



UNIZULU launches HeforShe Programme on its campuses

NALEDI HLEFANE

THE dawn of each day in South Africa brings with it a bitter reminder of the unending, vicious cycle of gender-based violence, which, on average, results in eight women being murdered and 114 raped.

These chilling statistics were released by the South African Police Service in September 2019. To help combat this scourge, the University of Zululand (UNIZULU) has joined hands with the United Nations (UN) in launching a chapter of HeforShe, a UN initiative started by women in 2014 with the aim of mobilising men to actively work towards attaining gender parity and women empowerment.

The launch took place at the end of July, symbolic of an ushering in of women's month.

In her introduction, UNIZULU Vice-Chancellor Professor Xoliswa Mtose elaborated that the HeforShe project was adopted as a commitment to re-educate the men who belong to the UNIZULU community to be symbols of trust and security on the institution's campuses and society surrounding them.

"We hope to reimagine and reconstruct the culture of safety, trust and security for all on campuses, particularly women. We commit to the reorientation of men to values of humanity and respect where we all support women emancipation in university and society at large," she added.

This bold move by the University was applauded by Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the Executive Director of UN Women, who was invited as a guest speaker during the launch. Having seen the positive impact of the project in the past years, she assured the university that it was on the right path. "In HeforShe, we challenge toxic masculinity and promote positive masculinity instead. We make it a point to recruit male leaders who have a platform to be role models, to exhibit positive masculinity. We hold men as peers to women to deal with women in a non-discriminating manner," she said.

Through HeforShe, many partners have effected tremendous changes in terms of raising awareness about the effects of – and alleviating – domestic



Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women, commended the University of Zululand for its willingness to grapple with gender issues through the recently launched chapter of HeforShe at the institution. Picture by Sphamandla Gumede

abuse, increasing the representation of women in leadership and increasing the number of females who penetrate predominantly male-dominated fields, among other issues.

Based on standard HeforShe practice, Dr Mlambo-Ngcuka said it would be left to the university to identify areas to address, as well as come up with innovative ideas on how to tackle them. The HeforShe team will be available to provide guidance to the institution at any given point.

In Mlambo-Ngcuka's view, launching the HeforShe chapter is especially important for students as they are on the path of becoming leaders. "We will be looking at how you include women as leaders and encourage female students to enter male-dominated fields. We also encourage you to provide spaces for leadership in social and other activities in university where students can play a role to make their campus and environment better. This is how we train them to become leaders in society and lead by example," she said.

According to Nhlanhla Cele, Executive Director: Institutional Planning,

the implementation of the UNIZULU chapter will be twofold. The first aspect involves a commitment drive where male employees and students will be encouraged to take part in the UNIZULU HeforShe initiatives, signing up either on social media or physically.

"Through (Prof Mtose's) wisdom and leadership, she has identified a way through which we can give pastoral care, support and guidance to young men on campus and she has put a system in place to help guide young men on campus to think differently about the language they use when they refer to and engage with women. In our attempts to get men to make the pledges, whether staff or students, we will provide a wide range of areas where they can make a personal commitment to this change," Cele said.

The second aspect of the programme entails 'gender balance'. To meet this objective, gender equality training and sessions will be run, and debate platforms opened up around this issue. The academic curriculum is also intended to be utilised in order to impart knowledge on social justice and public good values to students.

Siphelele Khomo's recognition during women's month equally rewarding

GCINJA NHLEKO

THE African Women Chartered Accountants AWCA has honoured University of Zululand (UNIZULU) academic, Siphelele Khomo, with the Trailblazer Award for her innovative efforts in the accounting field. Khomo, a senior lecturer in UNIZULU's Faculty of Commerce, Administration and Law, received the accolade at the recent annual AWCA recognition awards ceremony.

"I am honoured to receive this award. I was very surprised when I received the call informing me that I have won as there are many AWCA members doing remarkable work at different academic institutions. We all have a responsibility to make a difference," Khomo said.

Her achievement was applauded by UNIZULU Vice-Chancellor, Professor Xoliswa Mtose, who hailed Khomo as a "change maker who has dedicated her life and career advancing women in the accountancy field". It is this expression that the UNIZULU is always advancing to promote and recognise the distinct calibre of its academic staff members who are globally competitive



Siphelele Khomo.

that makes Khomo's recognition and award equally rewarding.

Prof Mtose recalled that it was Khomo's persistent and consistent performance that resulted in UNIZULU offering the highly sought-after BCom in

Accounting Science degree. It received accreditation to offer the qualification from the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA) in 2018.

The Network of Executive Women's (NEW) Women 2020 Report points out that "women are especially well suited to lead in today's changing marketplace". A 2012 McKinsey survey showed that the four "most important leadership attributes for success identified by global business executives – "intellectual stimulation, inspiration, participatory decision-making and setting expectations/rewards" – were most commonly found among women leaders.

Further studies show that women are also ranked as more "inclusive, collaborative, and empathetic" than their opposite colleagues, and offer diverse perspectives and skills that are essential for cultivating creativity, innovation and differentiation necessary for companies to attract customers. Women also outpace the dominant gender in higher education, earning a higher percentage of bachelor's, master's and doctorate degrees than their counterparts. Yet, the gender gap in senior leadership positions persists.

Honouring the great women of UNIZULU

NALEDI HLEFANE

IN honour of the hardworking women who contribute to the successful running of the University of Zululand (UNIZULU), the institution held a virtual event last week where the issue of gender equality was unpacked.

The event was held under the theme "Generation Equality: Realising Women's Rights for an Equal Future". Professor Xoliswa Mtose, UNIZULU Vice-Chancellor, explained that the topic emanates from a global campaign and links South Africa to global efforts to achieve gender equality by 2030.

"We want to join hands across spheres of government, and with all sectors of society, as part of a Decade of Action towards gender equality. We also want to see sustainable programmes that are geared towards achieving this goal," she said. One of the ways in which Prof Mtose said the institution had contributed towards transforming itself was through its leadership. In the past three terms, the university has had female vice-chancellors. She also noted that in the academic space, two of the institution's faculties are being led by female deans.

UNIZULU Council Chair Nomarashiya Caluza, in her opening remarks, shared the same sentiments acknowledging that there had, indeed, been progress with regards to changing some of the "enablers for the triple oppression of women". She explained that the triple oppression phenomenon refers to the repression of women based on their race, gender and class. In her view, the fact that UNIZULU has appointed three female vice-chancellors indicates that the institution is a site to display and test transformation. She stressed, however, that more barriers had to be broken in order for women to be empowered, hence she challenged Professor Mtose to prioritise empowerment programmes for women



Laila Vahed, who heads the UNIZULU library, directed the programme for the Women's Day event programme. Picture by James Thwala

in the institutions.

In her presentation, Lisa Vetten, who was invited as a guest speaker, said that inequality is a multi-layered notion that needs to be viewed from different angles. She said it was crucial to think deeply

about what the end result will be when considering equality. Using an illustration, she pointed out that sometimes in order to achieve equal outcomes, you may need to treat people differently because by giving them the same opportunity, achieving the same outcome is not necessarily guaranteed. So when we think about equality or try to achieve it, we need to decide whether we mean the same opportunities but different outcomes, or both same opportunities and outcomes.

She used various statistics of areas where inequality clearly exists, paying specific attention to the gender pay gap. Looking at the data presented, it was apparent that a lot of factors influence pay gap, namely age, race, skilled/unskilled status and gender. While the data analysis showed gaps in terms of the aforementioned factors, it was unequivocal that white men get the lion's share of income at the top and bottom part of the pay scale.

"We can't think of inequality in simple terms. We have to think of it as being layered and situated. Gender inequality is quite clearly shaped and influenced by race, age, professional status, by whether you work in a private sector, by whether you work in a public sector and by the kind of work you do and by childcare responsibilities and motherhood. We also need to think about how groups and categories are constructed. What characteristics are we looking at to try and determine how inequality is happening, and when we create these boundaries, who do we include and how do we exclude? And when we think about inequality, are we unintentionally creating new forms of inequality?" Vetten said.

She concluded by saying that equality and inequality are dynamic and that we need to think about them in complex ways in order to address the multiple forms that they take all the time.

Dismantling gender inequality in higher education

SAMKELE SOKHELA

THE University of Zululand (UNIZULU), under the Transformation and Social Inclusion Office, recently hosted a thought-provoking webinar titled Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education, which was geared towards discussing strategic ways of implementing inclusivity and finding solutions to gender inequality in the higher education sector. The webinar, which primarily focused on patriarchy, inclusivity and diversity among other key subjects, was graced by a diverse panel of five professionals from civil organisations, sister universities, government departments and chapter 9 institutions.

The webinar could not have come at a more perfect time, with gender inequality being a topical issue.

According to Heidi Schoeman, a senior lecturer in the UNIZULU Department of Law who was among the speakers during the event, fair opportunities to women and patriarchy still remain a broken mirror, the pieces of which are reflected in various institutions including in higher education. Schoeman believes that the country has all the resources to combat inequality matters in higher education institutions, referring to the Bill of Rights as one of the key tools that can assist in societal transformation.

She said the Bill of Rights' overall purpose is to promote equality and protect human rights. Therefore, the Equality clause, Section 9 of the Constitution, should be heeded as it can play a pivotal role in transforming society.

Dr Tlaleng Mofokeng from Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) highlighted that institutions need strategic policy-making and should introduce more support services for those affected.

"To fight this, there needs to be a stigma and judgemental-free environment. (We) need to increase access to (initiatives) such as the peer educator programmes and support them. Awareness and campaigns are key (as well)," he said. One of the attendees, Dr Makho-



One of the underlying issues of gender inequality is the discrepancy in remuneration, where females are still seen to be paid far less than their male counterparts. This, and other issues, was discussed during the recent Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education webinar, hosted by the University of Zululand. Picture by Samkele Sokhela

sazana Magigaba, commented that for transformation to effectively take place, people need to change the mindset and enrol action.

Sharing her view, Sesi Mahlobogoane, a Department of Higher Education and Training representative, said: "Charity begins at home. Let's teach our children about respect. Let us educate our kids about what equality is. Let us talk about equality in our societies (and run more) campaigns."

Makhosazana Nxumalo, the event organiser, believes the webinar served as a significant opportunity for the university to reflect on the progress it has made in tackling diversity, gender and inclusion issues and identifying areas that may need improvement.

"The university is home to students and employees from different walks of life, with different abilities. All have come

to the university with objectives to either study or work, though some do both. All have a right to be at the university and as the university community, we all have a duty to respect each other regardless of who and what we are. This webinar is one of many programmes of the Transformation and Social Inclusion office that are aimed at improving the institutional climate for diverse students (and) staff," Nxumalo said.

Other topics that were tackled during the event were "De-gendering University Spaces", which was delivered by Zoey Black from Gender Dynamix and "Sexual Reproductive Rights in Higher Education" by Dr Mofokeng. There was also a presentation by University of Cape Town's Gabriel Hoosain Khan, who shared practices and initiatives that have been helpful in promoting and protecting diversity at his institution.

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