

Ulwazi News



ISSUE 2

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Review of June to August 2005

By Ulwazi Manager, Yanga Depha

Firstly, let me take this opportunity and **SALUTE** all women in the Department during Women's Month. I want to assure you that Ulwazi Information Centre is there to help you with your information needs. As part of Ulwazi's contribution to Women's Month, a Gender Sensitivity workshop was arranged in collaboration with the Southern African Media and Gender Institute as described elsewhere in this newsletter. Thanks once again to those who attended the workshop and for your enthusiastic participation.

In the past three months, Ulwazi has strengthened relationships with internal and external stakeholders. Staff from Departments who are in the process of setting up Resource

Centers such as Community Safety, the Department of the Premier and the Provincial Treasury, have visited Ulwazi and consulted its staff about lessons learnt in the process of establishing a Resource Centre. In addition, an increasing number of students from institutions of higher learning in the province have visited Ulwazi for information needed for research projects they are undertaking.

Ulwazi continues to receive a high number of requests for information. Between June and August 2005, more than 80 requests for information both from within and outside the Department were received. An analysis of requests indicates that 50% of requests received were in respect of poverty related issues such as the Provincial Human Development Index, poverty maps and the Poverty Reduction Strategy. A further 20% of requests were received for demographic and population data. The rest of the requests were of a general nature, for example, about the work of the Department, the role of social workers and

procurement procedures.

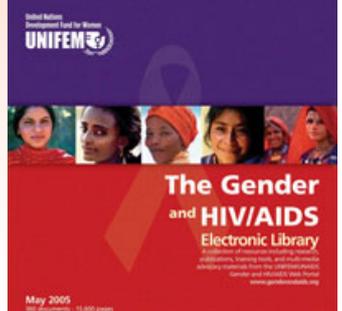
An exciting development in the past three months has been the use of Sabinet Online. Ulwazi is also in the process of arranging an Inter-Library Loan service with the National Library and Sabinet Online. Work on the Ulwazi website has continued during the past three months. It has however not been possible to update the website due to delays experienced by Cape Gateway.

Thank you for the support and interest shown in Ulwazi since its launch. Without your commitment we would not have achieved as much as we have during this time. Please contact Ulwazi staff if you have any comments or concerns about its services or suggestions for the way forward.



WHAT'S NEW IN ULWAZI?

UNIFEM Gender & HIV/AIDS Electronic Library CD



The United Nations Development Fund (UNIFEM) with support from the joint UN Programme on AIDS has developed this directory to provide up-to date information on the gender dimensions of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The Electronic Library has resources produced by a variety of organisations working on HIV/AIDS, including cutting-edge research and studies, training resources and tools, and multi-media advocacy materials that can be easily searched using a variety of criteria.

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Gender Sensitivity in the Workplace

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by Alma Crotz

Issues of women's empowerment have received increased attention in South Africa in the past decade. Despite this, gender sensitivity in the workplace is still a contentious issue.

On 4 August 2005, the South African Media Gender Institute (SAMGI) under the auspices of the Ulwazi Information Centre created a platform to debate and discuss gender sensitivity in the work place. Staff from various Directorates as well as District Offices were invited to participate. The topics that were explored included socialization, power relations and gender barriers in the work place. Interactive activities such as role plays were used to explore the various concepts. The exercises clearly showed that there is no link between gender and a person's talents or weaknesses. Gender

should therefore not be a barrier to achieving life goals. Social conditioning however creates stereotypes which often result in obstacles to women's self-actualisation. Gender stereotyping and its consequences should be actively addressed in the workplace.

Here are some of the thoughts and experiences on the workshop shared by participants:

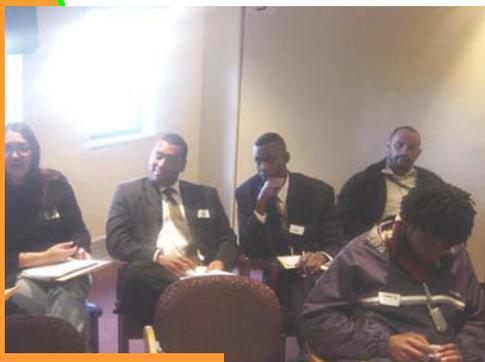
Michael Nevhari,

HRM Directorate: This workshop clearly assisted me in conceptualizing the term gender and the impact that society has on shaping daily roles that people play. Although short, this workshop has enlightened me on the following aspects: the definition of gender, the roles perceived to be men's by nature

and societal perceptions of such roles, and gender barriers at work. We also dealt with the influence of gender on shaping the mode of workplace communication and interaction. Gender is not a 'women's thing'; I am more empowered to articulate on it, much better than most women and men!

Melissa Johannes,

Research Directorate: The Gender Sensitivity Workshop was enlightening; as it elicited the stereotypes both men and women have of each other. It made me realize that gender is closely linked to one's attitudes and values around role allocation, and how easily society dictates certain tasks according to one's biological predisposition.



Pictures above taken at the Gender Sensitivity Workshop

Networking at the Learning Cape 2005 Festival

by Debbie Calitz

The Learning Cape 2005 Festival took place at the Cape Town International Convention Centre from 2 to 4 August 2005. The Expo, which was attended by approximately 20 000 visitors, hosted 130 exhibitors from sectors such as education and training, business, government and non-governmental organizations. Ulwazi staff and members of the Ulwazi Working Group formed

part of the Social Services team that hosted the Department's exhibition at the event.

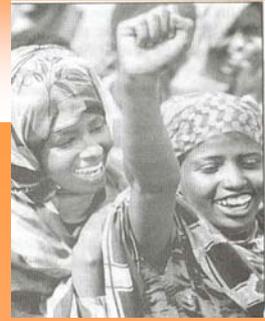
The aim of the Department's exhibition was to interact with learners, schools, FET Colleges, Higher Education Institutions and adult learners as potential future employees in the Social Work and Public Service sector. In addition to providing learners and unem-

ployed youth with career information, the opportunity to do HIV/AIDS awareness and to advocate against the dangers of Tik-Tik was seized by handing out pamphlets, balloons promoting the Help Line and condoms. Head Office and Cape Town District Office Staff members are thanked for their commitment and dedication in ensuring the success of the Department's exhibition.

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Who am I?

by Sharon Mckenzie



I am the passage of time. I represent the past, I carry the future. Within me I carry the ability to shape, mould and destroy the human spirit. It is with infinite delicacy that I wield my power, unassuming, undetected and quiet. Yet what is it that drives me to these extreme goals? How do I pursue these relentless quests with a moral conscience because that is what I need in order to leave the world a better place? Do I perhaps carry within me the desire to be known or would I just like to be acknowledged. Why would I want to settle for anything less than what I am due? Yet I was moulded to be indifferent to the pains of the world. Would I desire to change that view? Would my acquired intelligence help me to see the difference? Do I need educating? Whether I acquire it or not, my impact on the world will leave its mark. Within me I carry the tools to shape the future, the world, mankind. If my impact on the world is so remarkable, why am I delegated a lesser role in society. Should I not be making my self known? I think I shall. I shall do so by strengthening my resolve to make man a better soul. I

shall do so by teaching woman that they can do anything. I shall teach them how to have courage. This cycle needs to be carried with respect and dignity. Who am I I am woman.

How did we get ourselves into this role of anonymity? How did we allow death and pain to be an unnoticed moment? Violent crime has been our vigil companion for far too long. Are we to blame for the state of the world? Have our nurturing abilities become that of man, deferred or postponed? Are we striving too hard to match the skills and abilities of the hunter? Lets view the results of our labours and what do we see? The balance sheet of life reveals much to our credit yet more liabilities. What should be changed? Does this journey need to be undertaken alone? The gauntlet has been run and a painful one it was. Our liabilities are of our own making because the hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world.

Who am I to make such brash statements when all that counts in the world

is commercialism?

Who am I to say such things with such boldness I am the new woman ready to take on the world with man, to be at his side as his complement, ready to instil values that will grow a better family, a better society, a better world; to replace violent thoughts with moral ones; to turn hateful speech into kind expressions; to draw upon our religious values, to educate and value life. Is a human life today not considered as the cheapest commodity on earth and yet it is the most valuable of. A huge mindset journey lies before man. I shall help by starting this journey with a single step. I am capable of achieving all this for I am woman.

“I am the new woman ... ready to instil values that will grow a better family, a better society, a better world;...”

SA's push for gender equity

by Philippa Garson



Thirty percent of all our parliamentarians are women, which puts South Africa at number eight in

the world in terms of gender equality in government. The country leapt quickly from a position of 141 in the world before the 1994 elections to number eight, when the African National Congress adopted a 30% quota on its party list.

The country can also boast that nine of its 27 Cabinet ministers and eight of its 14 deputy ministers are women. Both the Speaker of the National Assembly and the Chairman of the National Council

of Provinces are women, Frene Ginwala and Naledi Pandor respectively.

According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the international association of parliaments of sovereign states, as of June 2002, Ginwala and Pandor were two of only 25 women around the world to preside over a house of the 1 809 parliaments. South Africa is one of only three African countries to have woman presiding officers in Parliament or a house

... cont/ SA's push for gender equity

of parliament.

Sheila Meintjes, a commissioner with the Commission on Gender Equality, a statutory organisation set up to advance women's rights in South Africa, believes 30% is the critical mass needed to make a difference in the struggle to promote women's rights. "This has been very important in promoting a range of policies and legislation that stands to benefit women."

But an international campaign is under way to increase women's representation in parliaments to 50%. With the slogan *50/50 by 2005: Get the Balance Right!*, the campaign has far to go to achieve its aims. By 2000, women comprised only 13% of national parliaments around the world, with a yearly increase of 0.5%.

"It's only when there is a critical mass of women in all their diversity in every country of the world, in both appointed and elected decision-making positions and in all international bodies, that gender issues will be addressed in the policy agenda and the goals of equality, development, peace and human rights for all can be realised in the 21st century", says WomensNet, an online venture to advance women's rights around the globe.

The campaign, launched in South Africa in March 2002 by the Gender Advocacy Project, has the full support of the Commission on Gender Equality and many politicians.

Considering that 52% of the population is made up of women and that there are 1.2 million more women on the voters' role than men, the 50/50 goal makes sense. "It's clear that women are actually very interested in politics. They want to participate", says Meintjes.

She points out that not all women in Parliament are "actively taking up women's issues as well as engaging in the rough and tumble of Parliamentary politics". While those who are not active feminists are still keen to advance women in society, they are over-extended and are doing "double duty", given that women are

supposed to be represented on every parliamentary committee.

Legislation and reality

The Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Quality of Life and Status of Women has seen through several important pieces of legislation on customary law, domestic violence and child maintenance, all of which have a direct bearing on the quality of women's lives.

"We have good legislation and good policies, but we need enough funding to ensure proper implementation. This is where we fall down", says Meintjes.

For example, the legislation protecting women against domestic violence puts much of the onus on an already overstretched police force, which does not have the resources to transform the law into reality.

Adds Beatrice Ngobo, acting chairperson of the Commission on Gender Equality: "We have women in Parliament and we have good laws to protect women, but they have not been properly publicised. When it comes to implementation, people at the frontline are mostly men. They won't give up power so easily." While women have taken up key positions in Cabinet and Parliament, in government generally, women still hold "marginal positions", says Ngobo. The challenge is to get women's representation in local and provincial government up to 30% as well.

Private sector still dominated by men

In the private sector, women's representation is even worse. A report released by the Employment Equity Commission in 2001 showed that women are inadequately represented across all sectors of the economy: at management level, 87% of all top management positions are still held by men and 80% of all senior management jobs are in the hands of men.

Women currently hold 37.6% of jobs in management (all levels) and professional jobs combined – which includes the teaching and nursing

professions.

There are still many barriers preventing women from getting ahead in business. Besides lacking the necessary education and skills, they are often denied financial assistance without a male guarantor.

While the political battle for gender equity has partly been won, the social and economic battles are clearly far from over. Levels of violence against women are alarmingly high. Women are extremely vulnerable to rape, sexual abuse, domestic and other violence, teenage parenthood, a lack of education opportunities, unemployment and sexual harassment.

Commission on Gender Equality

To change a patriarchal, chauvinistic society into one which sees women as equal players will be a long, arduous process.

It is up to the Commission on Gender Equality to monitor all sectors of society to ensure that they are promoting gender equity. The Commission must also investigate complaints on gender-related issues, as well as conduct research on all existing and impending legislation from a gender perspective.

Already, the Commission is swamped with far more complaints than it is able to attend to. With only five regional offices and 36 staff members, the organisation lacks the capacity to fulfil its mandate.

However, it has entered into a range of partnerships with relevant organisations, like People Opposed to Women Abuse, to broaden its impact. The Commission is now publishing an annual report card on progress on gender equality in both the state and civil society. But the most important partner in the struggle for women's rights is men. "There's a realisation that if we don't bring men in as partners we won't win the battle", says Meintjes.

Article sourced from
www.southafrica.info

