



Office of the Principal and Vice Chancellor

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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

THE 5TH NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN LECTURE

***“The Role of the National Development Plan Vision 2030 and its
impact on the Transformation of the Socio-Economic and Political
Life of Women in Post 1994 in the Republic of South Africa”***

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It is my distinct honour and privilege, on behalf of the Council, Management, Staff and Students of the University of South Africa, to welcome the Minister in the Presidency, Honourable Minister Jackson Mthembu, to our campus, and to this august occasion.

It is my hope, Minister, that your input and ideas will assist us to reflect and gain insights into what government considers as some of the strides that have been achieved since the dawn of our democracy in relation to the development of women.

Importantly, we would like to hear about those stubborn challenges that we must confront as a nation, and how government intends to address them.

These reflections and strategies are important to us as the university community because ours is a responsibility, amongst others, to teach, thus producing graduates who can add to the skills pool to assist the country to address some of the challenges facing the citizenry.

Our research output, other than some of it legitimately being about pursuit of knowledge, must assist the nation to overcome some of its challenges or, at the very least, to understand them.

Universities, what they offer and produce, are therefore shaped and influenced by society. Similarly, universities can shape and influence how society functions and responds to challenges.

But for us to be truly scientific in our pursuit of knowledge and at times solutions to society's challenges, we must always be able to respond to some of the realities facing us on the ground.

We gather here today at the time when the nation is in deep collective reflection over the scourge of gender-based violence and femicide. The murders of Uyinene Mrwetyana and Leighandre Jegels highlighted the plight of many women in our country who are violated daily.

As I pointed out recently, while Uyinene and Leighandre's cases received national and international attention, thousands of working class and poor women in both our urban centres and rural areas suffer daily in the hands of men, some being their partners. Their cases do not receive the necessary attention that they deserve. They are the silent, and silenced, majority.

A cursory look at some of the available studies on gender-based violence reveal some depressing facts. Many studies have been carried out by the Medical Research Council over the years, documenting the challenge that we face as a country; against femicide and violence against children.¹

¹ See some of the studies at <http://www.samrc.ac.za/intramural-research-units/GenderHealth-current-projects> (Accessed on 02 October 2019)

The 2018 study by Statistics South Africa, *Crime Against Women in South Africa: A in-depth Analysis of the Victims of Crime Survey Data*, that in 2000 the South African murder rate of women was five times more than the global average, decreasing of course over time to reach a low in 2015.²

Such slight improvements should however never be celebrated. The murder and violation of one woman is one too many. As a civilised society, we should not gather here and talk about how women continue to feel unsafe in their homes, workplace, university and on the streets.

Safety is a birth right for every woman.

Some may be asking why am I highlighting these worrying trends in a lecture that is supposed to focus on socio-economic development of women since 1994.

There are three main reasons why we should situate a discussion on socio-economic development within the current realities affecting women.

² Statistics South Africa (2018) *Crime Against Women in South Africa: A in-depth analysis of the Victims of Crime Survey Data*, <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/Report-03-40-05/Report-03-40-05June2018.pdf> (Accessed on 02 October 2019)

First, and as I pointed out earlier, it would be unscientific to ignore what is happening around us. Any development in society, and intellectual reflections related thereto, must be anchored on the lived experiences of those affected by events in that society. Thus, in its critique of the National Development Plan, the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) argues that the NDP “needs gender disaggregated data to emphasise the crisis proportions that GBV has taken on in South Africa, and dealing with GBV should be prioritized for intervention”.³

Second, universities are affected by the prevalence of gender-based violence. According to Finchilescu and Dugard (2018), students are the predominant victims of gender-based violence in our universities.⁴

As a Vice -Chancellor, I cannot afford to be silent when I have an opportunity to speak out against this scourge. We must use every opportunity to add our voices of protest and pledge to make the spaces that we have and influence, to advocate for the safety of our students and female colleagues.

³ Commission for Gender Equality (2014) Gender Analysis of the National Development Plan Vision 2030, <http://www.cge.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/NDP-integrated-analysis-FINAL-2-gender-analysis.pdf> (Accessed on 02 October 2019)

⁴ Finchilescu, G., & Dugard, J. (2018). Experiences of Gender-Based Violence at a South African University: Prevalence and Effect on Rape Myth Acceptance. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260518769352>

The third reasons why I am highlighting the scourge of gender-based violence is because this distressing reality reflects how society is still shaped by patriarchal notions of women not deserving equal treatment and opportunity as men. What therefore finds expression in backward and violent tendencies, mirrors subtle and hidden perpetuation of inequality and marginalisation of women in the economic development spaces.

Combined with race and class dynamics what emerges is some differentiated system where middle-class women must contend with the glass ceiling in the corporate sector, while working class women, both in the townships and rural areas, must contend with daily realities of marginalisation and lack of access to the levers of the economy.

It is on this account that I wish to briefly turn to some of the areas that I think need attention when engaging with the NDP.

With an unemployment rate standing at 29% during the second quarter of 2019,⁵ it should be expected that women would find themselves at the bottom of the opportunities ladder.

⁵ Statistics South Africa (2019) Quarterly Labour Force (QLFS) – Q2: 2019 (Media Release), <http://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=12370> (Accessed on 02 October 2019)

While there surely are more recent statistics that the Minister is exposed to, the latest analysis from Statistics South Africa which I could gain access to indicates the stark realities that women are still faced with. For instance, in one observation it is stated that “in addition to the low employment rates among females, a large portion of South African female workers remain concentrated in low-skilled and low-paying jobs. Women also bear the burden of doing unpaid work”.⁶

The StatsSA report that I have just quoted from goes on to state that there are various factors that serve to maintain the economic gender gap. These include:

- Women living in rural areas often have difficulties in obtaining the same education and skills as men;
- Unequal gender access to business and financial services; and,
- A large proportion of women face constraints that limit their ability to own and control assets.⁷

Whereas working class and poor women still face difficulties, middle class women have also had to contend with a myriad of challenges as

⁶ Statistics South Africa (2019) Gender Series Volume 1: Economic Empowerment, 2001-2014, <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/Report-03-10-04/Report-03-10-042014.pdf> (Accessed on 02 October 2019)

⁷ Ibid

they try to break the glass ceiling. The picture seems to be different between the public sector and the private sector.

Having set a target to achieve 50% representation of women in senior positions, the public sector seems to be on course to achieve that noble goal, even though there are challenges.⁸

The private sector has not done that well. A report released by the auditing firm PwC earlier this year shows that there is still a lot of work to be done in that sector. For instance, only 3.31% of CEOs of some of the big companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange are women.⁹

Some of the gender disparities that were found included the fact that:

- There were remuneration gaps that favour men in the health care, technology and finance sectors; and,
- White males still dominating as CEOs. This means that women, especially black women, find themselves in the bottom rung.

⁸ Kahn, S.B & Motsoeneng, R.P (2014) Gender equality in the South African public service: Ideal or reality? *Journal of Public Administration*, Volume 49, Issue 4, pp. 1060-1082

⁹ PwC (2019) Executive Directors: Practices and Remuneration, <https://www.pwc.co.za/en/assets/pdf/executive-directors-report-2017.pdf> (Accessed on 02 October 2019)

These, and many sets of statistics available that have been compiled by many organisations, show that there is still a long way to go for women to fully be said to be equal participants in the economy.

What should however not be missed is that there have been major achievements in closing the gender gap since 1994. Ours is a country that has opened itself to 'grapple' with the legacy of apartheid, which saw black people and women being marginalised from economic activity in general, and ownership and management of such activities in particular.

The task after 1994 was therefore a huge one. One that has been addressed with determination and purpose, especially by the State. Yet, a lot must still be done.

Programme Director, against the background that I have just outlined, there are a few considerations that I wish to make which I think may contribute to the NDP Vision 2030 being realised. This in addition and complimentary to what many other organisations and individuals have already suggested.

The first is to address the dropout rate by girls at high school. As the Commission for Gender Equality has observed, the dropout rate by girls at primary school is less. It then increases at high school. Some of

the factors identified include sexual harassment, teenage pregnancy, and conservative views that hold that girls should not proceed further with their studies.¹⁰

Both the State and society must intentionally address the challenges that girls face at high school, so that they can articulate to higher education.

The second intervention that must be strengthened is to encourage female students to take up professional and science streams of a wide variety in universities. This will assist in closing the skills deficit that some have observed as an impediment when considering the promotion of women later in their careers.¹¹

The State, together with institutions of higher learning, should develop a dedicated focus on the career-pathing of female students. This will ensure that there is an adequate pool of female graduates qualified in the professional and science fields who must then be mentored and promoted within both the public and private sectors to ultimately occupy higher positions.

¹⁰ Commission for Gender Equality (2014) Gender Analysis of the National Development Plan Vision 2030, <http://www.cge.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/NDP-integrated-analysis-FINAL-2-gender-analysis.pdf> (Accessed on 02 October 2019)

¹¹ Kahn, S.B & Motsoeneng, R.P (2014) Gender equality in the South African public service: Ideal or reality? *Journal of Public Administration*, Volume 49, Issue 4, pp. 1060-1082

The third intervention, which is a direct challenge to institutions of higher learning, is to create conditions that are conducive, encouraging, stimulating and supportive of female students to grow in their chosen professional streams. Female students must feel safe, for instance, to stay late at night in the library, which is a conducive study space, than having to rush home or to their residences because of fear of abuse.

The fourth intervention, which is already underway, will be for the State to meet its stated targets to have 50% of senior managers being women. This will serve as motivation for the millions of young girls and female students who aspire for a career in the public sector. Importantly, it will help to put pressure on other sectors of the society – the private sector and the non-governmental sector – to strive to meet similar targets.

Finally, the private sector, which holds the key to massive investments that may unlock the ‘untapped’ economic opportunities in the country, must be pressurised to remove the ‘glass ceiling’ that prevents many qualified and highly skilled women from reaching their potential.

These, and many other interventions, may assist in achieving the ambitious and yet necessary goals of NDP Vision 2030.

Minister, the University of South Africa stands ready to collaborate with the State and your department to assist the country reach its potential. Through our various research centres and institutes, we can add to the work that institutions of the State such as Statistics South Africa are doing.

This I say because there can never be any thought-out development that is not based on and undergirded by strong research and policy advice. That is where an institution such as ours may assist. I therefore look forward to having a discussion along those lines, as we hear from you some of the achievements that have been attained since 1994; and the plans that lie ahead to meet Vision 2030.

Once again, on behalf of the Council, Management, Staff and Students of the University of South Africa, I welcome you.

Thank you!