



THENSA

Technological Higher Education Network South Africa

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

'WATHINT' ABAFAZI, WATHINT' IMBOKODO': A CELEBRATION OF WOMEN'S MONTH

Over sixty years ago, nearly 20 000 South African marched to Union Buildings to protest against discriminatory pass laws being extended to black women. The demonstration saw women from different backgrounds take a stand against the apartheid government at a time when they were not considered equal participants in the political process. This August, we commemorate those brave and dynamic women who spoke out against injustice at a great personal cost. In this edition of the THENSA newsletter, we celebrate the achievements of women within our broader network. We provide a message of encouragement from our CEO, Dr Anshu Padayachee, who will discuss the importance of this day in relation to our initiatives as an organisation. At THENSA, we have long cherished gender equality and feminism, which is evident in our initiatives such as the Staff Phd Capacity Enhancement Programme where three quarters of our cohort are women, as well as our staff who are mostly made up of women. In the last month, we have witnessed tremendous challenges to our young democracy. We have seen livelihoods, incomes, resources and infrastructures destroyed in the name of settling political scores. Despite the incredible strides women have made in politics, business, science, technology as well as arts and culture, the scourge of gender-based violence, unemployment, poverty and hunger looms large. But instead of feeling hopeless and despondent, we should use Women's Day to reflect on what steps need to be taken to ensure we create a better and brighter country for all. We should honour the tenacity and spirit of the women who fought tirelessly for a democratic South Africa while rebuilding it for future generations.



SPECIAL REMINDER THAT OUR INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE HAS BEEN

POSTPONED TO 16 - 18TH MARCH 2022

UPDATES FROM OUR MEMBER INSTITUTIONS

- Last month, the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) and the European Union (EU) launched the Horizon Europe programme. This multi-million rand programme funds research and innovation initiatives in Africa and covers about 40 topics focusing on public health, innovation and technology, and science capacity, among other areas. At the virtual launch event, Durban University of Technology's (DUT) own Professor Keolebogile Shirley Motaung and Walter Sisulu University's (WSU) Professor Benedicta Nkeh-Chungag presented their research on the effects of COVID-19 in HIV-positive patients with or without antiretroviral therapy in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Multi-award winning celebrity chef and Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) alumna Siba Mtongana will join staff and students for a Young Women Empowerment Programme on August 7. The initiative will focus on female empowerment and personal development through in-depth conversations with young women eager to learn from Mtongana.
- Vaal University of Technology's Precious Mafunise has been named as one of the top 500 employable graduates in South Africa at the DHL GradStar 500 Programme and Awards Ceremony. Sponsored by a number of prominent companies such as ABSA and DHL in partnership with NPO Golden Key and BlackBark Productions, the event is designed to recognise the most employable students across the country with the hopes of introducing them to future employers.
- Opera singer Masabane Cecilia Rangwanasha, an alumna of Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), was the recipient of the Song Prize at BBC Cardiff Singer of The World Awards 2021. Having represented South Africa, Rangwanasha, who is a soprano, told TUT that the award made "[her] realise that every dream is possible".
- Mangosuthu University of Technology's (MUT) Xolile Ngubane presented the university's innovative projects at the National Treasury and the City of eThekweni Municipality workshop for public and knowledge sector stakeholders on innovation collaboration. Speaking on behalf of Professor Busi Nkonki-Mandleni, Ngubane discussed the university's innovative projects from the Community Engagement and Development Directorate (CEAD).

SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO, DR ANSHU PADAYACHEE



As I reflect on all the women who have been part of my life and career, I feel so fortunate to have been mentored by and had the opportunity to work with, some of the most incredible and world renowned women during my lifetime. I feel the need to highlight some of them who have had a profound influence on my career and my life in general, namely, my late mother Ayalla, my mentor Judge Navi Pillay who provided me with opportunities to share the most amazing human rights experiences with me and daring me to do things I would otherwise have hesitated to do. I must also acknowledge my sister advocates for women's rights worldwide who shared their experiences and knowledge with me without reservation. I lead by example. I have been particularly influenced by the generous women who have led by example, and whom I have been privileged to have met, worked with and who have shared their knowledge selflessly. To name a few, Prof. Irene Moutlana, Yvonne Chaka Chaka, Prof Sandy Africa, Thoko Didiza, Adv. Mojanku Gumbi and Gcina Mhlophe.

I have also had the good fortune to have worked with and be influenced by some fearless younger colleagues, namely Profs. Urmila Bob, Prof Thuli Madonsela, Dr Julie Reddy, Sanusha Naidoo, the amazing actress Leandra Reddy and Devi Sankeree Govender and all of those groundbreaking scientists, inter alia Profs. Helen Rees, Glenda Gray, Himla Soodyal, Quarashia Abdul Karim, Shirley Motaung, Linda Richter, Mala Singh, among the many women scientists and entrepreneurs I was privileged to have met and worked with throughout my career.

I must also recognise my colleagues from the various Universities in Africa and globally, the volunteers at the Advice Desk for the Abused and activists from across the world whom I have been fortunate to work with, learn from and whom have inspired me by their selfless contributions to women's empowerment over the past 40 years.

During my time in many leadership positions, I've met some incredible women, from personal assistants to junior colleagues and business partners, who were incredibly accomplished to take on any task, given the opportunity to do so. There has been a great deal of attention-focused on challenges for women at the top, and while I think it's important to celebrate exceptionalism, I think we also need to recognise and give more credit to the dedicated and highly competent women who work in administrative, managerial and secretarial roles who support academic and business leaders.

In many ways, these women in administration are the unsung heroines of the successes of professionals. We are now witnessing an evolution in the roles of secretaries and administrators, with those roles taking on increasing responsibility and importance. Whilst leaders will acknowledge the skills of their personal assistants who generally hold these positions, sadly, they do not always garner the respect I feel they deserve. We must evaluate what women in leadership positions have done to amplify and promote our women colleagues, especially the more junior colleagues who may struggle to be heard. Those of us in leadership positions have some level of privilege relative to others that allows us the ability to promote someone else's interests. We all struggle to be heard sometimes. In many cases, the best way to be heard is for women in strategic leadership positions to lead the way and be the voice of the voiceless.

I am constantly encouraged to see that our workplaces are changing, but I am equally disturbed by some practices in Higher Education that are not changing fast enough and it is important that we recognise what we plan to do about them. Gender based violence, access to health and educational needs and opportunities cannot be put on the back burner because we have enacted laws and the Constitution that purports to protect us. We cannot take our eyes off the ball at this juncture in our journey. We need to be vigilant and constantly monitor the way in which these laws are implemented in order to protect us. Any breach of our rights to justice needs to be brought to the attention of the Government and the public and we must not hesitate to challenge the Government if it continues to fail us or discriminate against us.

Whilst I am delighted to see an increasing number of women in professional and managerial roles, we are still a long way away from parity with our male colleagues. We must be careful not to be blind sighted by women being appointed to leadership positions, just to comply with the companies or organisations' gender targets. These appointees often find themselves being manipulated by bosses who believe they have done them a "favour" to appoint them to the position. At this juncture, I must acknowledge and salute the team of amazing women at the THENSA secretariat, Christelle, Kogie, Nadira, Khanya, Colleen and Nthombazana. Their unstinting support, and willingness to take on any task that we need to fulfil. Without you, it will not be possible to achieve what we have achieved thus far and under especially difficult and challenging times.

I am constantly reminded by the many young women academics, scientists and activists, including my daughters Levanya, Sandile and Sheetal who have drawn my attention to the challenge's younger women experience, often sadly, by older women bosses.

We can no longer ignore the concerns and experiences of young women scientists, innovators , businesswomen and entrepreneurs. There is so much that we can learn from these vibrant, brave and courageous young women whom we will ultimately hand over the baton to.

Women's month is an opportunity to remind everyone, whether they are male or female, to identify areas where we see overt and covert gender bias, stereotypes and inequalities and raise them without fear or favour. At the same time women's month provides us with an opportunity to celebrate women's achievements everywhere, but it is also a reminder that there is still a long way to go to create a truly inclusive world. Whilst I believe we should not wait for women's month to do something about the challenges women are facing, it is a great time to take stock of what has changed for us in the last year. I believe that we should see this as an annual reminder/ audit of the real empowerment of women. *It should not be about what is said but rather what is actually done.*

So, once again as we celebrate the successes of women's achievement, it is important that we have a measurable plan to evaluate how many women we have mentored and promoted.

Gloria Steinem, activist and writer said "The best way for us to cultivate fearlessness in our daughters and other young women is by example. If they see their mothers and other women in their lives going forward despite obstacles, fear and threats, they will know it's possible to achieve all ambitions. It all begins by believing in ourselves or else no one will believe in us. More importantly, we must match our aspirations with the competence, courage and determination to succeed.

I would like to leave you with this quotation by Emma Watson, actress and activist as we audit what we have or have not achieved for women in our democracy in 2021:

"No country can ever truly flourish if it stifles the potential of its women and deprives itself of the contributions of half its citizens.

FOLLOW US

FACEBOOK: @THENSAZA

TWITTER: @THENSAZA

LINKEDIN: THENSAZA

CONTACT US

+27 12 382 4896

+27 31 563 0504

INFO5@THENSA.CO.ZA