr></tbody></table>	Year	Population (Number of people)	Population growth (in percentage)	2013	52 982 000	1.8	2014	53 947 998	1.9	2015	54 901 943	1.9	2016	56 020 718	2.1	2017	56 521 948	0.9	2018	57 725 606	2.1	D L2
Year	Population (Number of people)	Population growth (in percentage)																					
2013	52 982 000	1.8																					
2014	53 947 998	1.9																					
2015	54 901 943	1.9																					
2016	56 020 718	2.1																					
2017	56 521 948	0.9																					
2018	57 725 606	2.1																					
	1A – correctly plotted number of people 1CA – drawing of graph 1A – correctly plotted population growth 1CA – drawing of graph																						
		(4)																					
		[30]																					
		TOTAL/TOTAAL: 150																					



basic education
Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

NSC 2019
MEO 2019
SC CANDIDATES

GRADE 12

ACCOUNTING
NOVEMBER 2020

MARKS: 300
TIME: 3 hours

This question paper consists of 20 pages and a 15-page answer book.

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- INSTRUCTIONS AND INFORMATION
- Read the following instructions carefully and follow them precisely.
1.

Answer ALL the questions.
2.

A special ANSWER BOOK is provided in which to answer ALL the questions.
3.

Show ALL workings to achieve part-marks.
4.

You may use a non-programmable calculator.
5.

You may use a dark pencil or blue/black ink to answer the questions.
6.

Where applicable, show ALL calculations to ONE decimal point.
7.

Write neatly and legibly.

8.
- Use the information in the table below as a guide when answering the question paper. Try NOT to deviate from it.

QUESTION 1: 45 marks; 25 minutes	
Topic:	This question integrates:
Manufacturing	Managerial accounting Concepts and Production Cost Statement Break-even analysis and interpretation Managing resources Internal control

QUESTION 2: 45 marks; 30 minutes	
Topic:	This question integrates:
VAT and Reconciliations	Financial accounting VAT calculations Bank reconciliations, Age analysis Managing resources Internal control processes

QUESTION 3: 40 marks; 25 minutes	
Topic:	This question integrates:
Inventory Valuation	Managing resources Weighted average method and FIFO method Internal controls

QUESTION 4: 65 marks; 40 minutes	
Topic:	This question integrates:
Fixed Assets and Financial Statements	Financial accounting Concepts and Balance Sheet with notes Managing resources Fixed asset management

QUESTION 5: 70 marks; 40 minutes	
Topic:	This question integrates:
Cash Flow Statement and Interpretation	Financial accounting Concepts, cash flow calculations Interpretation of financial information

QUESTION 6: 35 marks; 20 minutes	
Topic:	This question integrates:
Budgeting	Managerial accounting Cash Budget: analyse and interpret Managing resources Internal control

QUESTION 1: MANUFACTURING

(45 marks; 25 minutes)

- 1.1
- Choose an example in COLUMN B that matches the cost category in COLUMN A. Write only the letter (A–E) next to the question numbers (1.1.1 to 1.1.5) in the ANSWER BOOK.

COLUMN A	COLUMN B
1.1.1 Selling and distribution	A raw material issued for production
1.1.2 Direct labour	B bad debts
1.1.3 Administration	C depreciation on factory machinery
1.1.4 Factory overhead cost	D production wages
1.1.5 Direct material	E bank charges

- 1.2
- BERGVIEW MANUFACTURERS

This information relates to the financial year ended 29 February 2020. The business manufactures buckets.

REQUIRED:

- Prepare the following on 29 February 2020:
- 1.2.1

Factory Overhead Cost Note

(16)
- 1.2.2

Production Cost Statement

(10)

INFORMATION:

A. Stock balances

	29 February 2020 R	28 February 2019 R
Work-in-progress	?	130 000
Finished goods	140 000	155 500
Indirect material	14 300	12 400

B. Amounts extracted from the records on 29 February 2020

	R
Salary: factory foreman	150 000
Depreciation on factory equipment	145 000
Direct material cost	2 200 000
Direct labour cost	1 209 300
Indirect material purchased	33 100
Insurance	60 000
Water and electricity	115 000
Rent expense	113 000
Sales	6 500 000
Cost of sales (mark-up on cost: 60%)	?

• Insurance is shared by the factory, administration and the selling department in the ratio 3 : 2 : 1.

• Water and electricity for February 2020 is still outstanding, R12 000. The factory uses 80% of the water and electricity.

• Rent expense is distributed according to floor space used. The factory occupies 7 200 m² of the total floor space of 9 000 m².

- 1.3
- EASY FOODS

Easy Foods manufactures snack bars. The financial year ends on 31 December.

REQUIRED:

1.3.1

Explain why the change in units produced affected the fixed costs per unit.

(2)

1.3.2

Give TWO possible reasons for the increase in direct material cost per unit.

(4)

1.3.3

Explain why the business should not be satisfied with the level of production and the break-even point. Compare and quote figures for both years.

(6)

1.3.4

The owner, Mike, wants to reduce the weight of the snack bars from 80 grams to 75 grams while keeping the selling price at R12,50 each. Explain ONE reason against this option.

(2)

INFORMATION:

	2019		2018	
	Total	Per unit	Total	Per unit
Sales	R675 000	R12,50	R617 500	R9,50
Variable costs	R472 500	R8,75	R390 000	R6,00
Fixed costs	R191 160	R3,54	R191 160	R2,70
Direct material cost	R270 000	R5,00	R279 500	R4,30
Break-even units	50 976		50 000	
Units produced and sold	54 000		65 000	

QUESTION 2: VAT AND RECONCILIATIONS

(45 marks; 30 minutes)

- 2.1
- VAT

The following relates to Lunga Stores for the VAT period ended 30 April 2020. VAT at 15% applies to all goods.

REQUIRED:

Calculate the VAT amounts denoted by (i) to (iii) on the table. Indicate the effect of EACH answer on the amount payable to SARS. Refer to the example.

(8)

INFORMATION:

A. Amount owed to SARS on 1 April 2020, R5 500

B. Amounts from April 2020 Journals:

DETAILS	EXCLUDING VAT	INCLUDING VAT	VAT AMOUNT	EFFECT
Total sales	R544 500	R626 175	R81 675	Increase
Purchases of stock	174 900	201 135	(i)	?
Drawings of stock	32 000		(ii)	?
Bad debts		7 015	(iii)	?

- 2.2
- BANK RECONCILIATION AND INTERNAL CONTROL

The information relates to Plaston Traders for April 2020.

REQUIRED:

2.2.1

Show the entries that must be recorded in the Cash Journals.

(10)

- 2.2.2

Calculate the Bank Account balance on 30 April 2020.

(4)
- 2.2.3

Prepare the Bank Reconciliation Statement on 30 April 2020.

(9)
- 2.2.4

As internal auditor you are not happy with the control of cash in this business.

• Explain TWO problems to confirm your suspicion. Quote figures.

• Give advice on how EACH problem can be avoided in future.

(6)

INFORMATION:

A. Information from the Bank Reconciliation Statement on 31 March 2020:

Unfavourable balance as per Bank Statement	R19 500
Outstanding deposit	50 400
Outstanding cheques:	
Cheque 615 (dated 30 October 2020)	15 750
Cheque 960 (dated 20 March 2020)	11 850
Cheque 965 (dated 30 May 2020)	6 750
Unfavourable balance as per Bank Account in the Ledger	3 450

• The deposit of R50 400 appeared on the Bank Statement on 14 April 2020.

• Cheque 960, issued in March 2020, was reflected on the Bank Statement for April 2020 as R14 550. The Bank Statement is correct.

B. Provisional totals in the Cash Journals on 30 April 2020 before receiving the April Bank Statement:

• Cash Receipts Journal, R65 570

• Cash Payments Journal, R64 790

C. Information on the April 2020 Bank Statement which did not appear in the April 2020 Cash Journals:

DATE	DETAILS	DEBIT	CREDIT
11	ZL Nkosi (EFT by tenant)		R31 350
25	Debit order (Quick Insurance)	R9 750	
25	Unpaid cheque (P Grobler)	3 375	
28	Interest		150
29	Service fees	600	
30	Service fees	600	

- NOTE:

The bank duplicated the service fees in error. They will correct this error next month.
- D. Deposit entries in the April 2020 Cash Receipts Journal that do not agree with the April 2020 Bank Statement:
- R27 750 on 24 April 2020

• R44 000 on 26 April 2020. The Bank Statement reflected this as R33 500. An investigation revealed that the cash slips added up to R44 000, but only R33 500 was deposited. The shortfall cannot be traced and must be written off.
- E. Entries in the April 2020 Cash Payments Journal, not in the April 2020 Bank Statement:

DOCUMENTS	DATE	DETAILS	BANK
Cheque 980	29	PNA Suppliers	R8 600
EFT: P Sithole	30	Drawings	R7 300

- F. Bank Statement balance on 30 April 2020: ...?

- 2.3
- DEBTORS' AGE ANALYSIS

The information relates to Tonga Hardware.

REQUIRED:

2.3.1

Explain how the Debtors' Age Analysis will assist the business in managing debtors more effectively.

(2)

2.3.2

Explain TWO separate problems highlighted by the age analysis. Provide evidence for EACH.

(4)

2.3.3

State TWO strategies that Tonga Hardware can use to ensure that only reliable applicants are granted credit.

(2)

INFORMATION:

A. Debtors are granted 30 days to settle their accounts.

B. Debtors' age analysis on 29 February 2020:

DEBTORS	CREDIT LIMIT	AMOUNT OWING	CURRENT AMOUNT	30 DAYS	60 DAYS	90 DAYS
N Nene	9 000	7 500	3 150	4 350		
P Palm	5 250	6 300	5 700	600		
D Duma	10 500	2 175	750			1 425
S Swart	19 500	18 750	1 500	4 500	6 750	6 000
		44 250	34 725	11 100	9 450	6 750
					7 425	

- QUESTION 3: INVENTORY VALUATION
- (40 marks; 25 minutes)
- 3.1

Complete the sentences by filling in the correct stock valuation method. Write only the answer next to the question numbers (3.1.1 to 3.1.3) in the ANSWER BOOK.

3.1.1

The ... method assumes that stock is sold in order of date purchased.

3.1.2

The ... method divides the total cost of goods available for sale by the number of units.

3.1.3

The ... method is used for very expensive, individually recognisable items.

(3 x 1)

(3)
- 3.2

JJ FASHION HOUSE

JJ Fashion House uses the periodic stock system. Janine Naidoo owns the business.

REQUIRED:

Refer to Information A: Jeans

3.2.1

Calculate the following on 29 February 2020:

• Value of the closing stock using the weighted-average method

• Gross profit

(6)

(4)

3.2.2

Calculate how long (in days) it will take to sell the closing stock of the jeans.

(4)

3.2.3

Janine is considering a change in the method of valuing stock.

• Calculate the value of closing stock using the FIFO method.

• State ONE advantage of using the FIFO method.

(7)

(2)

Refer to Information B: Jackets

3.2.4

The owner is concerned about the theft.

• Calculate the number of jackets stolen.

• Give TWO solutions to solve the problem.

(4)

(4)

3.2.5

The internal auditor is concerned about the stock levels and the selling price of jackets.

Explain reasons for his concern, with figures, and give different advice in EACH case.

(6)

INFORMATION:

A. Jeans:

	UNITS	UNIT PRICE	TOTAL
Opening stock (1 March 2019)	240		R124 500
Purchases	3 150		R1 813 000
May 2019	1 300	R560	R728 000
October 2019	1 450	R580	R841 000
January 2020	400	R610	R244 000
Subtotal	3 390		R1 937 500
Returns from January purchases	130	R610	R79 300
Sales	2 880	R960	R2 764 800
Closing stock (29 February 2020)	380	?	?

B. Jackets:

	2020 (UNITS)	2019
Opening stock	1 760	
Purchases (less returns)	6 500	
Units available for sale	8 260	
Closing stock	2 980	
Units sold	5 020	
Weighted-average cost per unit	R700	R630
Selling price per unit	R1 450	R1 070
Stock-holding period	216 days	103 days
Mark-up % achieved	107%	70%

40

Sport

Concern grows over school rugby doping cases

JOHNATHAN PAOLI

The recent doping cases involving two of South Africa's promising young rugby props have renewed concerns about performance-enhancing drugs in schoolboy rugby, with the South African Institute for Drug-Free Sport (SAIDS) warning that pressure from adults and the increasingly lucrative pathway to professional rugby are among the biggest drivers of the problem.

While the vast majority of schoolboy rugby players continue to test clean, SAIDS chief executive Khalid Galant says the latest cases highlight a challenge that has persisted for more than a decade.

Former South African Schools 'A' and Blue Bulls U18 prop Deon Botes was handed a four-year suspension after testing positive for metabolites of the anabolic steroid nandrolone during the 2025 U18 Craven Week. His sanction runs until August 2029 after a disciplinary panel rejected his explanation that the substance entered his system through a supplement marketed as 'Testojoint'.

The case follows that of Junior Springbok and Sharks prop Kai Pratt, whose A-sample tested positive for an anabolic steroid ahead of the SANZAAR Under-20 Rugby Championship. Pratt has requested analysis of his B-sample, with reports indicating that the additional testing costs about R27,000 and must be paid by the athlete.

Galant said the cases should not cause panic, but neither should they be dismissed as isolated incidents.

"It has been an issue over the last 16 years. I won't call it an outlier in terms of these positive tests, but one also has to look at the context of testing," he said.

SAIDS conducts extensive testing at Craven Week, South Africa's premier under-18 rugby tournament, where hundreds of the country's leading schoolboy players compete in front of provincial and international scouts.

At the 2025 tournament, 131 tests were conducted, and Botes' was the only positive result. SAIDS has historically conducted between 120 and 150 tests at Craven Week each year. Galant said that before 2020, there were years in which at least seven players tested positive. "Globally, seven tests for 150 tests at schoolboy-level sport is very high," he said.

Testing is targeted rather than entirely random, with SAIDS considering factors such as teams, individual players, and playing positions.

The overwhelming majority of positive results involve anabolic steroids,



particularly nandrolone and its metabolites. Galant said that while there have been some cases involving contaminated supplements, investigations frequently point to deliberate use.

More troubling, he said, is the role adults can play in enabling young athletes to dope.

"The challenge for us when we do catch an athlete is often that guardians, parents, coaches, and teachers are implicated," Galant said. "So the player is not very eager to disclose how they got the substance or if someone injected it into them."

He described adults as a "constant variable" in investigations, with parents often having significant influence over young players and, in some cases, knowledge of their doping.

The commercialisation of schoolboy rugby has added to the pressure. Craven Week has become an important showcase for young players hoping to secure provincial contracts, franchise opportunities and, ultimately, professional careers.

"When you're at Craven Week and

walk around the sidelines, there are scouts from the local and foreign franchises. The stakes are extremely high, and they're getting even higher alongside the increasing commercial component of schools' sports," Galant said.

“The challenge for us when we do catch an athlete is often that guardians, parents, coaches, and teachers are implicated.”
— Khalid Galant, chief executive for the South African Institute for Drug-Free Sport

He stressed that commercial growth was not inherently negative but warned that greater financial rewards could encourage some athletes to seek shortcuts.

"What we need to focus on are the values. When sport gets lucrative, there will be the ones who take shortcuts and cheat," he said.

SAIDS has also found evidence that some young players regard school rugby as a window in which they can dope before professional-level testing

becomes more rigorous.

"Generally the strategy that we've found when we've interviewed players that tested positive is that they know they can dope while they're in high school," Galant said. "The minute they have a franchise or an agent interested in their career, they have to wean themselves off because testing gets more robust."

The issue is not confined to the latest two cases. Earlier this year, Wits University loose-forward Liam Santos, who matriculated from Grey College in 2024, received a three-year ban after testing positive for metabolites of Drostanolone and Dehydrochloromethyl-Testosterone during an in-competition test.

In 2022, Lions prop Sifiso Magwaza and Free State hooker Khoitsimodimo Mathibedi were each suspended for three years after testing positive for prohibited substances during Craven Week. SAIDS' sanctions register also contains several rugby-related cases involving minors whose identities remain protected under anti-doping rules. For Galant, however, testing is only one part of the solution.

"Testing is not the panacea to doping. It's education and trying to change the behaviour. So we're trying to focus more on the values of sport," he said.

SAIDS is reviewing its anti-doping education programme, including how information is delivered and whether it results in meaningful behavioural change. One weakness identified is the need for more targeted education for parents.

"One of the things that we have identified as a weak link in our education strategy is that we have to have more targeted sessions for parents on anti-doping matters and the consequences of doping," Galant said.

SA Rugby has recognised the seriousness of the issue and committed to strengthening anti-doping education through an advisory panel.

Although South Africa no longer has a World Anti-Doping Agency-accredited laboratory after the Bloemfontein facility lost its accreditation, Galant has stressed that testing continues, with samples analysed at accredited laboratories in Qatar, Spain and Poland.

The challenge, he says, is ultimately about protecting the values of sport before the pursuit of professional success becomes more important than fair competition.

The aim is not simply to catch athletes who cheat but to create an environment in which young players, their parents, coaches and schools understand the risks and reject doping before it becomes part of their sporting culture.

For South Africa's aspiring Springboks and professional players, that may be the most important test of all.

Caught out: Former school rugby stars Deon Botes (left) and Kai Pratt (above right) tested positive for banned substances.
Photos: Facebook