

ISANGQA

Welcome to *Isangqa* – The Circle

NEWSLETTER

The Eugenia Nothemba Gxowa Foundation

Ms Nomso Kana:

Deputy Chairperson of the Eugenia Nothemba Gxowa Foundation Board

This edition is published at the time when the whole world has recently been observing *16 Days of Activism of No Violence Against Women*, from 25th November to 10th December, every year. Protecting and promoting the rights of women and girls is the core function of the Eugenia Nothemba Gxowa Foundation (ENGF), so this period of activism and the recognition of these 16 days is very close to our hearts.

Central to this 5th issue of *Isangqa* 'The Circle' is the ENGF's report back on projects that have been undertaken during the past six months. We are proud to share information on the progress made on several important fronts:

- Collaborating with men and boys to curb gender-based violence against women/girls (GBVAW/G) is one of the ENGF's strategic programmes. During the one-year pilot phase of this project, we have succeeded in forming a partnership with the University of Fort Hare and the National Lotteries Commission.

- In a six-month employment programme implemented with the support of the National Development Agency and using resources from the Presidential Employment Stimulus, we have been able to work productively with a number of unemployed, volunteer matriculants. You can read about some of their on-the-ground experiences in this edition.

- We also update you on developments within the organisation: changes at the



governance level as well as the role of the ENGF in the East and Southern Africa Regions.

This issue also reflects on the life and times of our feminist sister, Ms Nomtuse Mbere. She was a role model and among her many achievements, she led the South African delegation to the Beijing's Women's Conference of 1995

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Advocate Mandisi Planga for his enormous contribution to this organisation. For two years, Adv. Planga served as the Deputy Chairperson on the ENGF board. However, in April this year, due to other commitments, he declined re-nomination. In extending our gratitude, we wish Adv. Planga everything of the best for the future. His place on the ENGF board has been filled by young feminist, Ms Anita Kube, whose biography you will find within these pages.

Friends, colleagues, partners: welcome to our 5th issue of *Isangqa*, 'The Circle'. ♀

CONTENTS

1. Welcome Note
Ms Nomso Kana

2. Foundation News

3. University of Fort Hare piloting a project to combat gender-based violence against women
Celeste Fortuin: Researcher for the ENGF/NLC Project

4. Makhanda Programme Delivers Community Service while Empowering Youth
Lelethu Sandi and Siyamthanda Titi

5. Tribute to Nomtuse Mbere: Botswana was Her Home
K.T. Montshi: Country Director, Sentebale, Botswana and Kay Raseroka: Retired Director of Library and Information Services, University of Botswana

Eugenia Nothemba Gxowa Foundation

Reg: 249-217NPO

CIRP Reg. NO. K2021839156

www.engfoundation.org.za

t+27 717600166



FOUNDATION NEWS

*Chairperson of Eugenia Nothemba Gxowa Foundation
appointed to key UN regional advisory group*

New ENG Foundation Board member



Ms Anita Kube is a paralegal with considerable experience in the fields of Advocacy and Research. As a vocal advocate for human rights, gender equality and fighting against gender-based violence, Ms Kube became a volunteer at the Eugenia Nthemba Gxowa Foundation, which led to the Foundation considering her for a position on the Board. Ms Kube possesses thematic experience in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, HIV and AIDS, Child Marriages and Advocacy.

She believes in living life with integrity. Ms Kube's choices in work are driven by a deep passion to define herself in a world that is fair, just and equal. She is inspired by leaders who are accountable and responsible and respect the rights of every human being, especially those who fully understand the magnitude of the contribution of women.

Ms Kube will be replacing Adv Mandidsi Planga on the ENG Foundation Board. ♀

The Eugenia Nothemba Gxowa Foundation celebrates the appointment of its Chairperson, Nomkhitha Gysman, as Co-Chairperson of the Regional Civil Society Advisory Group of the United Nations Women East and Southern Africa Civil Society Advisory Group (R-CSAG). Gysman will serve alongside its Chairperson, Robinah Rubimbwa, from Uganda, and Mary Yvonne Odonda from Kenya, who serves as secretary.



UN Women created the Civil Society Advisory Group in 2010 to foster dialogue at the global, regional and national levels and to build on existing partnerships and increase strategic dialogues with civil society partners. All the Regional Civil Society Advisory Groups formally recognise civil society as one of UN Women's most important constituencies and partners. This is because civil society provides a dynamic source for innovative initiatives, ideas and policy perspectives to assist UN Women in achieving its strategic goals.

The mandate of the Regional Civil Society Advisory Group is grounded in the goals that UN Women was founded upon, which include:

1. The General Assembly request to the Head of the Entity to continue the existing practice of effective consultation with civil society organisations and encourage their meaningful contribution to the work of the Entity (GA/64/289).
2. The Vision and Action Plan of the founding Executive Director, which states that: "In recognition of the special relationship I envisage between UN Women and women's organisations, I will be forming an NGO Advisory Group to advise me as Executive Director of UN Women. This will be a body through which NGOs can share their perspectives, expertise and knowledge from the country level and a channel for our ongoing collaboration."

The East and Southern Africa Civil Society Advisory Group has a tenure of two years, after which a new group of feminists from ESARO will be ushered in.

We wish Gysman everything of the best in this special and prestigious role. We trust that with her long-term experience in lobbying for women's rights and her deep knowledge of the region, the women of SADC will benefit. ♀

University of Fort Hare piloting a project to combat gender-based violence against women

Celeste Fortuin: Researcher for the ENGF/NLC Project

The Eugenia Nothemba Gxowa Foundation (ENGf), supported by the National Lotteries Commission, has embarked on Phase One of a HeForShe Solidarity Campaign at the University of Fort Hare (UFH). The campaign, which started in August 2023 and runs until July 2024, seeks to involve men and boys in the fight against gender-based violence against women (GBVAWG). It encourages senior leaders in the university, including Chancellor Adv D Ntsebeza and Vice Chancellor Prof Buhlungu, or any other man holding a senior position within the institution to become “Champions” in the HeForShe movement. By leveraging the influence of university leaders, the initiative aims to inspire young men to advocate gender equality and to reform perpetrators’ behaviours. Fort Hare is an ideal site for this pilot initiative, not only because it has a history of safety concerns with GBVAWG on the increase, but also because it already has a Gender-Based Violence policy. The campaign aims to encourage male leaders at UFH to actively combat gender-based violence against women (GBVAWG).

UFH has a history of infrastructural decay and safety concerns, including increasing incidents of GBVAWG, reflecting broader societal issues in South Africa, where GBVAWG rates are high, with 70 reported rapes per day and under-reported cases at universities.

The ENGf campaign aligns with the global HeForShe initiative as part of the United Nations 60th Commission on the Status of Women, which focuses on access to education for girls and the

retention of girls in the education system. It is also in line with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 (Quality Education) and 5 (Gender Equality).

The Global HeForShe Campaign

The HeForShe Global Solidarity Campaign, launched on September 20, 2014, by UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, and UN Women Goodwill Ambassador, Emma Watson, seeks to dismantle traditional gender roles and stereotypes. It positions gender equality as a universal human rights issue and calls for an inclusive approach that involves all genders. The campaign aims to encourage more openness, vigilance, reporting, prosecution and data collection to transform the perspective of men and boys on GBVAWG. Addressing the problem of GBVAWG in higher education institutions is crucial as it may negatively impact the UN 60th Commission on the Status of Women’s conclusions on girls’ access to education and their retention in school, as well as the two Sustainable Development Goals mentioned above.

Central to the HeForShe campaign is the recruitment of influential male figures in politics and society as “Champions,” who utilise their positions of authority to drive gender-related change. The campaign strategically extends its reach into academia, government and the private sector, aiming to harness the influence of male advocates to address gender-based violence against women and foster gender equality. With its extensive network and outreach capabilities, the



University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence



HeForShe campaign synchronises local endeavours with global initiatives to present a consistent and united stand against GBVAWG. It underscores the potential for progress through the collaborative efforts of diverse sectors and communities, accentuating the importance of shared responsibilities and joint action. The HeForShe campaign significantly contributes to the worldwide movement against GBVAWG, linking local issues to a broader international framework.

HeForShe uses a variety of technological platforms to engage people globally in its cause. Key activities include advocating for gender equality, promoting policy changes, raising awareness, engaging in dialogues, collecting

data for informed policymaking and forming strategic partnerships. The campaign encourages men to publicly commit to gender equality and take action in their spheres of influence, personally and professionally.

The HeForShe campaign has received support from many well-known men in different fields, who endorse its mission and pledge their commitment to advancing gender equality and uphold the ongoing global effort to empower women and girls. Some notable personalities promoting this campaign include H.E. Fumio Kishida, the Prime Minister of Japan; H.E. Michael D. Higgins, the President of Ireland; and H.E. Felix Tshisekedi, President of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The campaign started gaining momentum in 2016 when the Vice President and Secretary General of the SADC Parliamentary Forum, the SADC Heads of State, Vice President Hon. Joseph Njobvuyalema, and Dr Esau Chiviya, along with several national Parliamentary Speakers within the SADC region, chose to sign up as HeForShe champions for gender equality.

The South African campaign

In South Africa, the HeForShe campaign has received backing from various sectors. Within the private sector, in 2022, the MTN Group pledged R25 million to drive gender equality under the HeForShe banner. Standard Bank is also a champion of the campaign and an advocate for gender equity in the workplace. At the university level, the then-chancellor of Wits, Professor Adam Habib, signed up as a HeForShe champion in 2019 and hosted several public conversations with prominent men in business, politics and academia around promoting the values of gender equality.

GBVAW in higher education institutions is a multi-faceted

issue that includes a wide range of abuses, from physical violence to psychological and online harassment. The culture of under-reporting due to stigma and fear of retribution exacerbates the problem, often leading to the normalisation of GBVAW. The impact on victims is profound, affecting their mental health and academic performance and extending to the broader academic community by creating an environment of fear and mistrust. Institutional responses to GBVAW are varied, with many universities having policies in place but lacking in effective implementation and victim support services. Student-led initiatives have been pivotal in bringing attention to the prevalence of GBVAW on campuses, demanding institutional accountability and reforms. Academic research and education play a crucial role in understanding GBVAW dynamics and developing preventative measures, while collaborations with external organisations provide additional resources and perspectives.

In recent years, the media has played a pivotal role in highlighting the severity of GBVAW on campuses through the coverage of various tragic incidents. The murders of female students across different South African universities have drawn widespread attention, revealing the gravity and prevalence of GBVAW within these educational settings. These incidents have catalysed student-led protests, which have raised awareness and increased demands for action against GBVAW on campuses. Notable cases include the murders of Sandile Ndlovu from Durban University of Technology, Precious Ramabulana at Capricorn Technical and Vocational Education Institution in Limpopo, Jesse Hess from the University of Cape Town, and a shocking eight murders across higher learning institutions in just one month of 2023, all linked to GBV.

Various academic studies on the prevalence of GBVAW at institutions of higher learning provide a window into the GBV situation in South African universities, affirming its pervasive nature and underscoring the need for urgent interventions. They point to improved reporting mechanisms, comprehensive awareness, prevention strategies, and stringent policies and measures to protect students and hold perpetrators accountable. The insights gained from these studies are invaluable for shaping future research, policy development and implementing effective GBV response strategies on campuses across South Africa.

The need to actively challenge entrenched inequalities

The ongoing prevalence of GBVAW underscores the imperative for South African universities to address this issue, not merely through disciplinary measures but also by actively challenging entrenched inequalities and social norms, thereby fostering an environment that promotes social justice, human rights and safety for all students (Naidoo, 2019:9). Many universities have established policies against sexual harassment; however, few directly confront the broader issue of GBV, signifying a gap in the collective effort to eradicate GBV from higher education institutions.

The recent emphasis on GBVAW responses within ministerial and governing bodies has illuminated the vital role of universities in addressing this crucial matter. Beyond acknowledging the issue, universities must enact transformative measures that challenge and alter behaviours perpetuating GBVAW. Ahmed Bawa, the Chief Executive Officer of Universities South Africa, remarked in 2021 that universities must proactively set new standards against GBVAW, breaking away from deep-rooted unequal social norms that fuel this violence.

Reflecting on the global scale, a UNESCO programme initiated in 2015, called Transforming MENTalities, sought to redefine masculinities and engage men and boys in pursuing gender equality. Fast forward to 2023, the South African adaptation of this programme, championed by Higher Education Minister, Blade Nzimande, underscores the critical role of men and boys in eradicating GBV, framing it as a pervasive human rights issue rather than a women's issue alone. Minister Nzimande's call for intertwining the battle against GBVAW with broader economic and social justice struggles, particularly emphasising the liberation of black working-class women, resonates with the need for a holistic and transformative approach to end GBVAW.

Way forward for the ENGF research project

The HerForShe solidarity campaign at Fort Hare is the first phase of the campaign, with the intention to take it to all South African

institutions of higher learning. The research outcomes, findings and recommendations will guide the development of actionable strategies to tackle campus GBVAW. The research aims to identify and transform the structures and attitudes that perpetuate gender inequality and violence. Despite the recognition of GBVAW as a pressing issue within higher education institutions, many cases remain hidden due to shame and stigma. The use of feminist research methodologies is crucial in this context as it helps to bring to light these concerns and give a voice to those who have been marginalised.

In the pilot phase, the research will focus on the prevalence and nature of GBVAW, including physical, sexual, psychological and online forms, within the UFH community. It will also examine the sociocultural, structural and institutional factors that contribute to GBVAW, with a particular focus on marginalised groups, such as women, LGBTQI+ individuals, and gender non-conforming individuals. Apart from involving senior male leaders, as already

mentioned, the campaign at UFH will provide insights to shape university policies and advocacy for gender equality. Student leaders, university counsellors, psychologists, gender studies experts and women's and gender equality groups will also participate, offering diverse perspectives and practical strategies to combat GBV. National-level stakeholders will provide a broader context and support.

The expected outcomes of this research include a comprehensive report on GBVAW at UFH, identification of potential HeForShe champions, and the development of targeted campaign messages and communication strategies. The project will focus on the role of female students, advocating for their active participation in the campaign through initiatives like a young women's forum. The project's progress will be shared through various social media platforms, featuring interviews with leaders and advocates in the GBVAW and higher education fields. ♀



Makhanda Programme Delivers Community Service while Empowering Youth

by Lelethu Sandi and Siyamthanda Titi

Introduction

In 2023, the Eugenia Nothemba Gxowa Foundation (ENGF) was contracted by the National Development Agency to organise a six-month volunteer employment programme, funded by the Presidential Employment Stimulus.

ENGF engaged 23 unemployed matriculants, aged 18 to 35, and paid them a monthly stipend.

These volunteers visited people in Makhanda to raise awareness of the services offered by the Department of Social Development, SASSA (South African Social Security Agency) and other government departments. The recruits were trained to create profiles and gather data that would help the government departments decide on the eligible services for each household.

Two of the volunteers, Lelethu Sandi and Siyamthanda (Siya) Titi, share their experiences.

Lelethu Sandi writes:

As ENGF volunteers, we were compiling household profiles in Makhanda. We were shown how to complete the 26-page questionnaire and build relevant data which could be used by government service providers to benefit the people in the area.

Since many people were suspicious of scammers, they were reluctant to divulge personal information such as identity numbers or telephone numbers. Providing these details was optional, so we learnt how to explain our objectives to the



Lelethu Sandi

families we were visiting and did not make promises we could not fulfill, such as offering jobs or food parcels. I was able to identify issues and refer individuals to seek assistance from social workers on things such as ID documents, government grants and health issues.

I found that a significant portion of the population is dependent on social grants and that the unemployment rate is very high. People complained that they were not receiving alerts about job opportunities or being told about projects which could help them financially. Some of the elderly in the community were unable to respond to specific survey questions due to lack of information.

Although there were challenges, I was proud to meet my primary objective, which was to generate profiles making it easier for government workers to assist deserving cases.



Siyamthanda Titi

Siyamthanda Titi writes:

As a volunteer of the Eugenia Nothemba Gxowa Foundation, my role was to promote the services available to the community of Joza location in Makhanda from government departments. We did this by profiling households and collecting data about people's lives and their needs.

I discovered that there was a very high unemployment rate in Joza and that a sizeable section of the population was dependent on social subsidies. Many people were unaware of the services offered by the Department of Social Development, which include disability grants, pensions, social grants/food parcels, counselling and rehabilitation for substance abuse, and counselling for domestic and sexual abuse.

As household profilers, we were involved in many awareness activities. One of them was the campaign: "Life after Covid", which explained the effects of

Covid on the community and the economy. We attended a financial workshop by Wage Wise which taught us how to help people in the community to budget and save money. We highlighted the problems created by gambling with the help of Eastern Cape Gambling Board, and they showed us how to spot illegal gambling machines in spaza shops.

ENGF hosted a Parenting programme which focused on gender-based violence (GBV) and the harm it causes to the victim, family and community, whether it is against women, men or

children. We emphasised that GBV cases need to be reported to the police and told them about the trauma counselling that is offered by social workers at the Department of Social Development.

I helped a young woman who was financially dependent on her boyfriend, who assaulted her when he was drunk. I advised her to open a case of domestic violence against him and to seek counselling from social workers. Consequently, she received help and managed to find employment at a local school. She became financially independent and filed

a restraining order against her abusive boyfriend.

In another household, I came across a case where a child had lost both parents in a car accident and was being cared for by the grandmother. On my advice, the grandmother successfully applied for a foster care grant for her grandchild from the Social Development Department.

As a volunteer, I learnt that I could offer a helping hand in the community. It is satisfying to be able to give advice and information which empowers others. ♀

ENGF volunteers for the National Development Agency funded community service project through Presidential Employment Stimulus

Front seated from left to right : Avuye Magopeni, Kungawo Zatu, Anelisa Piyo, Siyamthanda Titi Vuyolwethu Nonxuba

Middle from left to right : Ashtelen Botha, Linda Saki, Nelisa Matika, Aphelele Jela, Sbongile Jacobs

Back from left to right : Lelethu Sandi, Sisipho Sofisa, Khanya Thomas, Xabiso Gysman, Sinovuyo Joni, Luxolo Hoyi



Tribute to Nomtuse Mbere: Botswana was Her Home

*by K.T. Montshi: Country Director, Sentebale, Botswana and
Kay Raseroka: Retired Director of Library and Information Services, University of Botswana*

Mme Nomtuse (Tuse) Mbere is one of those South African mothers who considered Botswana her home even after she returned to South Africa after independence.

Nomtuse was a special individual who lived a productive and purposeful life, leaving bold footprints in various areas of development in Botswana during her career in government and the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV). She was passionate about early childhood development, and I recall her enthusiasm in the 90s, while supporting the Kuru Development Trust and working with Ms Irene Gaolatlhe Thupe, to establish pre-schools in the remote settlements of Ghanzi District.

Still at SNV and working in consultation with the government, she helped found the Community-Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) pilot programme, working with Dutch volunteers such as Ruud Jansen and Paul van Hoof.

As a gender activist, Nomtuse fought for the rights of girls and women. She was vocal in debating the gender and equality issues that reinforced the women's global agenda established in Beijing in 1995. She enjoyed being in this space alongside several of her peers/sister-friends: Mme Setshwaelo, Mme Molokomme and Mme Raseroka to name but a few.

On returning to South Africa, Nomtuse quickly established herself as an experienced and sought after consultant in the areas of Gender, Sexual Reproductive Rights and training trainers. She worked closely with one of her best friends, Lungie Molamu, and they rekindled a professional collaboration that had begun in Botswana's Ministry of Local Government and Lands. In 2021, Nomtuse contributed a chapter to a



book authored by Nozipho January-Bardill entitled: "Write To Speak", sharing her experiences of when she led a South African delegation to the 4th Women's Conference in Beijing. Together with Natalie Africa and Afsaneh Tabrizzi, both seconded by Zanele Mbeki, Head of the South African Women's Development Bank, Nomtuse was responsible for pre- and post-Beijing responsibilities. Being a workaholic, she never actually retired.

Nomtuse loved people and made time for her friends who were scattered all over the world. She also had strong personal connections and relationships with her children's friends. During her regular trips to

Botswana, she would issue a notice of who she was going to visit and at what time. She was punctual and a perfectionist, who liked beautiful things without being ostentatious.

Nomtuse was generous without expecting anything in return. She lived her life rooted in faith and strong values such as integrity, and she would never compromise her personal or professional dignity. She had a calm demeanour and never held a grudge, but under that gentle exterior, was a straight talking, no-nonsense woman. Her aim was to help build the characters of those around her. Nomtuse never learnt Setswana, but we will miss her "mixed masala" of English and

Xhosa. "Entoni!"

She was laid to rest in Johannesburg on 11th August and not surprisingly, a lot of people from Botswana were present to pay their respects and to support her daughters, Nomsa, Nozipho and granddaughter, Lolo. By the time Nomtuse passed away, she was planning a trip to Swaziland with her children and their friends to celebrate the life of another awesome mother who passed away in 2021 - Mme Dora Nxumalo whose family has been close to the Masires and Mberes for decades. May their beautiful souls rest in peace. ♀

