

InFocus



A publication of the UN in South Africa

2023



UN SOUTH AFRICA "DELIVERING AS ONE"

United Nations joins SA to find just solutions for the energy crisis and transition

The UN and the Nelson Mandela Foundation launch "The Nelson Mandela SDGs Quotes Booklet"

Climate smart agriculture equips women farmers and grows the economy





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Nelson Muffuh

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Front cover: South African female crop and dairy farmer, Disebo Makatsa.
©Photo: Dee-Y Trading - Photo was applied by UN Women/SAMCO

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Message from the UN Resident Coordinator in South Africa, Nelson Muffuh



**For People
For Planet**

Dear friends, colleagues and partners

As we close a year and look forward to a new year, it's time to reflect on the challenges 2023 has presented and take stock of the successful results achieved. 2023 was another year of poly-crisis for People and Planet; from climate change and conflict to deepening inequalities and economic insecurities. Only 15% of the Sustainable Development Goals are on track. The 2023 SDG Summit recognized that with a fundamental shift in global behaviour, it is still possible to transition towards a just, inclusive, peaceful and sustainable World.

The UN in South Africa made some notable strides in our contribution towards the sustainable development efforts of the government and people of South Africa. Some strategic endeavors and collaborations included: The Motlanthe Foundation, The Thabo Mbeki Foundation, The Desmond and Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation, the Nelson Mandela Foundation, the Institute of Security Studies, DIRCO, MISTRA, Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, the Presidential Climate Commission, the Department of Home Affairs on the Migration Roundtable, the Department of Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation on SDGs localisation and acceleration, the Department of Social Development on social protection, the Department of Health on public health threats and the National Health Insurance, SANAC on the fight against HIV, and several stakeholders consultations on just energy transition, food systems, transforming education, decent work, gender equality, youth empowerment and gender-based violence, early warning systems as well as a strengthened relationship with the Global Compact Network in South Africa.

The UN family together with the government and an array of multi-stakeholder partners in an all-of-society approach, united behind the principle of leaving no one behind. I want to place on record my gratitude and appreciation to the UN Country Team, Regional Directors, all UN staff and partners for the collaborative efforts this year.

Let us ramp up on our partnerships and strengthen collaboration in the new year through our transformative entry points and key transitions, all of which have catalytic and multiplier effects across the SDGs. These include:

- (1) food systems;
- (2) energy access and affordability;
- (3) digital connectivity;
- (4) education;
- (5) jobs and social protection; and
- (6) climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

The Summit of the Future will take place in September 2024. It has been dubbed 'a once-in-a-generation opportunity, to take concrete steps to address our current predicaments but also to reinvigorate global cooperation and a much-needed commitment towards leaving a fair, just, and sustainable world for generations to come'.

Much like this year as we led up to the 2023 SDG Summit, we will continue to convene multi-stakeholder platforms to increase inclusive and transparent participation, co-create sustainable development interventions with partners, and catalyze for change on a number of critical issues.

I close with the words of the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres's remarks to the closing of the 2023 SDG Summit (High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development) this last September, "We have a rescue plan before us, in the political declaration. Now is the time to lift the declaration's words off the page and invest in development at scale like never before...Let's take action now for a better, healthier, more peaceful, sustainable and prosperous world." May 2024 be a year of opportunity, change and cooperation.

Respectfully,

Nelson Muffuh

United Nations joins South Africa in finding answers to the energy crisis

By Masimba Tafirenyika



UN team with Komati Power Plant officials in Mpumalanga. ©UN South Africa

May 2023 - After driving for almost two hours from South Africa's capital, Pretoria – but still a few kilometres away from our destination – tall chimneys, several boilers and surrounding buildings appear from the horizon, dominating the roughly flat landscape. A few minutes later, we arrive at Komati Power Station, a coal-fired station run by a state-owned company, Eskom, the country's major supplier of electricity.

The purpose of our visit to Komati in Mpumalanga Province – as a United Nations team led by the head of the UN in South Africa and its Resident Coordinator, Nelson Muffuh – was to learn from Eskom authorities their plans for a just transition for the employees and local communities affected by the mothballed plant, and how it is going to be reused as a source for renewable energy. Another aim was to use the information and evidence to mitigate negative impacts to ensure that the transition is just.

Komati was decommissioned or retired in October 2022 after having operated for 61 years. At its peak, the plant used to contribute 1,000 megawatts of electricity to the national grid. As the seventh biggest coal producer in the world, South Africa gets 80% of its electricity needs from coal-fired plants to power Africa's second biggest economy.

The country is currently going through a crippling nationwide energy crisis, forcing Eskom to implement rotational power cuts or loadshedding for up to 10 hours per day.

The environmental and social impacts on South Africa's reliance on coal to generate electricity is astounding.

According to Greenpeace, an advocacy group, the air pollution in Mpumalanga Province – which supplies the bulk of the country's coal needs – is the most polluted in the world, with record levels of nitrogen dioxide.

The province hosts more than 83% of SA's coal production and most of the coal-powered plants. The lingering headache among South Africans is the morning after – the plight of employees who will lose their jobs, and the fate of the affected communities, when more plants are closed, as is being planned. This is despite pledges by authorities that they will carefully manage the switch to renewable energy and ensure that closing coal plants will be spread over a reasonable timeframe. Undoubtedly, these assurances also recognize that South Africa has an abundance of coal which continue to play a key role in generating the bulk of its electricity needs.

In a statement Eskom issued on the day the Komati plant was officially shut down, the public utility company said it “has developed a comprehensive Just Energy Transition (JET) Strategy which places equal importance on the ‘transition to lower carbon technologies,’ and the ability to do so in a manner that is ‘just’ and sustainable. The remaining employees will take part in the Komati Repowering and Repurposing project.”

The statement goes on to say: “The power plant will be converted into a renewable generation site powered with 150MW of solar, 70MW of wind and 150MW of storage batteries, thereby continuing to put the site and its associated transmission infrastructure into good use and to provide economic opportunities to the community.”

During a briefing to the UN team by Komati's managers, economic activities at the plant have already started – albeit still on a small scale.

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Aquaponics project of fish tanks, whose waste is used as nutrients to feed plants without soil. ©UN South Africa

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There is the desalination plant which produces high quality, blue-drop certified water, which is then sold to local communities.

Another is the aquaponics project, which grows fish in tanks and uses their waste as nutrients to feed plants without soil. Currently the fish of choice is the tilapia, which is popular among South Africans.

The managers informed the UN team that before Eskom closed the plant, it carried out an exhaustive study of its economic and social impacts, which involved consulting workers, labour unions and the affected communities, among others.

Eskom says the plan to reuse Komati as a source for renewable energy funded by the World Bank is “one of the largest coal-fired power plant decommissioning, repowering and repurposing projects globally and will serve as a global reference on how to transition fossil-fuel assets.”

For its part, the UN in South Africa has also initiated several projects in local communities in the provinces of Mpumalanga, Eastern Cape and Limpopo as part of its contribution to the country’s transition to clean and renewable resources.

In the province of Mpumalanga, the UN has several of concluded, ongoing and planned projects ranging from climate finance of climate-resilient schools



A manager at the Komati Power Plant explains the challenges faced at the plant. ©UN South Africa

and health care facilities, to looking at the impact of energy and environment on children, working on youth entrepreneurship in the sector, green learning (UNICEF); conducting a situational analysis to examine opportunities and challenges for a JET and capacity building for municipal managers on JT (ILO); as well as working with ESKOMs energy transition programme (which includes financing the ESKOM repurposing

Union and repowering initiative) and community development (WB). The plans are to increase the UN initiatives in Mpumalanga, because this is the province where most of the socio-economic impacts of the energy transition will be felt.

In the Eastern Cape, one example of the UN initiatives is a project by the UNDP, which set up a wind-solar hybrid mini-grid in the Upper Blinkwater community and installed groundwater-pumping wind turbines in two remote schools.

The project now provides the local community with access to clean and affordable energy, benefiting almost 60 households and improving access to clean water to about 550 students and 16 teachers. At the COP26 conference in Glasgow in 2021, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France and the European announced they would make available US\$8.5 billion to speed up South Africa’s transition from reliance on coal-fired plants to clean energy under a Just Energy Transition Partnership.

Progress has already been made on how and when these funds will be released and used to solve South Africa’s energy crisis, and, as part of this initiative, the South African government launched an investment plan at COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh in 2022.

Several more coal-fired plants are expected to meet the same fate as Komati. What is clear is that it’s no longer a question of whether more plants will be closed or not, but when they will eventually be put to rest. Hence the need to start the transition.



UN commends the country's commitment to the just transition to a low carbon and inclusive economy

By Eunice Namugwe



Ambassadors, government, labour, private sector, international partners, community-based entities and the UN Country Team with the Special Advisor to the UN Secretary-General on Climate Action and Just Transition, Mr. Selwin Hart (in red tie) at the high-level roundtable in Pretoria. © UN South Africa

July 2023 - The UN in South Africa convened a high-level roundtable in Pretoria, focusing on "Raising the Game and Acting Now on Just Access and Transition to Energy to Leave No One Behind." The gathering facilitated multi-stakeholder engagement, including government, labour, private sector, international partners, community-based entities, think tanks, and the UN, to deliberate on the impacts and benefits of enhancing affordable energy access and ensuring a just transition.

Assistant Secretary-General Selwin Hart, the Special Advisor to the UN Secretary-General on Climate Action and Just Transition, participated in the roundtable. He emphasized the global scrutiny of South Africa's implementation of the Just Energy Transition, acknowledging the long, challenging journey ahead, which necessitates inclusive and responsible management.


Mr. Hart echoed a participant's call for increased investments in the solar industry, identifying it as one of South Africa's greatest opportunities for renewable technology adoption, especially for households and small businesses seeking affordable energy solutions.

The UN Resident Coordinator and Representative of the UN Secretary-General in South Africa, Nelson Muffuh reiterated

the essence of a "just" transition, emphasizing bridging the energy gap to ensure universal access to clean, affordable, and sustainable energy. He stressed the collective effort required to create an enabling environment promoting social equity, job creation, economic growth, and environmental sustainability.

The European Union Ambassador to South Africa, Sandra Kramer, highlighted donor support in the form of loans, grants, and expertise for South Africa's energy transition, in addition to significant funding secured at COP26. Speakers unanimously recognized the imperative for South Africa to transition to renewable energy, acknowledging both challenges and opportunities on this path.

The UN in South Africa reaffirmed its support for the country's commitment to renewable energy and a just energy transition, emphasizing the importance of balancing energy access, affordability, reliability, security, and sustainability. This support was communicated to the government through high-level meetings preceding the roundtable.

Meetings between the UN and the South African government emphasized a whole-of-society approach to decarbonization, aligning with Sustainable Development Goals and the National Development Plan. 



Mr. Selwin Hart had the opportunity to meet Kgosientsho David Ramokgopa, Minister in the Presidency responsible for Electricity (right) and Maropene Ramokgopa, Minister in the Presidency Responsible for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. © UN South Africa

The joint UN strategy on Just Energy Transition and Plan of Action



Action for Just Energy Access and Transition.



LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

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UNinSouthAfrica



ACT NOW
FOR PEOPLE FOR PLANET

September 2023 - The United Nations is promoting the concept of a Just Energy Transition (JET) towards low-carbon, sustainable and inclusive economies and societies for all. Urgent action is needed to address the challenges of climate change and depletion of the world's natural resources as the future of societies, jobs and livelihoods depend on the natural environment and the planet's ecosystems.

A just transition promotes environmentally sustainable economies which are inclusive, transparent, and which create economic growth and employment while reducing inequalities and poverty.

In line with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the UN Secretary-General, the UN Sustainable Development Group, and UN Country Teams (UNCTs) have a critical role in supporting countries' efforts to design and implement gender-responsive, inclusive, and coherent just transition frameworks that are coordinated with relevant economic, social and environmental policies.


In conformity with the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) signed with the Government of South Africa, the UN in South Africa is committed to supporting the efforts of the government in ensuring that the national priority of a JET in South Africa is just and fair and that the process is inclusive and leverages the contributions of all stakeholders based on social dialogue between government, employers' and workers' organizations as well as impacted community groups.

In this spirit, the UN Resident Coordinator Office in South Africa has set up a UN Just Energy Access and Transition (JEAT) Task Team to align and coordinate the UN agencies'

programmes and advocacy actions for a Just Transition in South Africa. This document sets out the joint UN strategy and plan of action on JEAT in South Africa.

The UNCT, through its various agencies – Food and Agriculture Organization, International Labour Organization, UN Development Programme, UN Environment Programme, UN International Children's Emergency Fund, UN Industrial Development Organization, UN Organization for Drugs and Crime, UN Women and the World Bank – is actively engaged in green economy initiatives in South Africa and is fully supporting the JET. The agencies' engagements are taking place at all levels – national, provincial and local.

The partners the RCO and agencies are engaging with include the Presidential Climate Commission, the Just Energy Transition Partnership Secretariat, government departments, trade unions, employer and business membership organizations, the UN Global Compact, international partners, academia and communities. The support provided at the national level has been multi-faceted. At the apex is the extensive high level stakeholder engagement, advocacy and convening spearheaded by the Resident Coordinator.

Finally, the UN is in the process of developing guidance notes for policy making, including good practices, highlighting experiences of how countries advance gender equality and inclusion as well as how to strengthen inclusion of persons with disabilities using an intersectional approach to Just Transition policies and processes. 



Climate-Smart Agriculture equips women farmers and grows the economy

By Maphuti Mahlaba



South African female crop and dairy farmer, Disebo Makatsa harvesting beetroot on her farm. © Dee-Y Trading

What many small-scale women farmers need are skills, finance, technology and access to markets, to move into the formal economy.

October 2023 - South African female crop and dairy farmer, Disebo Makatsa, has always loved farming, a passion she inherited from her mother. What started out as a vegetable garden in her backyard developed into a dream to farm formally on her own farm. In 2004, she applied for a 111-hectare farm from the government and was successful in 2009, but due to challenges with water, she applied for another farm in 2010. In 2014, her company, Dee-Y Trading, moved to a 368-hectare farm in the Free State Province where she does large-scale vegetable and dairy farming.

Makatsa is one of about 4,560 South African women farmers who have benefited from the Climate-Smart Agriculture programme since 2019. The programme is implemented by UN Women in South Africa, Malawi, Nigeria, and Uganda, and supported by Standard Bank. In South Africa, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) partnered with UN Women to provide farmers with technical farming skills.

South African female farmers were assisted to start and improve farming crops including maize, beans, and other vegetables. In Malawi, the programme focused on reaching 10,461 women farmers to grow groundnuts; in Uganda 1,400 were equipped with skills as cage fish farmers; and in Nigeria, 12,500 women learned new skills in the production of shea butter and rice.



Disebo demonstrates how her cows are milked and taken care of. © Dee-Y Trading

According to Makatsa, although commercial farming is still a male-dominated industry where women have to work twice as hard, the reality is that women have always been farmers, working the land and producing food. What many small-scale women farmers need to move into the formal economy are skills, finance, technology and access to markets. (Continued on next page)

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Some of the elements of the Climate-Smart Agriculture Programme include access to labour and time-saving farming equipment, climate-resilient agricultural extension services, information and training, technical farming training, business management skills, and mentorship.

The programme enriched Makatsa's business. She says some of the best agriculture practices she learned from the programme and implemented include conserving water by installing drip-irrigation technology, crop rotation which helps retain the nutrients in the soil, and intercropping which has helped her to keep the soil fertile while saving land space. The result has been a noticeable improvement in the quality of her produce and a significantly better yield of crops.

Additionally, the lessons learned and implemented on compliance have helped to formalize her business and supply big retailers with her fresh produce and milk. She currently has 68 milk cows, having started with 50, and employs 14 people on the farm, excluding those she hires during harvest season.

The future for Dee-Y Trading is agro-processing. Makatsa would like to see her business grow to produce pasteurized milk, yoghurt, maas, and other dairy products. She would also like to supply giant retailers with cut, ready-to-cook vegetables. 🌈



The heart of the agricultural economy: The employees at Disebo Makatsa's farm. © Dee-Y Trading



South African female crop and dairy farmer, Disebo Makatsa harvesting lettuce © Dee-Y Trading



Farm produce from one of the Climate-Smart Agriculture programme beneficiaries, Disebo Makatsa. © Dee-Y Trading

The impact of load-shedding on livelihoods: the story of two resilient single-mums

By Zeenat Abdool



Children look on as they use a parafin light to study during an electricity load-shedding blackout in Soweto, South Africa, on March 18, 2021.

© REUTERS/Siphwe Sibeko

While loadshedding has affected small and large businesses alike, it has also compromised access to quality education for children in remote and rural areas.

May 2023- “Stress! Stress! Stress!” is the reaction of 29-year-old Siphokazi Sithole when asked how she feels about energy cuts, or loadshedding as South Africans call them. A single mum of an eight-year-old autistic son, Siphokazi adds that loadshedding severely stresses her out, not only because she needs to ensure everything in the household is done by a certain time, but mainly because it has created a major dent in her income.

Sipho, as she is affectionately known to her friends, runs a mobile salon west of the capital, Pretoria. Living in the poor community of Olieventhoutbosch, Siphokazi is keenly aware of the importance of education and strives to ensure a better life for herself and her son.

During COVID, it really was difficult because my business is a mobile salon, and I wasn't able to travel to my clients' homes. I got the idea to open a salon here, which I did last year,” she says.



Siphokazi Sithole, 29-year-old, single mother from Olieventhoutbosch, Pretoria. © Siphokazi Sithole

“Unfortunately for her, despite the end of the lockdown, the salon struggled to pick up because of loadshedding.” “I don't have an inverter or a generator, I'm afraid it will be stolen because of the community in which I live. So, I have to book my clients for their treatments when there is electricity. But now electricity is often off for four hours at a time,” she says, referring to the loadshedding schedule which results in electricity blackouts for up to 10 or 12 hours a day.

According to the South African Reserve Bank, South Africa loses about R900 million (US\$50 million) a day from loadshedding. This forced the government to take extraordinary measures to resolve the energy crisis. In March, President Cyril Ramaphosa declared a national state of disaster and appointed a minister to deal with loadshedding.

When asked about the direct impact to her livelihood, Siphokazi says she needs about R15,000 (US\$833) a month to meet her expenses, including rent, food and school and transport costs for her autistic son. While she receives a government grant for her son, it does not cover all the expenses, so she has to ensure she makes enough each month for her son's special needs.

“I'm thinking of not paying his school fees for a month or two so that I can save up for a small inverter, but I also don't want trouble with the school, so I don't know what to do,” sighs Siphokazi in desperation. The mobile salon has also suffered as clients only book when they have electricity. Waxing and certain treatments require electricity as Siphokazi needs to heat up the wax or use the steamer for facials. Loadshedding is leading to some days with no income due to the client and the salon not having electricity at the same times.

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Electricity blackouts have led to physical, financial and emotional stress as Siphokazi Sithole deals with bouts of tantrums and distress from her autistic son who hates the dark. She says he loves to draw and when there is loadshedding, he cannot do any activity to keep him occupied while she does house chores.

“There are times where the dark gets to him and I can’t control the bursts of frustration. He doesn’t understand why there is no Wi-Fi for his video games. It then becomes very difficult to manage his behaviour,” says Siphokazi Sithole.



Lungiswa Xhamela, 34 year-old single mother in Free State Province, South Africa. ©Lungiswa Xhamela

While loadshedding has affected small and large businesses alike, it has also compromised access to quality education for children in remote and rural areas of the country.

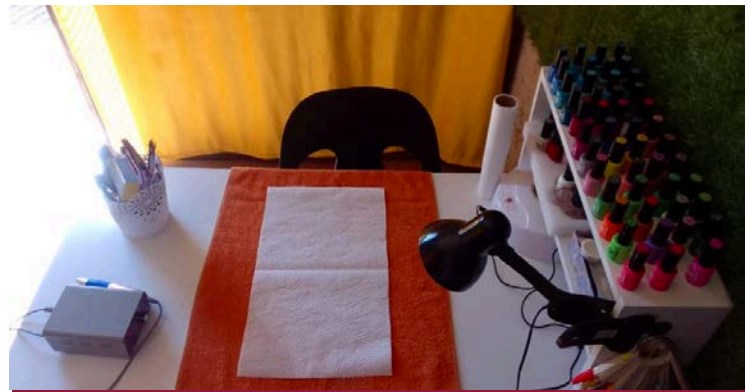
In response to the energy crisis, the United Nations in South Africa is implementing many projects around the country to help accelerate the generation of clean energy and find solutions to those communities least prepared to cope with loadshedding. In Mpumalanga, where most coal-fired power stations are based, it has undertaken a comprehensive socioeconomic and livelihoods impact assessment of the energy transition.

Through the South African Wind Energy Programme and in collaboration with the Department of Minerals, Energy and Resources, the UN also started a project in Eastern Cape that used wind turbine technology and solar power to generate electricity. Several schools have benefited from the project by being able to keep the lights on during school hours, providing access to uninterrupted education.

While some of the projects are still in their early stages, more schools in the Eastern Cape are expected to benefit from the programme.

In the Free State Province though, Lungiswa Xhamela is still recovering from the loss of her established and well-reviewed online teaching job due to the rolling blackouts. Following the pandemic, the 34-year-old mum was retrenched. Lungiswa then applied for an online teaching position to support her eight-year-old daughter and unemployed mum.

“It’s very difficult to get recruited into these online companies. But once you’re in, you get booked to teach based on reviews and it was going well. On a good month I would make at least R18,000 (US\$1,000),” says Lungiswa.



Siphokazi Sithole's nail station at the salon. © Siphokazi Sithole

However, following the extended hours of loadshedding, her ratings began to drop. “Loadshedding completely killed my business,” she says. She went from having 20 students to just one.

Following an article on News24, an online news site, about her situation, a donor gave Lungiswa a power generator. “I’m glad that I have the generator and my profile is still active on the online teaching platform but due to the damage already done, my reviews are bad and therefore no one will book me. It’s not because of my teaching, but really because I was seen as unreliable for not showing up for lessons,” she says.

Recognizing that loadshedding is increasing the existing digital divide in South Africa and people such as Lungiswa are struggling to keep their businesses afloat, the UN through UNDP teamed up with the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, a local think tank, in support of small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs). They rolled out the T.V. White Spaces (TVWS) network technology in rural areas under a project called, “Support to SMMEs to Provide Low-Cost Internet in Township and Rural Communities”.

The TVWS harnesses unused spectrum between T.V. broadcast bands that can be exploited to provide broadband without interference to the broadcasters. Through this initiative, the SMMEs are providing affordable digital connectivity via Wi-Fi hotspots to individuals, schools, clinics, taxi ranks, digital hubs, and other public facilities in the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern and Western Cape, and the Free State.

This initiative forms part of UN’s ongoing efforts to pursue inclusive growth through support to entrepreneurship and youth development programmes. The programme extends internet connectivity to vulnerable populations in remote areas and bridges the digital divide, giving communities the full benefits information technology can deliver.

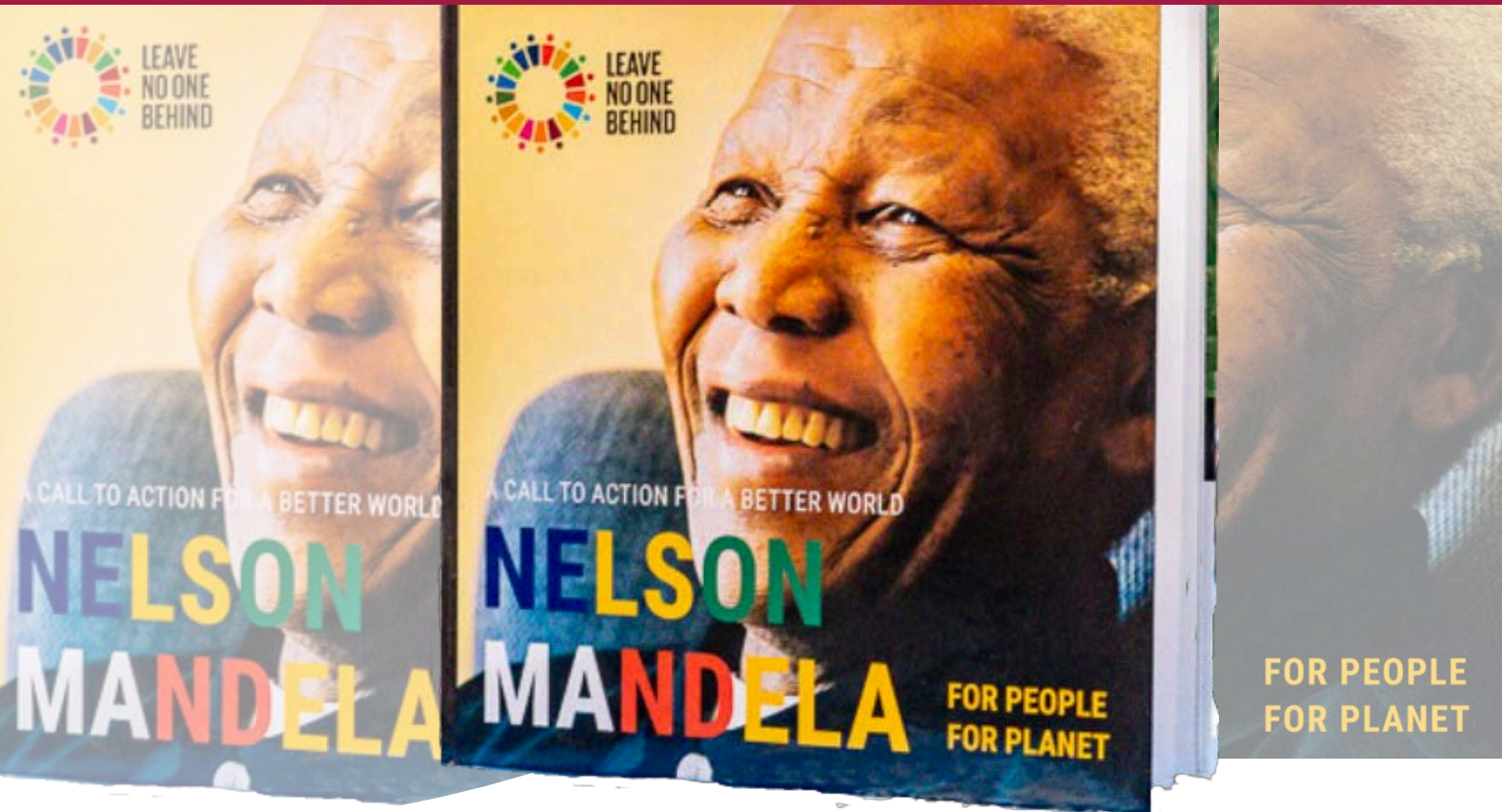
While loadshedding remains a persistent challenge to the livelihoods of ordinary South Africans, the UN in South Africa together with partners, are working in different provinces to find alternative and sustainable solutions to help mitigate the impact of the rolling blackouts for people like Siphokazi Sithole and Lungiswa.



Students at Lungiswa's aftercare. © Lungiswa Xhamela

Call to action for people and planet: Harmonizing Mandela's Legacy with the Sustainable Development Goals

By Eunice Namugwe



September 2023 - In an effort to foster accelerated individual and collective actions for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the United Nations in South Africa and the Nelson Mandela Foundation formally launched the “Nelson Mandela Sustainable Development Goals Quotes” Booklet on the 11 September at the Nelson Mandela Foundation in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The booklet, which was prepared in support of the 2023 SDG Summit held at the UN Headquarters in New York from 18-19 September, establishes connections between Nelson Mandela’s inspiring calls to action and the SDGs designed for the betterment of humanity and the environment. Participants at the multi-stakeholder gathering ranged from the government, civil society, private sector, the diplomatic community, creative artists as well as women and youth.

“This is not just about governments and international organizations taking action; it’s about mobilizing a whole-of-society contribution. It requires a multifaceted approach that involves various stakeholders, including businesses, individuals, leaders, activists, and communities,” said Nelson Muffuh, the UN Resident Coordinator in South Africa.

The SDGs are a global call to action to address the most pressing challenges facing humanity and the planet, from ending poverty and hunger to ensuring gender equality, reversing unsustainable production and consumption patterns, advancing rights and improving governance, protecting and conserving nature, reducing waste and pollution, and combating climate change.

Mr. Muffuh pointed out that the world is currently off track with regards to the necessary progress towards meeting the 2030 deadline. To course-correct and accelerate progress towards these goals, it was imperative that everyone, from member states and businesses to individuals and civil society, plays their part. He thanked the Nelson Mandela Foundation for its tireless efforts and collaboration in ensuring that Madiba’s call to action continues to echo in people’s hearts and minds.

“Let us honor his legacy by taking on this mantle of responsibility and actively work towards a world that reflects the values he fought for which include; fairness, justice, cohesion, equality and freedom. The path to a prosperous and sustainable world is paved with the continuation of Madiba’s legacy. Be Madiba and act now for people and planet,” said Mr. Muffuh. *(continued on next page)*



Nelson Muffuh, UN Resident Coordinator signs off some of the Mandela SDGs Booklets for guests at the launch. ©UN South Africa

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Gushwell Brooks, Head of Mandela Day and Public Outreach at the Nelson Mandela Foundation welcomed guests. ©UN South Africa

“Addressing the delegates at the book launch, Gushwell Brooks, Head of Mandela Day and Public Outreach at the Nelson Mandela Foundation, underscored the significance of the SDGs in striving for a world characterized by equality across political, economic, and environmental dimensions. He highlighted how this alignment beautifully resonates with Nelson Mandela’s enduring legacy. He reminded attendees that the SDGs are fundamentally linked to principles of social justice and the vision that Madiba held dear, in addressing issues like poverty and inequality.

Ambassador Catherine Muigai Mwangi, the High Commissioner of Kenya in South Africa, emphasized the importance of utilizing the booklet as a practical tool to advance the realization of the SDGs. Ms. Mwangi highlighted its potential to facilitate concrete actions and collaborations toward achieving these global objectives. Steve Letsike, Co-Chair of the South Africa National AIDS Council and Chair of the Civil Society Forum spoke of the vital role of, and space needed for civil society organizations to play their part in driving innovation to achieve SDGs.

The book launch started with a video message of support from the UN Deputy Secretary-General, Amina Mohammed. “The SDGs embody our commitment to end poverty, protect the planet and enhance prosperity and wellbeing of all. We find ourselves playing catch-up in the midway point and now is not the time to be disheartened. It is time to act now, for people and for planet and play our part as our global icon Nelson Mandela once called on us,” she said.

“The wonderful publication using Madiba’s own words to inspire and guide us all in our efforts to achieve the SDGs, is timely. Madiba understood the power of collective and individual responsibility. Madiba’s words remind us that achieving SDGs is not just a responsibility, it is a commitment to the values we hold dear, fairness, justice, and equality. The race is on and it is a race we can and must win. But now more than ever, it is in our hands and it always seems impossible, until it’s done,” echoed Ms. Mohammed.

Representatives from the private sector, civil society and youth shared their calls to action by urging their members and communities to act now to attain SDGs by 2030. UN Information Centres (UNICs), including those in Moscow and Brussels, shared videos with messages on the actions they were taking in support of SDGs.

The keynote address was provided by Grammy-award-winning flautist Wouter Kellerman, who also performed a specially written piece dedicated to Nelson Mandela and challenged other Grammy-winning artists to leverage their celebrity power to push for the attainment of the SDGs. The award winner, strongly believes that music transcends boundaries, builds bridges, and connects people. His call to action at the Mandela SDGs Quotes Booklet was a challenge to all Grammy-award winners and musicians to use their music networks and artistry to push for the attainment of the SDGs.

Natania Botha, an environmental and social justice activist, donated a piece of art to the UN as her dedication to SDGs. She called it the “last correspondent,” a mosaic of colors and textures that represents the urgency of the times and a poignant reminder of the tremendous impact of climate change on the planet. “The art piece, a human torso stands boldly in the face of adversity, serves as a symbol of resilience, strength and reminds us that even when the weight of the world challenges down upon us, we must rise unyielding in the face of challenges and hope that one day, we will have the privilege to share the tales of a world renewed with love and care.” (continued on next page)



Wouter Kellerman, a renowned South African musician, flutist and Grammy-award winner played a song as tribute to Madiba at the launch of the Nelson Mandela SDGs Quotes Booklet. ©UN South Africa

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H.E Ms. Catherine Muigai Mwangi, High Commissioner of Kenya addressed guests at the book launch. ©UN South Africa

“So much has and continues to go wrong under the watchful eyes of our elders, it is not from a lack of trying but we can certainly say that what is being done is not enough. This then places the mandate of getting the accomplishment of the SDGs on the bending shoulders of young people across the world,” said Tebogo Sipung, Executive Director for the Youth Network ACTIVATE. Tebogo made a clarion call to action saying that young people possess the ability, agility and vigor to make a shift and to flip the pages of history to ensure that no other young person is left behind in the quest of eradicating poverty and inequality in our lifetime.



Tebogo Sipung, Executive Director for the Youth Network ACTIVATE. ©UN South Africa

Achieng Ojwang, representing the UN Global Compact Local Network for South Africa, highlighted that businesses have placed a strong emphasis on SDGs 3, 4, 5, 8, and 13. These specific goals are set to be assessed to evaluate how effectively businesses are contributing to their achievement. She urged businesses to elevate their efforts, set higher aspirations, and foster greater collaboration with both government entities and within the business community itself. “This collective action is essential in driving meaningful progress towards achieving the SDGs,” she added.

UN staff members, Dr. Pride Chigwedere from UNAIDS and Nkululeko Mazibuko from the World Food Programme (WFP), in a harmonious duet, provided entertainment at the book launch for the participants. 🌍



Natania Botha presents her mosaic artwork gift to Nelson Muffuh as a symbol of support for the SDGs. ©UN South Africa



Achieng Ojwang, representing the UN Global Compact Local Network for South Africa ©UN South Africa



Dr. Pride Chigwedere (seated) from UNAIDS and Nkululeko Mazibuko from World Food Programme perform at the launch event. ©UN South Africa



Audience at the book launch applauds during a performance by UN staff. ©UN South Africa

Surviving Cholera: A mother's story of resilience in Hammanskraal Township

By Nombulelo Malinga

May 2023 - In the heart of Hammanskraal, about 50 kms north of Pretoria Central, a cholera outbreak struck like a bolt from the blue in its suddenness, virulence, transmission, and the rate of mortality within a short period of time. Cholera is a waterborne disease transmitted through contaminated water.

Sis Joy, a mother of two, was one of the residents whose families were threatened. "Cholera almost took my son's life," she says.

Within a few days of the first reported case, the situation had escalated to the point where the government designated Hammanskraal a "cholera hot spot." Statistics showed that 17 people died from cholera-related diseases and 177 more were hospitalized.

Although the outbreak was spreading fast, Sis Joy was surprised upon learning how quickly it spread closer to her home.

“I heard my neighbours talking about the cholera outbreak but I never thought that it would affect me and my children, she said.”

She says the reality of cholera's spread set in after she dropped off her son at school one morning, only to have him returned home in pain and tears. His stomach was gripped by cramps, and he couldn't stop vomiting. Fearing her child had fallen victim to the disease, she immediately took him to a nearby doctor.

Upon describing his symptoms which included stomach cramps, loss of appetite and persistent vomiting, the doctor advised her to rush her son to Jubilee District Hospital for immediate treatment. There, he received vital rehydration drips and medication, leading to a significant improvement in his condition.

Since that incident, Sis Joy has embraced strict measures to protect her household from further infections. She now purchases purified water, ensures tap water is thoroughly boiled before use, and maintains good hygiene practices. However, the financial burden of acquiring safe water on a nearly-daily basis weighs



Tatenda Musinahama, WHO South Africa Communication Officer (right), with Sis' Joy and her son who recovered from cholera. ©UN South Africa

heavily on her and accessing the weekly water deliveries to the community presents challenges due to her work commitments. When asked about alternative water purification methods, she says, "I know we're supposed to mix water with bleach before drinking it, but I'm not sure exactly how much [bleach] to use."

Sis Joy's story highlights the urgent need to make water purification systems easily accessible within communities. Recognizing the gravity of the cholera outbreak in Hammanskraal, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) joined hands with the South African Red Cross Society to provide life-saving information and resources to high-risk areas. They also set up handwashing stations at the Kanana Field Hospital and nearby schools, with plans for further expansion. For its part, the World Health Organization (WHO) immediately mobilized and deployed seven technical officers to provide support in crucial areas that included coordination, case management, environmental health, epidemiology/surveillance, data management, infection prevention and control. Additionally, the Red Cross Society has initiated a door-to-door campaign, distributing water purifying sachets to households in affected communities.

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UN Resident Coordinator, Nelson Muffuh, (in cap) addressing Red Cross, UNICEF, WHO, UNEP, volunteers, and community members on a site visit in Hammanskraal. ©UN South Africa

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Their objective is to provide 10 sachets per household, with each 25-gram sachet capable of purifying 20 litres of water for drinking, cooking, and washing.

"The United Nations is pleased to partner with the Red Cross on the cholera response and encourages partners and volunteers to continue their commendable efforts in combating the outbreak," said Nelson Muffuh, the UN Resident Coordinator in South Africa, after visiting the affected communities in Hammanskraal. As the distribution of water purifying sachets commenced in Hammanskraal and as water washing stations were provided, the hope was that every household could have access to clean and safe water. Through such initiatives, the UN in South Africa and its partners aim to safeguard the health and well-being of the community, ensuring that no other family endures the misfortune experienced by Sis Joy and more importantly those who lost their beloved ones.



Dr. Owen Kaluwa, WHO South Africa Rep, speaking to frontline health workers at the Kanana Treatment Centre in Hammanskraal. ©UN South Africa



The United Nations in South Africa joins the government in finding solutions to the Cholera Outbreak in Hammanskraal. ©UN South Africa



The United Nations in South Africa visits the Kanana Field Hospital and hand-washing station. ©UN South Africa

South Africa holds the first tripartite social dialogue for decent work in the fishing sector

By Tshepo Mohatle

May 2023 - As part of its support to the Government of South Africa, the International Labour Organization (ILO)'s 8.7 Accelerator Lab initiative assisted a tripartite social dialogue which seeks to attain the fundamental principles and rights at work for both nationals and foreigners within the fishing industry in South Africa. The initiative is also designed to end child and forced labour.

South Africa, being one of the first countries to have signed and ratified the ILO Work in Fishing Convention (C188), is often used as a role model by other countries for direction on the implementation of C188. Effective implementation of any international and national labour standard is only possible through social dialogue, which promotes the democratic involvement of the main stakeholders in the governance of the world of work. A common understanding of the challenges faced by workers, employers and government allows for solutions to overarching issues to be realized, voices to be heard, leading to sustainable progress towards decent work for all.

The 8.7 Accelerator Lab, having engaged individually with workers' and employers' organizations and relevant government organizations, brought together all stakeholders under one roof to further discuss issues that could only be addressed at a tripartite level through the tripartite social dialogue session that took place in Cape Town early this year. Participants were from ILO's key constituencies: the Business Unity South Africa and FishSA representing the employers' organizations, the Congress of South African Trade Unions, the Food and Allied Workers Union, and the Trawler and Line Fishermen's Trade Union.

Others included the University and Allied Workers Union, National Certified Food and Allied Workers Union representing the workers' organizations and government departments for labour, fisheries, the maritime safety authority, the Bargaining Council for the Fishing Industry, Home Affairs and and civil society organizations.

The presentations from various experts, and the discussions that followed, highlighted some of the gaps in the effective implementation of global labour standards within the fishing sector. These include excessive overtime and extreme fatigue, wage withholdings, insufficient shore leave, poor occupational safety and health, inadequate sleeping and ablution quarters, insufficient food and water provisions, sub-standard work agreements, among others.

Globally, some of the structural challenges that exist in addressing these deficits include weak or non-existent labour inspections of fishing vessels, fishers' labour rights which are often not well defined in labour law, overlapping legislation and governmental agency mandates and the complexity of transnational jurisdictions between flag States, port States, coastal States, and source States. As a result of these gaps, fishers may suffer many forms of labour rights violations and find themselves in situations of forced labour.



A session on International Labour Standards reminded participants that "forced labour does not exist in a vacuum. It is an extreme manifestation of gaps and failures in a wide range of policies, institutions and enforcement mechanisms. Therefore, it must be addressed in an integrated and coherent way if forced labour and all related practices are to be eliminated for good," according to Amanda Mejia-Canadas, an international labour standards specialist.

The tripartite social dialogue session also highlighted the importance of social dialogue, recognizing that when workers, employers and government, jointly with civil society, work together through dialogue, sharing information and communicating, they will open the doors for social justice to advance and for the improvement of the lives of fishers. Social partners expressed a common vision to ensure that safe and decent working conditions prevailed for fishers, which includes job security and a healthy fishing industry economy to create stability in the fishing industry. The dialogue agreed on the following action points that the appointed task team would look at: formal collaboration between DEL and SAMSA; cooperation framework on issues of joint inspections; move to ratify Protocol 29; unanimous agreement to reform the existing bargaining model.

Employers pledged their commitment and commended all other stakeholders to play their role, while workers agreed with employers and requested training so they could have a better understanding of the fishing sector. The government emphasized the existence of the South Africa Labour Relations Act, and that with cooperation from all stakeholders, the move to decent work for all can be achieved within the fishing sector. 🌍



Spotlight Initiative: Unified action to combat the scourge of Gender-Based Violence in Southern Africa

By Nombulelo Malinga and Eunice Namugwe



October 2023 - The United Nations, along with the Spotlight Initiative, convened a roundtable in Pretoria, South Africa, involving six southern African countries, to launch a five-year programme addressing Gender-Based Violence (GBV). With GBV, particularly violence against women and girls, at alarming levels in the region, the initiative aims for a comprehensive and collaborative approach. Key objectives included stressing the importance of a sub-regional strategy, outlining a four-pillar framework, and discussing measures to strengthen laws, policies, and support for women's movements. Participants, including UN Resident Coordinators from the involved countries, explored avenues for cooperation, resource mobilization, and knowledge sharing to ensure the programme success.

The UN Resident Coordinator for Lesotho, Amanda Khozi Mukwashi emphasized the crucial link between peace and a society free from gender-based violence, noting that many women lack peace in their lives.

Her Majesty the Queen Masenate Mohato Seeiso of Lesotho, expressed support for the initiative, participating online. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, the Minister in the Presidency for Women, Youth, and Persons with Disabilities, and her team attended the event in person, alongside ministerial representatives from the six countries, who joined both in-person and online discussions.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) region holds some of the highest rape cases in Africa, highlighting the urgency of the event. The roundtable showcased the determination to kickstart the movement to end GBV in the region in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on gender equality as it forms the bedrock of the UN's commitment to achieving the SDGs. The Spotlight Initiative (2017-2023) is the world's largest targeted effort to invest in gender equality as a precondition and driver for the achievement of the SDGs.

The roundtable comprised six sessions, each vital in addressing GBV. Ms. Khozi Mukwashi set the event's tone, stressing collective action. Mr. Zia Choudhury, UN Resident Coordinator in Botswana, leading the session on Donor and Partner inputs, highlighted the significance of the Spotlight initiative and UN's expertise. He underscored the necessity of diverse stakeholder partnerships for SDGs, emphasizing the need for involvement from governments, NGOs, civil society, academia, the private sector, media, donors, and GBV survivors to combat the complex issue of GBV effectively.

Dr. Dlamini-Zuma stressed the importance of empowering women, enabling them to access education and economic opportunities independently. Mr. Nelson Muffuh quoted UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, underlining gender-based violence as an ongoing emergency. He emphasized the collective effort needed across Southern Africa to achieve SDG 5. Donor representatives pledged collaboration with UN offices to combat GBV and achieve SDGs, highlighting the necessity of cooperation. The roundtable facilitated interactive exchanges, featuring activists like Sandra Zaca and Chieftainess Mambo Kawaza, who shared their experiences combating GBV and child marriage. Representatives from various sectors, including the diplomatic corps, international development partners, private sector, civil society, and the UN family, contributed to the discussions.



Delegates at the launch of the Spotlight Initiative in Pretoria. ©UN South Africa



Dr. Nkosazana Clarice Dlamini Zuma, Minister in the Presidency responsible for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities. ©UN South Africa

UNFPA conducts first high-level visit to Limpopo, the new priority province to tackle HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy and Gender-Based Violence and Femicide

By Ziyanda Ngoma



Innocent Modisaotsile, UNFPA Officer-In-Charge. ©UNFPA South Africa

May 2023 - Limpopo Province is one of the provinces with a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy, and Gender-Based Violence and Femicide with Waterberg and Vhembe districts being the most affected. In April 2023, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) conducted the first high-level visit to the province, coinciding with the handing of dignity kits to women and girls in need.

The Office of the Premier of Limpopo has strategic oversight of the UNFPA programme with the provincial Department of Social Development supporting programme implementation, in partnership with the provincial Department of Health, Department of Education, and all other government partners and stakeholders. For accountability purposes, periodical monitoring of progress in implementation is done through the Provincial Coordinating Forum, which is a structure that reports to the National Coordinating Forum.

LoveLife Trust, a youth-focused HIV prevention initiative, kicked off the event by educating young people about discrimination, disability inclusion and the challenges faced by the LGBTQI+ community. Approximately 150 participants attended the event, including students from Raeleng Secondary School, Thusanang Special School, and Reamogetshwe Disability Centre. Cllr. Gloria Seleka, the Mayor of Bela Ramotswe Local Municipality, welcomed and acknowledged the guests with high-level government officials and the local community in full attendance. The keynote address was delivered by MEC Nandi Ndalane, who reiterated the need to invest in young people, particularly young women and girls to address the prevailing challenges they face.

Lerato Khwinana Moloto, the provincial director for HIV/AIDS in the Department of Social Development, engaged the audience of young people with knowledge and skills to make informed decisions on sexual reproductive health and rights, HIV, teenage pregnancy, and Gender-Based Violence and Femicide.

Bottle Maharath, a loveLife Ground Breaker, gave a testimonial on the importance of Comprehensive Sexuality Education in schools and youth engagement. This was preceded by dignitaries handing over sanitary products, supported by Innocent Modisaotsile, the UNFPA Officer-in-Charge, to young women and girls in attendance. The vote of thanks was delivered by Councillor Morris Mataboge, Waterberg District Executive Mayor. All in all, it was a fun, interactive, and awareness-raising session with drama, dance, and singing.



Young girls at the youth meeting. ©UNFPA South Africa

Traditional leadership has the potential to play a positive role in countering GBV

By Linda Naidoo



A guidance note on alternative rites of passage and cultural practices for adolescents and young people in East and Southern Africa. ©UNFPA Lesotho

“ Women, even those that are regarded as witches, have a Right to Life, and not be killed in a heinous and horrendous manner.”

April 2023 - How should criminal law deal with a situation where a person charged with a criminal offence asserts that they were simply engaging in a customary practice that is widely accepted as appropriate in traditional society? How should criminal law deal with a situation in which a person murders or assaults someone because they believe that the victim was using witchcraft to cause grave harm to them or their family members?

“Violence is not in our culture, in fact we strive for peace in our communities,” asserted a member of the traditional leadership in Limpopo Province. At a dialogue on gender-based violence (GBV), members of the House of Traditional Leaders in Limpopo questioned why they were being left out of countering GBV in South Africa. “We are not even informed when perpetrators or offenders are released into our communities and yet we can do so much to monitor offenders, and keep survivors safe,” said Hosi Ngove, the leader of the House of Traditional Leaders.

Indeed, traditional leaders are the backbone of communities. With violence against women and femicide reaching epidemic proportions, traditional leaders have the capacity to become influencers of change, that can save the lives of women.

In South Africa, it is estimated that nearly four children are killed every day; and approximately seven women are killed per day.

According to the UNODC global homicide report, compared with other countries where statistics are more readily available, South Africa ranks among the five countries with the highest female homicide rates. According to the report, the majority of female victims are killed by close partners (predominantly by their husband or boyfriend) or are family-related (father, brother, son etc.)

One must understand that traditional leaders, are symbols of unity and are hence, in a most opportune position to reverse the epidemic of gender-based violence. Female traditional leaders can mobilize themselves, to not only be enablers for change in supporting women survivors, but also role models for promoting equality and empowerment.

Gender-based violence is a disruption to the social order and cohesion of communities. Therefore, there needs to be a closer link between traditional leadership and the chain of justice. Bantubonke Holomisa, Member of the South African Parliament emphasized that traditional leaders have authority over approximately 18 million people and can be partners of positive change, and the solution to addressing GBV. 🌍



Are the voices of children and youth heard in current programming on Gender-Based Violence?

By Linda Naidoo



©Canva photo

Youth and children experience gender-based violence (GBV) on every front: at home, at school, online and in their communities.

August 2023 -There has been a surge in online sexual exploitation and abuse in South Africa. Images depicting children under the age of 13 are readily available online. According to Dr. Sagie Naidoo, Forensic Head at the Department of Health in KwaZulu-Natal, "Of the approximate 65,000 cases of GBV in South Africa, KZN has the highest proportion, with 10,916 cases, that are received at KZN health facilities; with a prominence of rape in 32% cases that include children below the age of 12 years." He indicated that "if all GBV cases were fully reported in South Africa, we would probably have approximately 500,000 GBV cases". He further indicated that "KZN had the highest number of teenage pregnancies numbering at 18,550 per year."

Linda Naidoo, Project Officer of United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC), lamented that "violence against children and youth is a silent epidemic that does not discriminate. It often has devastating consequences for each and every one directly impacted, and for their family, community and the economy." She further reflected on the impact of the recent crises in the province on GBV. KwaZulu-Natal has lived through a turbulent time. The past two years have been characterized by various crises. This has caused further strain with increased violations of basic human rights, and GBV

With the simultaneous crises of COVID-19, civil unrest led to a spate of looting of shops and facilities, and climate change with the province being ravaged by storms and floods. Another consequence has been the rise in the cost of essential commodities that pushed large numbers of people into hardship and poverty. Many of these crises are interrelated: all of them placed children, youth, and women at greater risk of violence, abuse and exploitation.

On 25 August, in observance of National Women's Month and International Youth Day, UNODC, in partnership with several government departments, held a dialogue at Umhlanga Garden Court to hear the concerns presented by children and youth.

Adv. Pat Moodley, the Head of the Department of Justice for the province, indicated that "there needs to be more reflection of how the spate of events in KZN has impacted on children, this has not been done". She asserted that "all indication are that the statistics for GBV increased during these periods. Have we measured how our children were impacted, especially at the emergency shelters?," she asked.

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She emphasized the importance of government coordinating their responses to GBV. She said that the Department of Justice has passed amendments to three acts to increase protection to victims of GBV and femicide, such as the Domestic Violence Act, Criminal Law Amendment, and the Magistrates Court Act.

Advocate Nonhlanhla Dlamini, the Deputy Director of the Prosecuting Authority in KZN, indicated that “if drugs are increasingly impacting on children, then the relevance of the National Drug Master Plan needs to be interrogated”.

She added that “we do not listen enough to our children” and “the meeting that we are having today has not been done before, whereby we listen to what our children say” and “adjust our responses accordingly”.

Buyisiwe Sophasi, the Head of the Children’s Directorate at the Department of Social Development, presented the reports made by children in Parliament, and reflected that “caregivers and parents accept bribes of R500, allowing educators to have sex with their children. She asserted that the challenges facing children in the province are spiraling out of control, and children feel unprotected by their families and the Inkosi. They are killed for muti and drugs are readily available to children at a young age.”

Furthermore, she said, “GBV is a huge concern as mothers are terrified of their husbands or partners, there is much violence at home, and children are unsafe and further exploited by the mothers’ partners”.

Ms. Sophasi added that “children are bullied at school by peers, and educators who threaten them”. In addition, “Children are at risk of exploitation as they walk long distances to school, and by-pass taverns and shebeens”.

She concluded that, “Programmes that are being devised are not responding to the voices of children”. She recommended that the “involvement of traditional leaders and healers is necessary, in order to mobilize them to play a meaningful role as advocates of GBV, so that the best interests of women and children are protected”.

Other government entities such as that of the Department of Education, South Africa Police Services, and the Department of Safety and Security, presented their programmes. The meeting concluded that all departments should collaborate and coordinate services, and further interact with the representations made by children and youth so that programmes are more aligned. In addition, collaboratively with UNODC, another meeting would be held with Traditional Leaders later on to strengthen partnerships on addressing the killing of women and children in KwaZulu-Natal. 🌍



Pride and deep reflection as COVID-19 youth photobook is unveiled

By Sudeshan Reddy and Toby Fricker

March 2023 - Life under hard lockdown and the rate of infection of the COVID-19 pandemic may no longer be a reality for most of the world, but the memories and impact left behind are still vivid in the minds of many.

The public was given the opportunity to peer into such memories of 10 young photographers from around South Africa, who were chosen to have photos which they personally shot during the days of hard lockdown, to be exhibited and published in a collaborative project between UNICEF South Africa, European Pressphoto Agency Images and Maverick Citizen.

The group, mostly made up of students, were taken through months of mentorship and guidance by veteran photographer, Kim Ludbrook, culminating in a launch to unveil their work at the Foto ZA Gallery in Rosebank, Johannesburg.

“Everywhere Miguel Chicane (15) goes, it’s photos, photos, photos,” said a beaming Ms. Chicane, mother of Miguel, whose work is included in the project.

“I’m so proud of him. I’m excited. I’m grateful to everyone around him who gave him the motivation and I know he’s going to go far.”


for every child



Maps Maponyane, UNICEF South Africa Advocate (right), stands with project participant and photographer, Miguel Chicane (left) whose work was unveiled at the launch. ©UNICEF South Africa

This engaging piece of work developed and produced by young people presents the story of the COVID-19 pandemic years through their experiences and at a pivotal moment in their young lives,” said Christine Muhigana, UNICEF South Africa Representative. “Providing the space for children and youth to reflect on how they felt and coped is also part of the healing process to help move forward.” 🌍

Low vaccine coverage threatens children's lives: UNICEF launches the 2023 State of the World's Children Report

By *Tobby Fricker and Sudeshan Reddy*

April 2023 - UNICEF South Africa and UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office launched UNICEF's flagship report, *State of the World's Children 2023*, at an event held in Johannesburg. The report spotlights the increasing under-immunized children in the region and other parts of the world amid heightened vaccine skepticism.

The report notes that the perception by parents and caregivers of the importance of vaccines for children declined by 29.9% in South Africa. In addition, over 86% of so-called "zero-dose children" (those who have never received a vaccine) live in 20 districts in the country – the poorest performing in reaching immunization coverage targets.

Speakers at the launch included the National Department of Health Child Specialist, Dr. Lesley Bamford, Senior Immunization Specialist at the UNICEF Western and Central Africa Regional Office, Dr. Celestin Traore, and UNICEF Regional Health Advisor for the Eastern and Southern Africa Region, Dr. Paul Ngwakum.

They were joined by Dr. Eduardo Celades Blanco, Chief of Health at UNICEF Nigeria. Nigeria is among the top two countries in Africa with the largest number of zero-dose children. Representatives from the South African health sector and local and regional media joined the hybrid event online and in-person.

UNICEF-produced short films from South Africa, Nigeria and Angola on the importance of vaccination and how spreading awareness and community-level health interventions have helped increased coverage were also screened at the launch.

In her opening remarks, UNICEF South Africa Representative Christine Muhigana noted: "The risks posed by low vaccination coverage are immediate and severe and there are potentially hundreds of thousands of lives to be lost and enormous economic costs incurred if we fail to #BuildBackImmunity – both globally and in South Africa."



L-R: UNICEF South Africa Representative Christine Muhigana, Ruth Field from AstraZeneca, UNICEF South Africa Chief of Health Sufang Guo, at the State of the World's Children launch. ©UNICEF

Speaking to broadcast and online journalists after the event, Ms. Muhigana, UNICEF South Africa Chief of Health Dr. Sufang Guo and Health Specialist Dr. Mercy Kamupira explained why the report focuses on child vaccination this year and the interventions the country office has in place together with government and other stakeholders to drive coverage nationally.

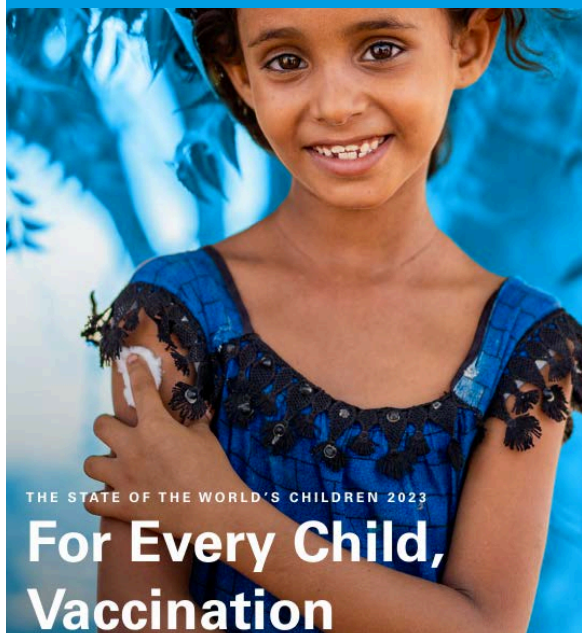
Part of these interventions include activities around Africa Vaccination Week, which is spearheaded by the National Department of Health, and supported by UNICEF, each year from 24 April – 30 April.

Highlighting the need for ongoing action, Ms. Muhigana noted that "while this data is a worrying warning signal, it should be recognized as a signal and not a trend. Vaccine confidence is volatile and time specific. Additional data collection and further analysis will be required to determine if the findings are indicative of a longer-term trend."

Dr. Bamford, whose experience in the sector spans over three decades, delivered a message on behalf of the government of South Africa.

"We do note with concern the information contained in this report showing that our zero-dose children have in fact increased. We are committed to working with UNICEF and other partners to try and understand what is driving that increase and ensure that we put interventions in place to address that," Dr. Bamford said. 🌍

The *State of the World's Children* report is available for download at www.unicef.org/southafrica.org.



National Department of Health Child Specialist, Dr. Lesley Bamford, delivered a message of support on behalf of the government at the launch of the report. ©UNICEF South Africa

Women owning the ‘menstrual economy’: local entrepreneur changing lives by manufacturing sanitary pads

By Maphuti Mahlaba

October 2023 - Over the past few years, there have been concerted efforts to lift the veil on the taboo and stigma around menstrual hygiene. Not only have there been calls for sanitary products to be freely available but there have also been conversations around who owns the means of production of these essential products.

Lindiwe Nkuna-Kgopa, 40 years old, started thinking about throwing her hat in the ring of what she calls the menstrual economy in 2015 after listening to these conversations. She realized that in South Africa, there were no women-owned, large-scale manufacturers of sanitary products that can compete with the big suppliers. This was the start of Lindiwe Sanitary Pads which today not only sells to individual customers but supplies the South African government’s National Sanitary Dignity Programme in four provinces. In 2022 alone, Lindiwe Sanitary Pads reached 10,000 girls, supplying them with a year’s supply of sanitary pads through the government’s programme: combatting period poverty.

“When I started Lindiwe Sanitary Pads I felt it was unfair that women are only end-users of sanitary pads and decided we needed to be active in the menstrual economy. We needed to be part of the entire value chain. Menstruation is a huge economy and it’s interesting that with all the taboos and stigma that have existed around menstruation, when it comes to the boardroom where the rands and cents are counted, suddenly men can talk about periods and get involved in the manufacturing and selling of pads,” says Lindiwe.

“Initially, when I approached funders they’d turn down my applications because they said I didn’t have a manufacturing background. I had never even set foot in a factory! So they’d said ‘you don’t have the technical know-how. You are unbankable!’” she says. An entrepreneur at heart, having previously dabbled in marketing and accounting, Lindiwe took the rejection in her stride and decided to build the profile of a reputable sanitary pads manufacturer. When Lindiwe Sanitary pads started in 2018 the business focused on branding, packaging, and distributing sanitary pads purchased from an external manufacturer.

Her supplier ran an enterprise development programme and through that opened up their factory for Lindiwe to learn the process of manufacturing a sanitary pad from start to finish. The technical skills Lindiwe acquired enabled Lindiwe Sanitary Pads to start manufacturing their own products in 2020.



Crafting the ‘menstrual economy revolution’ from her offices in Centurion to the rest of the continent. ©Lindiwe Nkuna-Kgopa

But what the entrepreneur quickly learned is that being product-ready and having greater access to markets is costly and requires knowledge. In came UN Women South Africa Multi-Country Office (SAMCO), supported by NAMA Women Advancement. They started implementing a series of business coaching and mentoring workshops that equipped Lindiwe and other businesswomen with the essential skills for running profitable and sustainable businesses. Lindiwe is also one of the entrepreneurs on UN Women’s [Buy From Women](#) platform, which links clients who want to procure from women-owned entrepreneurs with such suppliers.

“The process of getting your product ready, running it through the necessary tests, and meeting potential big clients is quite expensive. For example, traveling to meet a potential big client in Cape Town, at your own expense, is quite demanding,” notes Lindiwe. “That’s why the programmes run by UN Women for female entrepreneurs are invaluable. They trained us then put us in spaces where we can create linkages with market-potentials and eventually take advantage.” (continued on next page)

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Lindiwe was one of the women entrepreneurs sponsored by UN Women SAMCO through NAMA Women Advancement's support to attend the Africa Women in Trade Conference and Expo in Cape Town in 2022. This is where Lindiwe met a contact who introduced her to a major client that not only bought a large supply of Lindiwe Sanitary Pads products but will also be pushing out the products into the rest of the African continent. Additionally, the contact enabled her to meet clients who took an interest in the business and provided letters of intent that have unlocked funding for Lindiwe Sanitary Pads to build a 3,500sqm factory.

Additionally, her business is in the process of procuring what will be South Africa's second-largest sanitary pads manufacturing machine which will produce 850 units per minute. Lindiwe Sanitary Pads currently employs 92 women during peak seasons and 16 women in the low production periods.

Lindiwe highlights that automating the manufacturing process will not kill these jobs but grow the company's output and revenue, allowing these women to be more securely and sustainably employed in other areas of the company. The machine is much-needed as the business expands its reach from supplying wholesalers and independent pharmacies to supplying two major retailers' house brands.

In 2022, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa awarded Lindiwe the prestigious Presidential Award in the Black Industrialist Women category for her impactful business. She was also recently appointed the president of the Circle of Global Business Women's South Africa Chapter.

"From never having stepped in a factory to packaging sanitary pads in my kitchen and selling them on the streets and from the boot of my car, to being able to achieve this success in five years – I think we are definitely on to something," says Lindiwe. 🌍



Lindiwe Nkuna-Kgopa with UN Women SAMCO Representative Aleta Miller at the Africa Women in Trade Conference and Expo in Cape Town. ©Lindiwe Nkuna-Kgopa

UN Women SAMCO has partnered with the South Africa Department of Women, Youth, and People with Disabilities to enhance the capacity of women-owned enterprises in the Sanitary Dignity value chain. The Sanitary Dignity Implementation Framework aims to ensure dignified menstruation management while promoting women's economic empowerment.



Lindiwe Nkuna-Kgopa in conversation with Joy Zenz, convener of the Africa Women in Trade Conference and Expo in Cape Town. ©Lindiwe Nkuna-Kgopa

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South Africa AIDS Conference: ACT, CONNECT and END the EPIDEMIC

By Zeenat Abdool



“ It is a game-changer in many respects. It was created to be pandemic-ready, and it delves deeper into social and structural drivers of the epidemics. ”

Minister Joe Phaahla

June 2023 - The 11th South Africa AIDS conference took place in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal province from the 20-23 June 2023 under the theme: Act, Connect and End the Epidemic. Health Minister Dr. Joe Phaahla acknowledged that South Africa has made progress in achieving some of the HIV targets but the country remained "far off in ensuring people are on treatment and lowering their viral suppression," adding that the country lags behind reaching these targets among males and children. "More effort is needed to place and retain people on treatment. "

Referring to the 95-95-95 statistics, the Minister revealed that South Africa is currently at 94 percent of people living with HIV who know their status; 77 percent of those who know their status and are on antiretroviral treatment; and 92 percent of those on treatment who have a suppressed viral load.

He added that it remains imperative "that we keep in mind that in 2025, it will be the deadline year for the 95-95-95 targets, which are outlined in the current Global AIDS Strategy" and emphasised that in the remaining two years, South Africa needs to accelerate its efforts in order to meet the targets.

The minister described South Africa's launch of the National Strategic Plan (NSP) for HIV, TB and STIs for the period 2023 to 2028 as a "game-changer" emphasizing that the strategy places people and communities at the centre of the country's efforts to overcome inequities in the response to HIV, tuberculosis, and sexually transmitted infections, as well as to end AIDS, hence, dubbed "The People's NSP".

The five-year plan provides a strategic framework for a multi-sectoral approach that is people-centred to eliminate HIV, TB and STIs as public health threats by 2030. Concluding his remarks, Minister Phaahla said that "this NSP emphasizes the need to break down barriers and maximize



the need to break down barriers and maximize equitable and equal access to services through resilient and integrated health systems to guarantee the health and social protection of all South Africans."

The Resident Coordinator for the UN in South Africa, Nelson Muffuh, delivered a message saying that the UN stands in solidarity with the 8 million people in the country living with HIV and that South Africa is a beacon for the rest of the world about what is possible, when "leaders are acting boldly and collectively, bringing together cutting-edge science, delivering services that meet the people's needs, protecting human rights and sustaining adequate financing. "🌍

South Africa's leadership in the global HIV response

By Zeenat Abdool



South Africa's Leadership in the Global HIV Response

Dr. Angeli Achrekar, UNAIDS Deputy Executive Director Programmes



June 2023 - In a video message titled: South Africa's Leadership in the Global HIV response, at the opening plenary at the AIDS conference, UNAIDS Deputy Executive Director, Angeli Achrekar, shared and reinforced the positive contribution of South Africa in the global response to the fight against HIV as well as the advances made to date.

Congratulating South Africa on its new National Strategic Plan (NSP), the Deputy Executive Director said that "there is strong alignment between the NSP and the Global AIDS strategy, which features bold targets so that every country and community can be on track to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030."

Sharing statistics on the rate of new infections across southern Africa, Ms. Achrekar indicated that the region has showed a decrease with South Africa showing a decline of 50% of new HIV infections between the period 2010 to 2021. While this is significant progress, sadly though, adolescent girls and young women account for 30% of new HIV infections. Achrekar emphasized that to address this "we must target interventions to the populations most at need."

South Africa has also made progress in reducing the number of AIDS-related deaths with statistics showing a steep decline by 62% for the period 2010 to 2021. According to Ms. Achrekar, this is a testament to "great leadership" and commitment to the fight against HIV/AIDS in the country.

“ It will take all of us working together in close collaboration with governments, with communities, and with partners to ensure we sustain the HIV response. We need to move urgently forward together. ”

Concluding her message, Ms. Achrekar highlighted six key actions countries must take in order to end AIDS by 2030. These include:

1. political will and leadership to end inequalities,
2. a greater push for the expansion of HIV prevention,
3. realize human rights and gender equality and decriminalization of key populations,
4. support and effectively resource community-led responses,
5. address inequalities in prevention, testing and treatment access and outcomes and;
6. ensure sufficient and sustainable financing. 🌍



UN Secretary-General calls for solidarity at the 15th BRICS Summit 2023

By Eunice Namugwe



UN Secretary-General, António Guterres and his Spokesperson, Stéphane Dujarric at the 15th BRICS Summit in Sandton, Johannesburg. ©UN South Africa

August 2023 - The United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, has called for global unity and cooperation to address the critical challenges currently facing the world, which range from the climate emergency to escalating conflicts, soaring inequalities and technological disruptions.

Addressing the 15th BRICS (Brazil, Russian Federation, India, China and South Africa) Summit held in Johannesburg from 22-24 August, the Secretary-General expressed concern over growing global divisions and tensions, attributing them to diverging perspectives on global crises, contrasting approaches to security threats, differing strategies towards new technologies, and the consequences of events like the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic.

He stressed the need for a strong multilateral framework rooted in 21st century realities and advocated for deep reforms to global institutions to ensure they are inclusive and representative of today's world. He also called for greater representation of women and young people at all levels.

Mr. Guterres highlighted the need to focus on Africa, saying that the current global governance structures were designed in a different era. He called for reforming the Security Council and the Bretton Woods institutions to reflect the present power dynamics and economic relations, to ensure that they effectively address contemporary challenges.

"We are moving towards a multipolar world, and that is a positive thing. But, multipolarity in itself is not enough to guarantee a peaceful or just global community.



UN Secretary-General António Guterres with world leaders at the 15th BRICS Summit. @UN South Africa

To be a factor of peace, equity, and justice in international relations, multipolarity must be supported by strong and effective multilateral institutions," he said.

The Secretary-General added: "Look no further than the situation in Europe at the dawn of the last century. Europe was multipolar - but it lacked strong multilateral mechanisms. The result was the First World War. As the global community moves towards multipolarity, we desperately need - and I have been vigorously advocating for - a strengthened and reformed multilateral architecture based on the UN Charter and international law." [\(continued on next page\)](#)



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The Secretary-General further called for the world to drastically step-up climate action and climate justice, proposing a "Climate Solidarity Pact in which developed countries provide financial and technical support to help emerging economies - in Africa and beyond - to promote an equitable and just transition to renewable energy."

The Secretary-General's participation at the BRICS Summit underscored the importance of global cooperation and multilateralism in addressing the complex challenges facing the world today. While at the Summit, the Secretary-General held discussions with the leaders of the BRICS, including South African President Cyril Ramaphosa. 🌍

“ Now more than ever, we must do all that we can to achieve the sustainable development goals. ”
United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres



Naledi Pandor, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation welcomes the UN Secretary-General at the BRICS Banquet at the Gallagher Estate hosted by President Cyril Ramaphosa



Mr. António Guterres, UN Secretary-General met with the UN Country Team during his stay in South Africa for the BRICS Summit.

UN empowers youth on videography and photography to capture stories of hope

By Rencilwe Moningi



February 2023 - The International Organization for Migration (IOM), through the Multi Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) joint project on social cohesion, trained 10 young South Africans and migrants as film makers, facilitators of videography and photography in Cape Town. The purpose of the training was to equip the youth with skills to capture positive stories of hope, to be used to showcase contributions by migrants in South Africa to promote social cohesion, tolerance and improve community relations between migrants and host communities. The youth were nominated through local partner organizations that work with the MPTF project on social cohesion activities in Cape Town.

The training ensured that the young participants produce stories on hope-based narrative approaches to create awareness in a positive way. They were trained on using correct words and photos to capture attention without harm, capturing photos and videos using smart phones editing and crafting of videos and photos as well as

sharing the stories on the digital platforms. The training lasted for three days and was hosted at Africa Unite offices.

“I am excited to have attended the training because it has been my wish to tell the story of my father who contributes to the local economy in the township by sharing knowledge and skills to locals and also employing locals in his business,” said Alphanaine Kiza, a participant from Africa Unite organization in Cape Town. In addition to the training, the participants received vlogging kits to assist in producing stories of hope to promote social cohesion in communities. Vlogging is a method used to create videos about thoughts, experience or talk about issues of interest and post them online. The vlogging kit has a LED ring light, microphone holder, phone holder, floor standing tripod and is USB powered. 🌍



Alphanaine Kiza operating a mobile phone using the vlogging kit to record and edit a story. ©IOM South Africa 2023

Decoding the Sustainable Development Goals - a hackathon for girls

By Maphuti Mahlaba



The hackathon allowed the young participants to learn the basics of coding and encourage a passion for Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEM) education and careers.

March 2023 - More than 100 high school girls from Gauteng communities participated in a hackathon organized by iamtheCODE and hosted in partnership with UN Women East and Southern Africa Regional Office in Johannesburg on 24-25 March 2023.

Senegalese-born, Lady Mariéme Jamme, is the founder of iamtheCODE. She shared the vision behind the project, explaining that the programme was being implemented around the world, with a special focus on the African continent, to develop one million young women and girl coders by 2030 in alignment with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. On the first day of the two-day workshop held at the Birchwood Hotel in Boksburg, Johannesburg, participants unpacked the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with discussions focused on localizing them within the African and South African context to enable the girls to create meaningful solutions to the lived realities of citizens on the continent and in the country.

Businesswoman and philanthropist Basetsana Kumalo, a patron of iamtheCODE, urged the participants to dream big and take steps towards realizing their aspirations. She emphasized that although the organization's goal of creating and building up one million girl coders by 2030 is big and ambitious, it was achievable. Sharing her own life journey, she encouraged the young women to believe in themselves, seize empowering opportunities and become part of Africa's solution in the fourth industrial revolution.

Deputy Regional Director of UN Women Regional Office for East and Southern Africa Zebib Kavuma highlighted that the digital divide between girls and boys is a key challenge leaving women and girls who have much lower access to technology than men and boys unable to take

advantage of the new digital world's opportunities. She called on the girls to believe in their skills and ability to be leaders in the digital space and utilize such spaces to learn and grow. On the second day of the event, the participants started the day with a virtual conversation with girl coders from Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya. Through a partnership with UNHCR Kenya, iamtheCODE visited the girls in Kakuma two weeks before the hackathon in South Africa to empower them with coding skills.

The exchange between the groups of girls in the two countries inspired the hackathon participants to take on the challenges and see themselves as future coders, programmers, hackers, and developers. Lady Jamme Mariéme also announced and shed light into iamtheCODE's unique and free Digital Learning Platform that has been developed, with a 12-week blended learning curriculum. This combines courses by Codacademy (recently acquired by Skillsoft), covering up to four programming languages (HTML, CSS, JavaScript, Python) combined with their hands-on 'Practice labs,' enabling theoretical learning with practical application.

The hackathon concluded with all the girls receiving gift hampers to celebrate their learning and achievements. The partnership between UN Women and iamtheCODE includes empowering young women and girls in Africa by changing their career trajectories and building STEM competencies and engagement from their communities, through the iamtheCODE digital platform, hackathons, mentoring and tailored programmes. UN Women will continue to explore additional areas of collaboration with iamtheCODE to advance young women and girls' skills in digital literacy. 🌍

First CEO network breakfast meeting shines spotlight on Generation Unlimited

By Sudeshan Reddy

April 2023 - Members of the UNICEF South Africa CEO Network gathered at the first CEO Network Breakfast in April at the Liberty Group offices in Braamfontein, Johannesburg.

The UNICEF CEO Network, is made up of a wide array of business leaders from various sectors in South Africa. The network convenes quarterly dialogues to constructively engage on the Sustainable Development Goals as they relate to children and the operations of the private sector in South Africa and across the African continent.

UNICEF Representative, Christine Muhigana, and the Chief of Education, Hana Yoshimoto, both delivered presentations to familiarize members with Generation Unlimited and how partnerships can be maximized to reach more young people across the country and take them from learning to earning. The first quarter 2023 edition focused on UNICEF's flagship youth programme, Generation Unlimited under the theme, "Unlocking Pathways for South Africa's Youth".



UNICEF Chief of Education, Hana Yoshimoto, highlights the Generation Unlimited initiative at the CEO Breakfast meeting. ©UNICEF South Africa

ILO Director-General urges more social justice on first official visit to South Africa

By Tsepo Mohatlé

April 2023 - In his first official visit to South Africa, Gilbert F. Hougbo emphasized the need for more social justice. Mr. Hougbo held discussions with President Ramaphosa on the way forward for the ILO's work in South Africa. He also shared his vision for a Global Coalition for Social Justice that would contribute to the reduction and prevention of inequalities and ensure that social justice is prioritized in national and global policymaking and activities.

During his stay, the Director-General also met officials from the National Economic Development and Labour Council, as well as government, business, labour and community representatives. He also held discussions with the United Nations Resident Coordinator in South Africa, Nelson Muffuh, and the heads of UN agencies based in South Africa.

Issues discussed included the just transition to greener economies, social protection, youth employment and the Africa Continental Free Trade Area.

"We owe it to our future generations to coordinate efforts in realising a fair and safe working environment without leaving anyone behind, and this is what social justice is about," said Mr. Hougbo.

"If we want to achieve shared prosperity, inclusive growth and universal and lasting peace, we first have to achieve social justice. Social justice helps societies, economies and households become more resilient to socio-economic and environmental shocks, geopolitical instability and global health crises."



ILO Director-General Gilbert F. Hougbo met with Ministers Lindiwe Zulu, Ebrahim Patel and Thulas Nxesi to discuss the AfCFTA agreement, and the importance of social protection and supply chains in South Africa and beyond. © ILO South Africa

Children on the move: Providing tools to tell stories

By Sudeshan Reddy



Sharing experiences at the Children on the Move Storytelling Workshop in Cape Town. @UNICEF South Africa/2023/Reddy

Supported by the European Union, UNICEF, with the Scalabrini Centre and the UNHCR, co-hosts a story-telling workshop to share best practices from those assisting migrant children in South Africa

May 2023 - “The journeys of children on the move are complex, layered and very necessary to document,” said UNICEF South Africa Child Protection Manager Hellen Nyangoya at the opening of a two-day workshop on storytelling hosted by the Scalabrini Centre and UNICEF.

The European Union Global Promotion of Best Practices for Children in Migration is a multi-country project funded by the EU and co-founded and implemented by a partnership between the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and UNICEF. Also referred to as ‘Children on the Move’, this programme supports child migrants who are among society’s most vulnerable.

UNICEF South Africa has partnered with the Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town to document what has been learned about supporting children on the move over the time of the EU Best Practice Project between 2020 and 2023. Bringing together a cross section of participants who are working with children on the move nationally, the workshop encouraged participants to, in the words of Ms. Nyangoya, “add detail to and bring alive the information you have given us in the interviews, deepen your relationships and share successes, challenges and frustrations.”

There was consensus that sessions like this provide a rare opportunity to “breathe and reflect” as described by Yasmin Rajah from Refugee Social Services in Durban who also noted that “the power of language is critical and cannot be underestimated”.

The stories of children who have been forced through various factors to leave their homes are nuanced and layered and require a necessary degree of understanding and empathy when describing and writing about it. The European Union Global Promotion of Best Practices for Children in Migration was among the issues raised, including the importance of not constantly depicting children on the move, as cautioned by one of the participants, as “helpless victims with no urgency of their own.”

Indeed, when telling these stories it was important to be cognizant of both the power of memories as well as the significant concepts of ‘belonging and safety’ and how these shape the experiences of children on the move.

With breakaway groups, open conversations and the physical drawing of narratives, the workshop was interactive and lively and included among its sessions:

- Being aware of ‘exceptionalizing’ refugees vs. integrated (i.e. local children and children on the move).
- Understanding notions of alternative care – kinship/fostering care vs. institutions.
- Being aware of how to use infographics in a compelling and useful manner.
- Telling stories about particular children or adults that illustrate when best practices worked well e.g. how social workers or officials began to understand key ideas or how a good result was achieved for a child.
- Understanding the real experiences of migrant children who have to deal with ‘space-based loss’ and also ‘relational loss’ – and how to tell the stories of what this loss means.
- The need to also share stories of the barriers that got in ones way e.g. bureaucratic challenges to accessing documents.
- The need to think through one’s recommendations to make processes work better.

Participants were reminded, through the engaging sessions, that their life-changing work is worth documenting effectively so that the necessary support is given, attitudes shaped, and meaningful differences made in our collective quest to leave no child behind. 🌍

Refugee women rebuild lives with assistance from UNHCR's social services programme

By Tendani Sibuyi

More than 150 refugees and asylum-seekers who are survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal Province, are receiving assistance from intervention programmes provided by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency. These include cash assistance, psychosocial support and business training to help rebuild their lives. However, the recent rise in xenophobic attacks in the province have impacted on the ability of refugees and asylum-seekers to benefit from these on-going initiatives that could improve their lives.

July 2023 - Idaya, a 39-year-old asylum-seeker from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), vividly remembers the night her father woke everyone up one morning shouting that they had to leave their village immediately as the rebels were approaching.

"I remember it was early in the morning. The rebels came to our house, knocked and demanded money from my mother. They raped and killed her before my eyes, and they raped me too," recalls Idaya.

Idaya and her family were forced to escape from the DRC in 2008, but she later became separated from them. When she arrived in Burundi, she sought assistance from UNHCR and was taken to a refugee camp where she was provided with medical aid, food and counselling.

In 2013, Idaya fled again to South Africa, where she got married and hoped to find lasting peace. But the cycle of violence continued as she suffered abuse at the hands of her husband. Now a single mother of three children, Idaya struggles to provide for her family's basic needs and worries about the well-being of her children, especially her four-year-old son who suffers from hydrocephalus (a disorder caused by a build up of fluids in the brain) and is in need of urgent medical treatment.

With South Africa's high unemployment rate and xenophobic violence increasingly affecting communities and foreign-owned businesses, many refugees and asylum-seekers have become reliant on assistance from UNHCR and local charitable organizations. Like Idaya, they borrow money to make ends meet. In South Africa, UNHCR provides social services through its partners to the survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), including cash-based intervention (CBI), psychosocial support and business training.

Since January 2023, UNHCR has provided support to survivors of GBV and their dependants in Durban through its partner, Refugee Social Service (RSS). This support helps families to meet basic needs, address gender-based violence risks, and improve livelihoods. The women also receive counselling sessions for psychological support and healing.



Idaya Hussein, an asylum-seeker from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). ©UNHCR South Africa

Idaya received a once-off cash assistance of about R2,000 (US\$110) in June 2023 as well as business training and coaching, and counselling. She now participates in outreach activities by sharing her experiences with other refugee women, providing advice and offering emotional support. She is also working hard to raise funds to start a small clothing business so that she can pay for her son's medical treatment and rent. *(Continued on next page)*

“ I thank UNHCR and RSS for supporting me under the cash programme. With the money I received, I was able to pay for my rent and provide food for my children. The social workers are assisting me in coping well in life.

Idaya, 39-year-old asylum-seeker from the Democratic Republic of the Congo ”



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Cash support is provided on a one-off basis for the most vulnerable refugees. However, due to funding shortfalls, the amount available cannot reach all those in need. “Because of our funding situation, UNHCR is only able to provide small cash grants. But this can really make a difference.

For some women, it can mean being able to feed their children and sending them to school. Other women have used the money to set up businesses such as hair and nail salons, fruit and vegetable stands, and clothing stalls,” says Gloria Ekuyoa, CBI Programme Officer at UNHCR.

While there are opportunities for refugees to access national social services provided by the South African Social Security Agency, they often struggle to access grants due to a lack of relevant documents.

Salon-owner Dela, 41, fled the conflict-torn DRC after her father was killed and she became a victim of sexual violence. Since arriving in South Africa, she has been receiving support that includes a business starter kit worth over R7,000 (\$388), cash payment, and business training. With the money, she was able to buy equipment and products for her salon business, which is now thriving, serving both the local South African and refugee communities. She has also received psychosocial assistance to help her come to terms with the trauma she had experienced. Dela has plans to hire staff to expand her salon.

“The father of my children used to abuse me and threaten to kill me. With the little money I brought home, he wanted to buy alcohol. I am grateful to UNHCR and RSS for their support programmes. With their help I can sustain my business,” says Dela.

Yasmin Rajah, a director at RSS who oversees the UNHCR’s social assistance programme, says refugees and asylum-seekers are more likely to enter into transactional relationships to survive, and this could include exchanging their bodies for money, and staying in relationships where they are emotionally and physically abused.

“We work with organizations like UNHCR to offer cash-based interventions that help with business development, accommodation, and food for GBV survivors. However, obtaining refugee status and accessing the asylum system remains challenging.

The absence of sustainable livelihoods and limited access to resources also leave women and members of vulnerable populations in a difficult situation, exposing them to multiple instances of GBV,” says Mr. Rajah.

Despite their challenges, Idaya and Dela are focusing on healing while rebuilding their lives.

“The challenges are there, but we are pushing and hoping for a better future,” says a smiling Dela. 🌈



UNHCR + IFPELAC + INEP launched a project to provide technical and vocational education and training for 200 displaced students and their peers in Cabo Delgado host communities. The scheme prioritizes women. Many plan to become plumbers and electricians. ©UNHCR East and Southern Africa

Coach Merlin: the refugee-making magic on the basketball court

By Laura Padoan



Social Cohesion Soccer Tournament in Cape Agulhas Municipality in Western Cape Province. ©IOM South Africa

April 2023 - The South African township of Delft, built upon the exposed sand dunes of the Cape Flats between Table Mountain and the Stellenbosch winelands, has in recent years become home to refugees and asylum-seekers fleeing conflict from across the African continent.

But with unemployment rates rising and the cost-of-living crisis taking its toll, tensions between South Africans and the newcomers have become increasingly strained. Junior Sophile, a young Delft resident, explains: "I was told that the migrants were here to take our jobs, they are here to take our homes, our new houses and all that," he says. "I was angry with them. I wouldn't like to see them in the streets."

Opportunities for jobs and further education in Delft are limited, leaving many young people susceptible to recruitment by street gangs. So, when Merlin Mosoko, a refugee from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, arrived in Delft, he decided to set up a basketball club to provide a sanctuary away from gang culture and the violence that he saw engulf his own country.

Sophile was immediately won over. "When I met coach Merlin, it came as a surprise to me," he says. "He came in as a father, as a friend, as a coach. He was there to be part of our lives. And then he showed me something big with basketball."

One of twelve children, Mosoko learned to play basketball in the street with his brothers and sisters where he developed an unusual style of play, shooting the ball with two hands, and outscoring his opponents. His talent soon won him a spot playing in a senior league but his professional career in the game was cut short when war broke out in the 1990s, leaving Mosoko with little choice but to flee to South Africa.

With his ambitions now channeled into his players, they soon found a winning streak, attending major competitions and tournaments throughout South Africa. The club is now supported by the United Nations' Multi-Partner Trust Fund, which has enabled Mosoko to run a series of basketball clinics during the school holidays for nearly sixty South African and foreign-born children. The UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund has supported 10 sports projects in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape provinces to improve community relations and promote tolerance, equality and anti-discrimination.

Last year Mosoko's dream was realised when the club became the champions of the National Basketball Association Juniors Basketball league, with many of the players winning prizes and opportunities to play at a national level. But his greatest achievement is arguably off the basketball courts: changing sentiments towards refugees and migrants.

Local mother Thelma Kuta is grateful to the club for championing social cohesion in Delft. "Little did we know Coach Merlin would provide a place of refuge for our children," she says. "They started attending the basketball club and from there, their lives changed and they no longer roamed the streets."

Now nearing fifty and his beard flecked with silver, Merlin Mosoko's wizardry on the courts continues to cast a spell over both South African and migrant and refugee children in Delft.

"I didn't think that one day my club would become so big," he explains. "From the age of eight to forty-eight, I'm still playing and coaching basketball. Seeing all that my club has achieved today, I'm so proud of it." 🌍

Hope-based stories promote the human rights of migrants and reshape host communities

By Sally Gandar



Creative group work using illustrations at the Hope-based narratives workshop in Cape Town. © OHCHR

March 2023 - Across the world, almost 272 million people are international migrants - individuals and families who have left their countries in search of better opportunities, safety or dignity. South Africa remains the country of destination for migrants in the African region and among the top 20 migrant destinations in the world. The 2020 World Migration Report says that between 2.9 million and 4.2 million migrants, including asylum seekers, refugees and other migrant groups, live in South Africa.

Though migration is an age-old and universal occurrence, negative, fear-driven anti-migration narratives have thrived in all regions. The unique experiences, contributions and stories of migrants, their journeys, and the host communities they join are often lost in damaging narratives as migrants are blamed for deep-rooted socio-economic challenges.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has long recognized the harmful impact that anti-migrant narratives can have on migrants' lives, and societies more broadly. Harmful narratives portray migration and migrants as a threat, scapegoat migrants and use imagery that triggers fear or victimises migrants. Such negative narratives ultimately have significant consequences for the rights of migrants, the communities that welcome them, and those who defend their rights.

In October 2022, the OHCHR Regional Office for Southern Africa (ROSA) held workshops in Johannesburg and Cape Town on hope- and values-based narratives of migration. The workshop was part of broader mobilization by OHCHR to counter the rise of negative narratives of migration and shift to progressive ones that recognize and respect the human rights of all – migrants and members of host communities alike.

In South Africa, the pilot training sessions on hope-based narratives are embedded within the UN Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) Joint Programme. The programme aims to strengthen migrant integration and social cohesion through stakeholders' engagement, socio-economic activities and countering anti-migrant narratives.

Additionally, in partnership with the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, the programme is designed to contribute towards strengthening the implementation of South Africa's National Action Plan to Combat Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

OHCHR ROSA Deputy Regional Representative, Joseph Bonsu, said the training session would give participants the skills and tools they need to reframe harmful narratives about migrants.

"This workshop on hope-based narratives in the context of migration is part of the concerted efforts by OHCHR to build hope- and values-based narratives on migration and migrants, to shift from negative narratives to ones with human rights and human stories at their heart," he noted.

The training is based on OHCHR's Toolbox on Narrative Change and the global #StandUp4Migrants campaign. The toolbox explores avenues to promote hopeful narratives on migration that show how migrants and local communities have more in common than that which divides them.

Human rights are used as a starting point to move the migration conversation from "the other" to "we" and finally to construct a counter-narrative of "us" by focusing on the shared humanity of migrants and host communities.

A wide range of advocacy, media and communications professionals from civil society organizations in Gauteng, Kwa-Zulu Natal and Western Cape provinces attended the training. They explored how to reframe narratives by using the power of storytelling, localising stories, finding common ground, and building partnerships.

Siyabonga Mahlangu from Inner City Federation, a platform where Johannesburg inner city residents come together to resolve common issues, says working with migrants and sharing their stories often risks jeopardizing migrants' rights.

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"Whenever you show that you understand the issues migrants face, you get told that they are all undocumented and they are criminals or property hijackers – they will be called names and risk deportation," he says, adding that the training had enabled him to see a different way of communicating migrants' stories.

“From the workshop today, we can see that we can ask South Africans to also share their stories of living and experiencing life with migrants. They can start to advocate for them by telling authorities that migrants and locals are all part of a wider human family.”

Siyabonga said the workshop had also changed his perspective on his organization's role in supporting migrants. "I now have a different understanding of how I should approach the problems that migrants are facing. For example, if migrants have an issue with access to water and sanitation, I can assist them up to a certain point. However, I should allow other organizations that have a better understanding of how to deal with the issue of documentation to help with those issues. If we keep working in silos instead of collaborating, then we will create more problems for migrants."

Kristin Dannevig from Hope-based Comms, who led the training session, said stories on migration and migrants should include people's lived experiences and portray them as active agents of change. "To counter negative narratives of migration and build new ones, we need to be conscious of the stories we tell. You can change hearts and minds with stories."

OHCHR continues to engage with participants as they utilize the skills gained through the workshops and further develop and publicize hope-based narratives within the context of migration and human rights. 

Stand Up for Human Rights



ARTICLE 1

ALL HUMAN BEINGS ARE BORN FREE AND EQUAL IN DIGNITY AND RIGHTS.

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

75 UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

DIGNITY, FREEDOM & JUSTICE FOR ALL



Sharing our stories is a vital step in fighting racism and xenophobia

By Sally Gandar



Participants at the Reclaiming Our Shared Humanity panel discussion and film screening. ©UN South Africa

March 2023 - As part of its participation in the annual Human Rights Festival held at Constitution Hill in Johannesburg, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Desmond and Leah Tutu Foundation Legacy Foundation (DLTLF) held a film screening and panel discussion titled, "Reclaiming our shared humanity – protecting human rights by combating racism and xenophobia."

The event, which focused on how sharing our stories creates spaces of trust and allows diverse groups to connect, is part of OHCHR's ongoing work to end racism and all related forms of discrimination and highlights the global #FightRacism campaign and call to action to Learn, Speak up, Act! The discussion also forms part of the United Nations' work towards promoting social cohesion and peaceful co-existence between migrants and host communities in the context of a joint programme under the UN Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF).

A short documentary, "Coach" and the trailer for the documentary film, "Bergsig," were screened at the event. Both films focus on sharing the lived experiences of people who face exclusion and discrimination, and how we can reclaim our shared humanity. Beyond outlining their challenges, the films delve into what individuals and communities are doing to build bridges and instill hope despite the difficulties they face daily. These stories aim to challenge stereotypes and inspire people from all walks of life to make positive contributions to society.

Coach Merlin Ekwanza, the focus of the film, "Coach," explained that while integrating into South African society was difficult because English was not his first language, he looked for commonalities rather than differences. "It was not easy to integrate as a French-speaking migrant in South Africa, but I used the language of sport to integrate and give back to the community," he said.

Damian Samuels, who filmed and produced Coach, also lectures at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. He explained that telling stories like Coach Merlin's is about connecting people. "It's the first step because narratives of hope challenge stereotypes." He also highlighted the growing importance of sharing stories and conversations through social media because it often functions as a bridge between policies and lived experiences and helps break down complex concepts for many people.

Acknowledging that racism and xenophobia are rooted in misplaced fear, Felicity Harrison, Head of Sustained Dialogues at the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, said suspicion and a lack of knowledge further drive intolerance in society. "We have a fear of 'the other', yet we don't know 'the other' - we need to create spaces where people can come together and interact.

Gahlia Brogneri, Executive Director and Co-founder of Adonis Musati Project, commissioned "Coach" after attending a Hope-Based Narrative Workshop hosted by OHCHR under the Migration MPTF Joint Programme in 2022. Since releasing the film, several schools have approached Coach Merlin to train their teachers. This work is supported by Adonis Musati in order to strengthen social cohesion. "Stories of hope like Coach Merlin's have a ripple effect; teachers and principals are learning from him; his story could change communities."

Reflecting on the panel discussion, OHCHR Regional Representative, Abigail Noko said, confronting and combating racism has never been more urgent. "In 2023, as we mark 75 years of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, South Africa and indeed many countries around the world, still grapple with deep-seated, systemic racism that leads to exclusion and violence. Fighting and ending racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance requires all of us to step out of our comfort zones and interact with people who may not look or speak like us." 🌍



L-R: Thomas White, Moderator, Constitution Court; Damian Samuels, Filmmaker and lecturer at Cape Peninsula University of Technology; Coach Merlin Ekwanza, Basketball Coach and Mentor, Adonis Musati Project. ©UN South Africa

LivingUbuntu: A campaign hoping to promote social cohesion in communities

By Reneilwe Moningi



Industrial performance at Akani methodist school in Gauteng and distribution of leave behind leaflet and calendar to the learners. ©UN South Africa

March 2023 - A new campaign, titled #LivingUbuntu, which aims to connect South Africans and migrants alike and to reawaken the South African spirit of ubuntu that has been lost in recent times, was launched by the United Nations in South Africa.

The word “Ubuntu” builds on the traditional South African philosophy that emphasizes the interconnectedness of all people and the importance of community and harmony. It suggests that people need to live the philosophy that individuals are only truly human when part of a community and that the wellbeing of that community is critical. The campaign stresses the importance of compassion and empathy.

The Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund launched the #LivingUbuntu awareness campaign in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration, International Labour Organization, UN Development Programme, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, UN Women, the UN Children’s Fund, the UN Information Centre and the Government of South Africa.

The campaign, which was launched in March to coincide with the South Africa’s Human Rights Month and the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (21 March), is aligned with efforts by the government and the UN to promote social cohesion and encourage people to safeguard the human rights and dignity of all people living in South Africa.

The focus of the campaign is on the provinces of Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape in communities that have large numbers of migrants and have been identified as hotspots for violence, intolerance towards migrants as well as racism and racial discrimination.

The campaign was rolled out with educational articles and adverts in community newspapers including Inthuthuko (KZN), Inner City (Gauteng) and Dizindaba (Western Cape).

A radio campaign that included a radio drama series, interviews with experts on migration as well as radio adverts was aired on Pheli FM and Alex FM in Gauteng, Izwi FM, Intokozo FM in KwaZulu-Natal and Zibonelo FM in the Western Cape.

A TV advert that showcased the many roles that migrants play and the contributions they make in the South African society was produced and aired on GauTV, 1KZNTV and CapeTown TV. The school aspect of the campaign includes an industrial theatre production for Grades 8-10 learners and aims to promote tolerance and social cohesion. These learners are targeted as young adolescents’ development when their attitudes, perceptions and beliefs are being defined and cemented and their broader social value systems is being solidified.

The performance theatre performance was followed by discussions that aimed to get young people to reflect on commonly held beliefs and ask the question: “What is the real story?” In this way, it allowed learners to engage with common beliefs, perceptions and attitudes and factual information with the aim of establishing that many common beliefs and perceptions are not based on facts.

Learners also took home leaflets, posters and calendars that help to reinforce these messages and to take the campaign back into their homes and share the information with their families. To date, over 20,000 learners have been reached and the feedback has been positive, “The whole show was a breathtaking and the message was clear: social cohesion is essential for our communities,” said Patricia Oss, a migrant teacher from Akani Methodist School.

The final element of the campaign was digital with a social media campaign that included positive messages around social cohesion as well as educational content to help create greater awareness around the role that migrants play and the contributions that they make to society. The videos are also being shared on social media to extend the campaign to a wider audience. 🌍

Remember, Unite, Renew. Kwibuka 29th Memorial Ceremony

By Nombulelo Malinga



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF
REFLECTION
ON THE 1994 GENOCIDE
AGAINST THE TUTSI IN
RWANDA

#Kwibuka
#PreventGenocide



"Kwibuka" means "to remember" in Kinyarwanda. It is a word that carries deep meaning for the people of Rwanda, especially for those who survived the genocide against the Tutsi in 1994. On the 29th anniversary of that tragic event, dignitaries, diplomats, and members of the public gathered at the Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre in South Africa to do just that - to remember.

April 2023 - Organized by the Department of Global Communications and the Permanent Mission of Rwanda to the United Nations, the Kwibuka 29th Memorial Ceremony was a poignant event that took place on the 12 April 2023. It was a time for reflection, for mourning, and for honouring the memory of those who lost their lives. But it was also a time for resilience and hope towards a brighter future.

Nelson Muffuh, the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in South Africa, delivered the UN Secretary-General's message marking the International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda. The message emphasized the importance of standing firm against rising intolerance and being vigilant to prevent genocide and other forms of atrocities.

In his message, the UN Secretary-General said, "Together, let us stand firm against rising intolerance. Let us be ever vigilant – always ready to act. Let us truly honour the memory of Rwandans who perished - due to the genocide against the Tutsi - by building a future of dignity, security, justice, and human rights for all." The message resonated with the attendees, highlighting the need for continued efforts to promote peace, justice, and human rights worldwide.

In her opening remarks, the director of the Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre, Tali Nates, underscored the importance of remembering and reflecting on the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. The event aimed to raise awareness about the genocide and educate people about the consequences of denial, which has been an ongoing part of the genocidal process.

In his closing remarks, the High Commissioner of Rwanda in South Africa, Eugene Segore Kayihura, emphasized the need to combat denial in all its forms, as it continues to manifest itself even after the genocide. Denial is a dangerous phenomenon that seeks to erase the truth and perpetuate the cycle of violence, and it is crucial to confront it and ensure that the victims are honored and their memory is preserved.

The genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, which took place in 1994, resulted in the systematic killing of almost one million people, including Tutsis, moderate Hutus, Twa and others.

The International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda was designated by the UN General Assembly on 26 January 2018, recalling that Hutu and others who opposed the genocide were also killed. The title of the annual observance was amended to reflect the significance of the genocide and its impact on Rwanda and the international community.

The Kwibuka 29th Memorial Ceremony served as a solemn reminder of the atrocities committed during the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda and the importance of remembering and reflecting on the lessons learned. It emphasized the need to combat denial and intolerance, promote peace and justice, and build a future based on dignity, security, and human rights for all.

The event concluded with a renewed commitment to honor the memory of the victims by working towards a better and more just world. A world where we remember the injustices served against the Tutsi in Rwanda, unite to promote peace and renew our hope in fair and just human rights for all. 🌍

The Nelson Mandela Foundation and the UN celebrate Nelson Mandela International Day

By Eunice Namugwe



Alice Brown, a board member at the Nelson Mandela Foundation gives a keynote address at the Afrika Tikkun Green Acres Farm, Diepsloot, Johannesburg on Mandela Day 2023. ©UN South Africa



Afrika Tikkun Green Acres Farm team showcase some of their produce. ©UN South Africa

July 2023 - In November 2009 the UN General Assembly declared 18 July "Nelson Mandela International Day", a day to recognize and salute the former South African President's contribution to the pursuit of peace, freedom, equality and development for all. On this commemorative day, the world is reminded of Madiba's Call to Action - It's in your hands! As Madiba said, it is truly in our hands "to create a better world for all who live in it."

To celebrate Nelson Mandela International Day, the United Nations in South Africa, in collaboration with the Nelson Mandela Foundation, introduced the "[Nelson Mandela SDGs Quotes Book](#)," aligning Mandela's famous sayings with each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The book underscores the importance of sustainable development, emphasizing that #ItIsInYourHands to actively contribute towards achieving the SDGs - a true 'Call to Action.'

The book's launch occurred in two distinct phases. The initial phase premiered on Morning Live Show on the South African Broadcasting Corporation television, followed by an official announcement for downloads during the Nelson Mandela International Day proceedings on 18 July 2023, at Afrika Tikkun Green Acres Farm, in partnership with the Nelson Mandela Foundation. The second phase unfolded as a hard launch hosted at the Foundation, solidifying the book's impact and outreach.

The soft launch comprised of a tree planting ceremony where, alongside the Foundation the United Nations in South Africa contributed to the fight against poverty and inequality through various initiatives. These efforts align with the global call to action that the Foundation championed on Mandela Day. The day saw a worldwide commemoration with the planting of trees and support for community food gardens, fostering a collective commitment to addressing global challenges. As the world reflects on Mandela's legacy, it is a reminder to draw inspiration from his words and translate them into meaningful action. Together, let us take action to inspire change—for people, for the planet. 🌍



Meseret Zemedkun, UNEP Representative and Aleta Miller UN Women Representative at the Mandela Day event ©UN South Africa



UN Staff took to planting on Mandela Day at the Afrika Tikkun Green Acres Farm in Diepsloot, Johannesburg. ©UN South Africa

The UN and the Government of South Africa Commemorate World Food Day in KwaZulu-Natal

By Luthando Kolwapi

October 2023 - The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in South Africa joined government officials to commemorate the 2023 World Food Day at a ceremony held in KwaMaphumulo, Ilembe District in KwaZulu-Natal Province on 30 October under the theme, 'Water is Life, Water is Food. Leave No One Behind'.

Among those attending were the Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Thoko Didiza, the KwaZulu-Natal Member of the Executive Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development, Super Zuma, and FAO representative in South Africa, Babagana Ahmod.

The event signified commitment towards addressing global food security and water-related challenges, while highlighting South Africa's dedication to eliminate hunger and malnutrition. It was also an occasion to stress the importance of food and agriculture in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The aim of the commemoration of World Food Day event was to inform local communities of the need to mitigate the impact of rising food prices through activities such as setting up food gardens and supporting agricultural cooperatives. Additionally, it also sought to raise public awareness about global hunger and to encourage people to take action within their communities to combat it.

In her remarks, Minister Didiza said, "South Africa remains dedicated to playing its part in the global mission to ensure a world where no one experiences hunger, and where water, the source of life and sustenance, is a resource accessible to all," adding "Let us labour together to achieve these critical objectives and contribute to a better and more sustainable world for generations to come."

Dr. Ahmod told the audience that the World Food Day, celebrated annually on 16 October, marks the inception of FAO, stressing the need for global initiatives to address hunger and various forms of malnutrition.



Dr. Babagana Ahmod, FAO Representative in South Africa at the national commemoration event for World Food Day 2023. ©UN South Africa

"This event was an opportune platform for raising awareness, fostering community solidarity, and showcasing the collective dedication to turn the vision of a hunger-free and food-secure world into a concrete reality," he said.

The event also served as a reminder of the global community's shared responsibility to protect the planet and its natural resources, particularly water, as it was vital for life and food production. Messages shared at the events also emphasized the need for collaborative efforts involving the government, the private sector, and civil society organizations as essential to achieve the SDGs.

It was also pointed out that addressing water-related challenges required sound governance practices, inclusive approaches, and integrated water resources management. Investing in innovative water management technologies and collaborative efforts were crucial for building a resilient and water-efficient society and achieving the SDGs.

As part of the commemorative activities, senior officials also undertook a tour of various projects and disadvantaged households and handed over food packages and agricultural material.



The ILO and NIOH support informal economy on World TB Day

By Tshepo Mohatlle

March 2023 -The International Labour Organisation (ILO), in collaboration with the National Institute for Occupational Health (NIOH), participated in the commemoration of World TB Day in Rustenburg, on 23 March 2023. The 2023 theme for World TB Day commemoration was “Policy in Action”.

The ILO partnership with NIOH involved support to the informal economy in addressing occupational diseases, including HIV, TB and COVID-19. The two entities also developed a video and pamphlets that target workers in the informal sector. These are an information and awareness tool for the informal sector on the epidemics of HIV, TB and COVID-19 as well as on workers’ rights in relation to Persons with Disabilities and People Living with HIV.

The video was launched during a “Policy in Action” event. The NIOH Executive Director, Dr Spo Kgalamono, when launching the video, highlighted the need to “prioritize the strengthening of TB and HIV programmes for informal economy workers, by ensuring that the most vulnerable workers are included in all strategies meant to improve TB and HIV prevention, screening, treatment and care; and that access to these services is improved for informal economy workers, thus reducing the gap in health inequalities.” Dr Kgalamono added that informal economy workers are vulnerable to HIV and TB because of poor access to health care and social protection. He added that the day-to-day survival of the workers, having to put food on the table and providing basic needs for their families takes priority over health matters such as HIV and TB.



Delegates and industrial performers at Phezulu High School for the national World TB Day event in KwaZulu-Natal province. ©ILO South Africa

The reality is that workers are likely to seek healthcare when already very ill. “The informal economy usually does not have enough capacity to provide their own health services, let alone occupational health services including HIV and TB,” noted Dr Kgalamono.

HIV-AIDS Technical Specialist at the ILO, Simphiwe Mabhele, highlighted that “policies and interventions that support the formalization of enterprises represent the main pathway to formal jobs for independent workers owning or operating their own informal economic unit. Such policies are also a necessary condition for the formalization of the jobs of workers employed in the informal sector and a means to improve the working conditions of contributing family workers also employed in the informal sector.”



Informal economy workers and the epidemics of HIV and TB

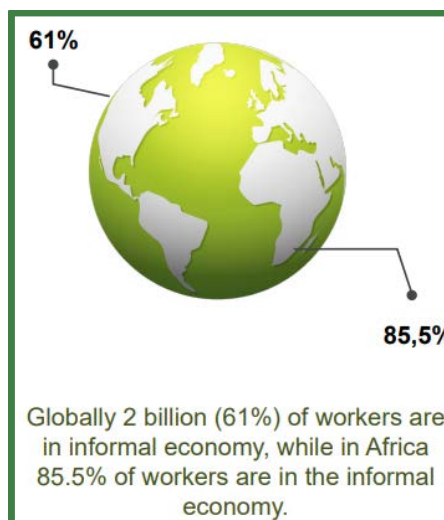
“While formalization of the economy is a complex and long-term process that often requires combining interventions on laws and regulations, informal economy operators should be supported in addressing the impact of TB, HIV and other diseases that impact their lives and operations.”

Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) President, Zingiswa Losi, spoke on behalf of workers, emphasizing that “as organized business and organized labour, we have a role to play in combating the TB pandemic. We must play our role in motivating and following up with our members and employees to ensure that they not only seek treatment when they show symptoms

of TB but that they continue to take their medication even when they feel better and mistakenly believe that they are no longer infected, thus exposing their families, friends, and colleagues to unnecessary risks.”

She further called on employers to make sure that workplaces abide by the letter and spirit of the Mine Health and Safety Act for the mining sector and the Occupational Health and Safety Act for other workplaces and urged unions to hold employers accountable to do so.

Download pamphlet on: [Informal economy and the epidemics of HIV and TB.](#)



Recognize, reduce, and redistribute unpaid care work for an equal society

By Maphuti Mahlaba

March 2023 - Unpaid care work in South Africa is valued at approximately R1 trillion (US\$54 billion), about 14% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), according to Oxfam South Africa. This and other insights into the care economy and its implications were shared at a three-day workshop on Unpaid Care Work held in March 2023 in Johannesburg.

Hosted by UN Women South Africa Multi-Country Office and the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, and supported by the Government of Canada in South Africa, the meeting brought together policymakers, trade unions, women's associations and organizations, women entrepreneurs, and men's organizations.

The consultation provided a platform for engagement between stakeholders on critical strategies and policy priorities to address the unpaid care work that contributes to increased gender inequality, increased burden of care, and deepening poverty levels for women.

"On average women spend about 289 minutes on unpaid care work daily, while men spend about 88 minutes on the same," according to Advocate Mikateko Joyce Maluleke of the Department of Women, Youth and People with Disabilities.

The conference affirmed the role of the care economy in contributing to socioeconomic development and the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). "We need to identify game-changing strategies to address critical issues that hamper the full attainment and realization of SDG 5, Gender Equality," said Dr. Hazel Gooding, the Deputy Representative of the UN Women South Africa Multi-Country Office.

“ Women's disproportionate burden of unpaid care work limits their ability to engage in paid work, which results in a loss of human capital and potential economic growth for the country. It also reverses the gains we've made towards gender equality. ”

Stakeholders called for urgent action into effective, gender-responsive, and clear policies and strategies that ensure that unpaid care work is recognized for its contribution to the economy as it fills the gap left by the lack of social services.

The outcomes of the consultation included a call for accurate and updated data and statistics on unpaid care work and its impact on gender equality; comprehensive maternity protection legislation that will eliminate the burden of care on one partner – usually the woman – and ensuring shared responsibility of children, including a review of the 10 days legislated parental leave currently in the Basic Conditions of Employment Act.

Other outcomes included the need for a comprehensive social security system and policies that will take into consideration the care work burden carried by women; private sector investment in initiatives that will significantly reduce the increased burden on women in poor communities; and scaling up successful models and multi-sectoral programmes focused on transformational and systematic challenges in the redistribution of care work. 🌍



Representatives from government, development partners, trade unions, women's associations and organizations, women entrepreneurs, and men's organizations gathered to discuss solutions to the disproportionate unpaid care workload South African women carry. ©UN South Africa

High cost of living, unemployment, crime and loadshedding contributing to depression

By Sindiswa Mathiso



Mental health is a universal human right. Everyone, wherever and wherever they are, has a right to the highest attainable standard of mental health.

October 2023 - Depression is a common and serious medical illness that negatively affects how you feel, the way you think and how you act. Since the onset of Covid-19, many of us have had to deal with the loss of our loved ones. We have been forced to deal with isolation. Our trauma was worsened by the fact that we could not be with our loved ones when they died and even mourning them was hard due to Covid-19 restrictions.

After the pandemic, we had to deal with its after effects. Some of the major ones being the high cost of living, loss of jobs, the energy crisis, and rising levels of crime. We feel like lots of things are out of our control. Getting of bed, sorting things out, dealing with debt, juggling with load shedding has become an overwhelming task for most of us.

Most adults are in debt due to high cost of living caused by rising inflation and interest rates that affect our mortgages and credit cards. There is no doubt that debts can make one feel very uncomfortable, guilty, depressed, hopeless and even helpless.

The respondents of a recent study conducted by the South African Depression and Anxiety Group indicate that along with the helplessness respondents felt, those employed (74%) were expected to deliver work, despite power outages. This led to high levels of performance anxiety and work-related stress, in addition to heavy financial demands caused by the secondary impacts of load-shedding (e.g. food spoilage, appliance breakages, etc.).

The aim of this article is to make you aware that if you are feeling depressed and feel like you are in a dark place, you are not alone.

Always stay in touch and don't withdraw from life. Socializing with others can improve your mood. Keeping in touch with colleagues, friends and family means you have someone to talk to when you feel down and out.

Try also to be more active. Taking up some form of exercises can make you feel better. There's enough evidence that proves that exercise can help lift up your mood. If you haven't exercised for a while, start gently by walking for 20-30 minutes every day.

Try to also face your fears. The mistake we make is to avoid the things we find difficult. In this economic crisis, we even avoid our creditors, and this makes things even worse. If this starts to happen, try not to run away from your problems: face them head on.

When people feel low or anxious, they sometimes avoid talking to other people. Some people can lose their confidence in going out, even to an extent of not going to work. This can lead to high levels of work absenteeism that then adds to more problems.

You may also drink more than usual as a way of coping with or hiding your emotions, or just to fill time, but alcohol will not help you solve your problems, rather, it can worsen things in your personal life, in your family life, at work and also in your finances.

Eating a healthy diet is also very important when feeling depressed. Some people don't feel like eating when they're depressed and are at risk of becoming underweight while others find comfort in food and can get overweight.

Trying to have a routine. When you feel down, you can get into poor sleep patterns, staying up late and sleeping during the day. Try to get up at your normal time and stick to your routine as much as possible. Not having a routine can affect your eating habits. Try also to carry on eating regular meals. Seek therapy, get help if you're feeling down or depressed for a lengthened period, opening to a professional can help you find better ways of coping. 🌈

UN engages government and mobilizes partners to accelerate Global Goals

By Eunice Namugwe



SDGs Multi-stakeholder engagement at the UN House in Pretoria on 27 July 2023. © UN South Africa

July 2023 - The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Summit, held from 18-19 September in New York, was a pivotal moment for countries worldwide to recommit to their journey towards achieving the SDGs. For South Africa, the Summit was not just an opportunity to assess progress made in addressing vital social, economic, and environmental issues, but also a platform to chart a transformative course with reinforced actions and pledges towards the attainment of SDGs.

The Summit marked the midway point in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and served as a comprehensive review of the state of the SDGs, responding to global crises, and providing political guidance on transformative actions leading up to the 2030 target year.

South Africa Government's ongoing efforts:

The government of South Africa actively prepared for the upcoming summit, focusing on critical processes such as the SDGs 2023 Report. This report provided crucial insights into the country's progress, challenges, and necessary actions related to SDGs. Additionally, South Africa initiated the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process, which will culminate in a presentation at the 2024 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Simultaneously, municipalities are conducting Voluntary Local Reviews, and various organizations, including Global Compact SA, civil society groups, academia, and the UN, are all contributing to the preparations, enriching the overall landscape.

UN Engagements in South Africa

1. Multi-stakeholder Engagement (27 July 2023)

In July 2023, the UN convened a gathering of diverse stakeholders to emphasize their critical role in ensuring that national commitments genuinely represent the perspectives and hopes of all South Africans. This inclusive approach aimed to generate balanced, equitable, and inclusive outcomes that could drive tangible and widespread progress, ultimately fostering transformative change within the context of global challenges.

2. Harnessing the Gender Dividend (7 August 2023, Women's Month Dialogue)

During Women's Month in South Africa, the UN, in collaboration with various stakeholders, hosted a dialogue to underscore the centrality of women in concurrent transitions, such as green, blue, circular, and formal transitions. The aim was to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment considerations were integrated into policies, plans, and practices to enable meaningful participation that would benefit women. Despite constituting more than 52% of the population, women in South Africa remain under-represented in key sectors of the economy. Hence, deliberate efforts are required to empower women, reduce the burden of care, and optimize the "gender dividend" to accelerate the country's multiple transitions in a gender-inclusive manner. [\(continued on next page\)](#)

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3. Mobilizing Youth-Led SDGs Acceleration (11 August 2023, International Youth Day)

The UN Youth Theme Group, in partnership with the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), convened youth leaders in Johannesburg's Alexandra Township on International Youth Day. The theme highlighted the vital role of young people in advancing sustainable development through green skills and equitable transitions. The introduction of the SDGs Youth Advocates programme aims to raise awareness and inspire individuals from diverse backgrounds to actively support the global sustainable development goals.

4. Launch of the Nelson Mandela SDGs Quotes Booklet (11 September 2023)

In an effort to mobilize accelerated actions from all stakeholders towards the SDGs, the UN in South Africa and the Nelson Mandela Foundation published the Nelson Mandela Sustainable Development Goals Quotes Booklet. This booklet draws parallels between Mandela's call to action speeches and the Global Goals, inspiring collective commitments for accelerated interventions in line with Madiba's aspirations.



Nelson Mandela Sustainable Development Goals Quotes Booklet. ©UN South Africa

The book represents Madiba's call to action, urging new hands to champion social justice and continue the fight against poverty and inequality. Within its pages, Madiba's wisdom is intertwined with the SDGs, offering insights, inspiration, and a call to action for each of us to make a difference in our communities and beyond.

The launch of the booklet, held on 11 September at the Nelson Mandela Foundation, was attended by representatives from the media, government, diplomatic corps, women, youth, faith-based organization, private sector, traditional leaders, change makers and other thought leaders.



Youth Activist shares challenges she faces as a young woman in the informal sector ©UN South Africa

5. National Stakeholders Dialogue (12 September 2023)

The Ministry in the Presidency, in partnership with the UN in South Africa, hosted an interactive dialogue to discuss national pathways to SDGs transformation. This dialogue aimed to facilitate meaningful conversations, identify challenges, and foster collaboration and knowledge sharing to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs in South Africa. The recommendations made at the dialogue served as a guide to South Africa's national commitment at the 2023 SDGs Summit.

The UN in South Africa stands firmly in support of the government's efforts to mobilize and engage a diverse range of stakeholders. Together, they aim to define national SDGs transformation pathways, ensuring that South Africa continues to make meaningful progress towards achieving the Global Goals. In the face of complex global challenges, these collaborative endeavours represent a beacon of hope and a commitment to a sustainable and equitable future for all South Africans. 🌍



UN Staff took to tree-planting with the Nelson Mandela Foundation on Mandela Day at the Afrika Tikkun Green Acres Farm. ©UN South Africa

Uniting to accelerate Sustainable Development Goals in South Africa

By Nombulelo Malinga



United Nations Country Team and officials from Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation in the Presidency stand united in developing strategies to accelerate SDGs in South Africa. ©UN South Africa

September 2023 - In the lead-up to the 2023 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Summit in New York, the United Nations Resident Coordinator in South Africa, Nelson Muffuh, and the Minister in the Presidency for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Maropene Ramokgopa, jointly convened the SDGs National Dialogue with the theme, "Strategies for Accelerating Sustainable Development Goals Achievement in South Africa".

As the world approaches the midway point towards the 2030 deadline for the SDGs, this National Dialogue was held to foster crucial partnerships and collaborations, both within and beyond South Africa, to expedite the progress of these vital global goals with a resolute commitment to leave no one behind.

The heart of the discussions revolved around identifying strategies to foster partnerships and collaborations at national, regional, and international levels, all geared towards advancing the achievement of the SDGs. Participants included members of the diplomatic corps, development partners, the UN Country Team, as well as representatives from civil society, business, academia, and other sectors.

The upcoming 2023 SDG Summit is set to be a crucial gathering where global stakeholders will come together to make vital decisions aimed at guiding the world towards a more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable future for everyone. At the dialogue, the UN Resident Coordinator underscored the urgency of the moment, revealing that at the current pace, only 30% of all countries around the world will attain SDG 1— ending poverty in all its forms by 2030.

"Just 12% of the 140 SDGs targets (for which we have data) are on track," he said, emphasizing the need for immediate action. These stark statistics carry tangible consequences, particularly concerning issues like poverty, hunger, and climate change, affecting women disproportionately, particularly within the informal economy.

Minister Maropene Ramokgopa stressed the immense potential of the SDGs to accelerate progress. "The road to achieving the SDGs in South Africa has been a challenging one, but it is also filled with immense opportunities for growth, innovation, and positive change" she said. The minister emphasized the SDGs as a shared vision for a better world, encompassing prosperity, peace, and environmental sustainability, with multi-stakeholder partnerships playing a pivotal role.

The National Dialogue brought together a panel of experts, including Risenga Maluleke, the Statistician-General of South Africa; Ayodele Odusola, the UN Development Programme Resident Representative; Dr. Achieng Ojwang of the UN Global Compact Local Network South Africa; and Yared Tsegay, representing the SDGs Working Group at the African Monitor.

The panel echoed the urgent need for effective strategies and collaboration in order to achieve the global goals. Mr. Maluleke highlighted the challenge of tracking SDGs' progress accurately to provide timely data and address issues such as inequality, poverty, inadequate infrastructure, healthcare services and peace and security. He noted the potential offered by administrative data, big data, and artificial intelligence, especially with the support of research institutions and civil society organizations. (continues to next page)



Participants at the National Dialogue during panel discussions. ©UN South Africa

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Mr. Odusola emphasized the District Development Model (DDM) as a framework for SDGs implementation, emphasizing the critical role of governance. He also underscored the need for climate-resilient infrastructure to withstand turbulent shocks.

Dr. Ojwang addressed the private sector's role in SDGs, highlighting that while the Global Compact was aware of its responsibilities, the challenge lies in aligning priorities with the Government's National Development Plan and assessing progress.

She called for businesses to deepen their understanding of their role and scale up efforts effectively. Mr. Tsegay stressed the importance of global, local and regional partnerships, emphasizing the need for practicality in setting achievable goals while recognizing capacity limitations.

Participants also highlighted the need to localize the SDGs effectively and enhance the representation of culture in SDGs contexts. An official from the Department of Human Settlements suggested a strategy focusing on

human settlements and emphasizing their role in advancing the SDGs. She advocated for leaving no place behind, particularly through the transformation of informal settlements.

Mohanuoa Emma Mabidilala, the Chief Director at the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, stressed the importance of performance management system units in municipalities for localizing the SDGs, Agenda 2030, and the National Development Plan.

She said this approach would ensure well-designed government plans with the right indicators for effective monitoring. The African Leaders Network highlighted the importance of collaboration within diverse networks and the need to overcome silo mentalities. She advocated for skills development and reskilling based on market demands, active youth involvement and private sector support with a specific focus on skills development at the local community level.

The National Dialogue served as a powerful testament to the collective determination to advance the SDGs in South Africa and beyond.

It illuminated the path towards a fairer, more inclusive, and sustainable world for all. The resounding call for collaborative action, data-driven decision-making, inclusivity, and the active involvement of youth and diverse networks reverberates as a clarion call for change.

As the world approached the 2023 SDG Summit, these insights acted as guiding beacons, reminding us that the journey to achieving the SDGs requires tailored strategies, united efforts and unwavering commitment.

The closing remarks by the Resident Coordinator and the Minister underscored the critical importance of translating dialogue into action, emphasizing the need to make tangible differences at the grassroots level through the Integrated Development Planning Committee. With these insights, the world will embark on the path to a brighter and more sustainable future, leaving no one behind. 🌍



Maropene Ramokgopa, Minister in the Presidency responsible for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. ©UN South Africa



Ayodele Odusola, UNDP Resident Representative speaks about some of UN initiatives in support of the government. ©UN South Africa



Delegates talking about accelerating implementation of the Global Goals in South Africa. ©UN South Africa



Global Africa Business Initiative launched in South Africa

By Eunice Namugwe and Nombulelo Malinga

April 2023 - The Business Forum of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) launched the Global Africa Business Initiative (GABI) at a function held in South Africa's coastal city of Cape Town in April. The launch, which brought together leaders from the African business community, was held under the leadership of AfCFTA Secretary-General, Wamkele Mene, and also attended by Sanda Ojiambo, the Assistant Secretary-General and Chief Executive Officer of the United Nations Global Compact.

The AfCFTA is the world's largest free trade area bringing together the 55 countries of the African Union and eight Regional Economic Communities. The overall mandate of the AfCFTA is to create a single continental market with a population of about 1.3 billion people and a combined GDP of approximately US\$ 3.4 trillion.

AfCFTA is one of the flagship projects of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, the AU's long-term development strategy for transforming the continent into a global powerhouse. The practical implementation of the AfCFTA has the potential to foster industrialization, job creation, and investment, thus enhancing the competitiveness of Africa in the medium to long term.



Tujenge Afrika Pamoja!
(Let's Build Africa Together)

Theme: Acceleration of Implementation of the AfCFTA



16-18 April 2023 Cape Town International Convention Centre
Cape Town, South Africa



Sanda Ojiambo, Assistant Secretary-General and Chief Executive Officer of the UN Global Compact at the AfCFTA Business Forum. ©UN South Africa

According to the World Bank, AfCFTA could boost regional income by \$450 billion, increase wage growth for women, and lift 30 million people out of poverty by 2035.

Ms. Ojiambo's presence was significant as it underscored the importance of the AfCFTA in promoting economic growth and development in Africa. In discussions at the forum, Ms. Ojiambo spoke about the role of businesses in supporting the implementation of the AfCFTA and emphasized that businesses have a responsibility to promote sustainable development and help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). She also highlighted the importance of responsible business practices, including respect for human rights, environmental protection, and anti-corruption measures.

At the Business Forum 2023, Ms. Ojiambo introduced the Global Africa Business Initiative (GABI) to South Africa and talked about the UN Global Compact's Ten Principles, which provide a framework for responsible business practices designed to help businesses align their strategies and operations with universal principles on sustainability and corporate responsibility. (Continued on next page)

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“Leveraging vast partner networks, GABI seeks to seize Africa’s challenges and catalyze long-term solutions,” she said. “Aligned with the African Union’s priorities this year, GABI will foster collaborative initiatives that support implementing AfCFTA. The African business community must utilize AfCFTA to drive socio-economic transformation.”

GABI was launched in 2022 by the UN Secretary-General as a global platform connecting leaders to drive and invest in Africa’s unstoppable growth and to leverage the best of the UN in support of the Agenda 2063. The platform brings collective expertise and perspectives from the UN Global Compact, the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Economic Commission on Africa (UNECA), the Office for the Special Advisor on Africa, the International Trade Center (ITC), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and Sustainable Energy for All to support Africa’s accelerated and sustainable economic growth. Across the UN system, multiple agencies are actively working to support the accelerated implementation.

For more than two decades, the UN Global Compact has built bridges between business, governments, civil society, and the UN towards advancing sustainable development and humanizing the global market.

During her visit, Ms. Ojiambo met with representatives from the South African government, business community, and civil society to discuss how the UN Global Compact can support the implementation of the AfCFTA and promote sustainable development in Africa. She emphasized the importance of partnerships and collaboration among different stakeholders in achieving the SDGs and work towards building a more prosperous and equitable future for all Africans. Africa’s private sector is driving Africa’s economic development agenda. The Africa we want is profitable, but also inclusive and sustainable.



UN Resident Coordinator in South Africa, Nelson Muffuh, welcoming Sanda Ojiambo, the Assistant Secretary-General and Chief Executive Officer of the UN Global Compact in South Africa. ©UN South Africa

Innovative public-private partnership solutions remain vital. It is important to note that, SMEs are the backbone of Africa’s economies and that closing persistent gender gaps for women in Africa is a must if Africa will ever be unstoppable. AfCTFA is a catalyst for change, let us harness these solutions and opportunities for Africa,” said Ms. Ojiambo.

In conversation with the UN Country Team in South Africa led by its Resident Coordinator, Nelson Muffuh, Ms. Ojiambo, pointed out that the private sector should be seen not just as financiers but as co-creators towards development solutions. The potential for private sector’s contribution to growth and transformation is significant and the development of local networks for

sharing of knowledge and best practices should be encouraged to forge collective actions, she added.

The UNDP Regional Director for Africa, Ahunna Eziakonwa, who also participated in the Business Forum, underscored her organization’s commitment to promote sustainable development in Africa and support the implementation of the AfCFTA. She stressed the importance of gender equality and women’s empowerment in achieving sustainable development in Africa, noting that women’s participation in the formal economy remains low in many African countries. She further highlighted the importance of closing the gender gap in employment and entrepreneurship to achieve inclusive and sustainable economic growth. 🌍



Mr. Mondli Gungubele, Minister in the Presidency of the Republic of South Africa (centre) with the UN delegation at the AfCFTA Business Forum. ©UN South Africa

United Nations in South Africa: Strengthening strategic partnerships in 2023

By Krivani Pillay

Nelson Mandela Foundation

September 2023 - Leveraging on Nelson Mandela's legacy, the UN in South Africa partnered with the Nelson Mandela Foundation to produce a call-to-action Sustainable Development Goals Booklet. Whilst the SDGs were launched two years after Madiba's passing, he has throughout his decades of activism and leadership made a consistent call to action for us all to be stewards of our community, country and planet. In 2008 Madiba called on a new generation to take responsibility telling us all, South Africans and all global citizens, "It is in your hands". It was a clarion call to work collectively towards achieving what is now called the SDGs – it may not have been the same words but with certainly the sentiment and essence of the 2030 Agenda.

The booklet uses Madiba's own words and shows alignment to SDG Action. It was officially launched by the United Nations in South Africa and the Nelson Mandela Foundation in September 2023, exactly one week before the SDG Summit at the UN Headquarters in New York. Initially, the book was launched on national television on 18 July, Madiba's birthday. Resident Coordinator, Nelson Muffuh has been consistent in his messaging: "Mandela's legacy, characterized by fairness, justice, cohesion, equality, and freedom, provides the perfect inspiration for this global effort."

The launch event was attended by representatives from the government, civil society, private sector, the diplomatic community, creative artists, women, and youth, showcasing a collective commitment to the SDGs. The keynote address was provided by Grammy-award-winning flautist Wouter Kellerman, who also performed a specially written piece dedicated to Nelson Mandela and challenged other Grammy-winning artists to leverage their celebrity power to push for the attainment of the SDGs.

Download the book here:

<https://southafrica.un.org/en/239699-nelson-mandela-sdgs-quotes-book>

Watch the Resident Coordinators inspiring call to action here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJWHbeUo5So>

Watch Grammy-award-winning flautist Wouter Kellerman's call to action: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZPODCr21ERE>



CEOs Dinner

April 2023 - Ms. Sanda Ojiambo, the Executive Director and CEO of the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) joined the UN Resident Coordinator in South Africa to attend the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Business Forum, which aims to accelerate intra-African trade and boost Africa's trading position in the global market. ASG Ojiambo spoke at the event reiterating the commitment of the (UNGC) to the ambitions of the AfCFTA. Along the margins of the AfCFTA Business Forum, the UN Resident Coordinator and ASG co-hosted a CEOs Dinner to introduce them to the Global Africa Business Initiative (GABI) - an annual conference that seeks to elevate Africa's presence on the global stage by charting a sustainable, inclusive, and just roadmap for the continent, led by Africans for Africans.

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The dinner was attended by a number of prominent business leaders and executives including Achieng Ojwang, Executive Director of Global Compact Network South Africa; Phuthi Mahanyele-Dabengwa, CEO of South African multinational technology holding company Naspers; Patricia Obozuwa, Vice President of Public Affairs, Communications & Sustainability for Coca-Cola in Africa; and Alex Nyangi, Emerging Markets Public Affairs Manager at Google, among others. Participants discussed the tremendous potential for growth in South Africa and how the nation is leading the way towards energy access and a low-carbon economy. Furthermore, South Africa has a youthful population, where digital ecosystems have become more resilient and inclusive, enabling greater participation by women and more opportunities for small businesses and marginalized communities.

Desmond and Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation

On 17 November 2023, the UN in South Africa partnered with the Desmond and Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation to host the 13th Desmond Tutu International Peace Lecture featuring a keynote address by philanthropist Melinda French-Gates. This partnership showcased the power of the 5 P's: Partnerships, People, Planet, Prosperity and Peace and serves as an example of how strategic alliances can effectively drive progress towards achieving the SDGs.

The Arch (as Tutu is affectionately referred to) displayed an unwavering commitment to peace and human rights, aligning harmoniously with the 'People' and 'Peace' pillars of the 2030 Agenda. Philanthropist French-Gates through her intervention showcased the importance of the 'Prosperity' pillar. The partnership helped amplify the impact of individual efforts, weaving together diverse threads of action in a cohesive tapestry of change. The event also honored the legacy of Leah Tutu, a steadfast partner and supporter of her late husband.

The '90 Voices' exhibition, celebrated Leah Tutu's 90th birthday and the contributions of 90 women to South Africa's liberation, served as a testament to the strength of collective action. This partnership also served as a clarion call for more such partnerships to deliver on the SDGs, reminding us that we are all part of the solution. It is through these partnerships that we can weave a narrative of hope, a narrative where the 5 P's guide us towards a more sustainable future. One of the key takeaways from Melinda Gates was "If you leave this world better by lifting up one person; that is a successful life."

Watch Lecture here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n2TR5ZcePKM>



Christine Muhigana, UNIECF Representative, delivered a message of support on behalf of the UN in South Africa.



Cape Town Conversations

After the SDG Summit in September 2023 lamented the slow progress in achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, the UN in South Africa heeded the call to immediately brainstorm how to leverage strategic partnerships to accelerate the SDGs. For South Africa, 2023 was a particularly important year as a global leader. Assuming the BRICS presidency marked a pivotal moment in international cooperation. This will further continue for the country's 2025 G20 Presidency. This platform presented a unique opportunity to prioritize the needs of the global south as previous and current G20 Presidencies have done (Indonesia 2022, India 2023 and Brazil 2024).

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Early in the year the UN Resident Coordinator, Nelson Muffuh, cemented a partnership with the Thabo Mbeki Foundation. Later on that partnership extended to the Observer Research Foundation (ORF) in India to collaborate on the inaugural Cape Town Conversations. The Cape Town Conversations was hosted from 24-26 November. Numerous influential global actors descended on the mother city for the three days to discuss contemporary issues of global governance (SDGs 16 and 17). The inaugural conversations identified new challenges, presented solutions and included candid, no holds-barred discussions on shaping the future world order. This year's edition, with the four G20 presidencies, was an opportunity to centre the needs and priorities of the global south in international policy discourse.



The Cape Town Conversations 2023 were built around several thematic pillars, each resonating with the core objectives of the SDGs. From women-led development to the Just Green Transition to the Development Imperative and Data for Development. This strategic partnership between the Thabo Mbeki Foundation and the Observer Research Foundation was a testament to the power of collaboration in bringing about meaningful change. By pooling resources, expertise, and influence, we collectively helped curate the discourse on global governance and drive progress towards the SDGs. Like the 2030 Agenda, the Cape Town Conversations is a platform illuminating the path towards a sustainable, inclusive future.

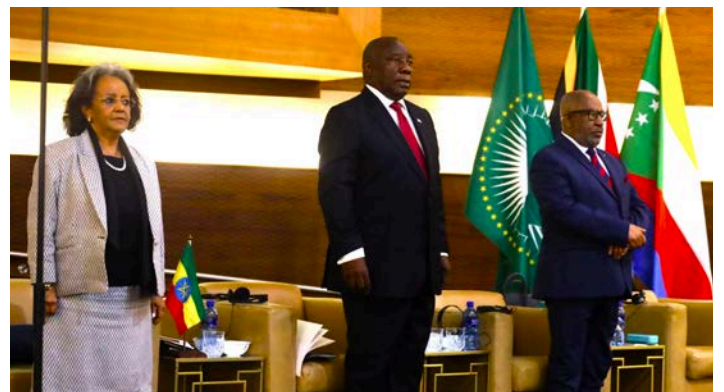


The conversations were a reminder that the most daunting challenges can be overcome when we stand together. At the end of the three days discussion marathon (which started early and ended with daily red-eye sessions and still holding full attendance) it was clear that Africa was not just witnessing the unfolding of key global opportunities but actively shaping them. It was a partnership that signaled the power of "we can" to catalyze progress towards the SDGs by fostering innovation and bringing voices from the developing world to shape international conversations. The UN in South Africa has already added the 2024 Cape Town Conversation firmly on its planning calendar.

African leaders push to dismantle patriarchal systems that perpetuate inequalities: The Third AU Men's Conference on Positive Masculinity

November 2023 - Former Liberian President, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, in her role as patron of African Women Leaders' Network (AWLN) has stressed the importance of harnessing male political leadership to complement the efforts of women in leadership over many decades towards End Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG). The African Union High-Level Presidential Response to EVAWG was established in 2020 to mobilize political commitment and action at the highest level of the AU leadership and decision-making to prevent and end VAWG in Africa. Renamed the AU High Level Presidential Initiative on Positive Masculinity in Leadership to End Violence Against Women and Girls in Africa, the Initiative is run through the Annual AU Men's Conferences.


The 2023 third Men's Conference was co-hosted by President Azali Assoumani of the Union of the Comoros (the current chairperson of the African Union) and President Cyril Ramaphosa of the Republic of South Africa. The 3rd Men's Conference on Positive Masculinity in Leadership to EVAWG set out to consolidate political will towards EVAWG in the region at the highest levels of political leadership and to consolidate the role of male leadership across sectors towards EVAWG and women's leadership in shaping the AU Convention to EVAWG. (Continued on next page)



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A number of UN agencies were closely supporting the planning and implementation of the third Men's Conference, including ILO, UN Women, UNFPA, UN Global Compact coordinated by the Resident Coordinator's Office. Prior to the conference, the UN team also supported the planning and design of the consultations with leaders in the private sector (business and organized labour) and other stakeholders in the world of work.

The outcome of these consultations was included in the wider Men's Conference. In his address to the Conference, the UN Resident Coordinator pledged his support as senior male leadership in the UN system in South Africa saying, "I would like to take this opportunity to express my steadfast and unreserved commitment to championing positive masculinity, a cause that is not just a responsibility, but a moral obligation.

"All men in the room and beyond are urged to reinforce their commitment and advance collective and individual actions to combat violence against women and children. Through championing positive masculinity, we collectively promote healthy and constructive behaviors, attitudes, and values associated with being a man, instilling and reinforcing qualities such as responsibility, respect, courage, and leadership in young boys especially as they transition into manhood. We must encourage fathers to assume their parental responsibilities and support their children, even those born out of wedlock." 



Ms. Ahunna Eziakonwa delivered the UN statement on behalf of Ms. Amina Mohammed, UN Deputy Secretary-General.



Customary Male Initiation Summit kicks off in the Eastern Cape

By Ziyanda Ngoma

30 – 31 October 2023: Each year, dozens of South African boys die from the customary male initiation practice performed under unsafe conditions. Male initiation is a cultural practice that marks the rite of passage from boyhood to manhood. It involves circumcision and prepares teenage boys to be responsible men in society.

Over the years, initiations have been marred by controversy and beset by a plethora of challenges ranging from physical injuries to deaths among male teenagers.

As part of efforts to raise awareness around the practice, the provincial leadership of Eastern Cape Province, one of the worst affected provinces, convened a Provincial Initiation Summit in the port city of East London to discuss measures to reduce injuries and deaths among the initiates.

In his remarks at the summit, the Premier of Eastern Cape Province, Oscar Mabuyane, said, "While customary male initiation holds great significance in our cultural traditions, it is essential to recognize that it must be conducted safely and responsibly to prevent unnecessary harm and loss of life."


As the custodians of culture, representatives from the provincial House of Traditional Leaders, which forms part of the provincial legislature, emphasized the importance of ongoing communications and advocacy sessions through community imbizos (gatherings of traditional leaders) and publicity on community radio stations. Participants further highlighted the important role played by fathers and uncles in constructing positive values and positive masculinity among the youth.

Speaking at the summit, the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in South Africa, Nelson Muffuh, said that the gathering served as a platform for dialogue, collaboration, and action.



Resident Coordinator, Nelson Muffuh sharing remarks at the Customary male initiation Summit

"We must work together to identify and implement practical solutions to avert further deaths of young male initiates and promote safer initiation practices. This requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses both the cultural and health dimensions of the issue, while also respecting and preserving our traditions," he noted.

A key outcome of the summit was the proposal to bring medical experts to work collaboratively on the traditional aspects of the practice. In the past, the traditional leaders had shunned the involvement of medical experts but are now finding ways to work closely with them to reduce unnecessary injuries and loss of life among the male initiates. 



Media Training Workshops in 2023

UNIC conducted five impactful media training workshops this year, tailored for journalism and communication practitioners, including United Nations Communication Group (UNCG). These training workshops covered diverse essential topics from wellness and safety to indigenous languages, social media, countering hate speech, misinformation and disinformation, fact-checking and verification. The workshops also serve as a platform for journalists to gain insights into the work of the United Nations and how best to navigate the media landscape for futuer collaboration.



702 Walk The Talk: Walking for the Sustainable Development Goals

In a powerful demonstration of unity and commitment towards a sustainable future, the UN participated at this year's "Walk The Talk" event organized by Radio 702. This photo wall captures the spirit and dedication of UN personnel from various agencies who laced up their shoes to bring visibility of the UN and the Sustainable Development Goals - 20 August 2023



UN DAY: Community cleanup, GBV shelter and old-age home visitations

In partnership with environmental activists in Pretoria, the UN hosted an outdoor youth engagement in support of the Tshwane Life Foundation Care Centre in the Burger's Park by planting trees and doing a city clean up, with a focus group of Environmental Science students from the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) and UNICEF Volunteers - 24 October 2023



16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM: UN and partners take action to end Gender-Based Violence

Community engagement for the #16Days of Activism to #OrangeTheWorld: The UN in South Africa, in collaboration with the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA) and Khuthaza Foundation, hosted a special event for the readout of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), a film screening session and the unveiling of the 16 Days of Activism mural at the Tshwane UNiversity of Technology in Arcadia, Pretoria - 10 December 2023





LEAVE
NO ONE
BEHIND

A CALL TO ACTION FOR A BETTER WORLD

NELSON MANDELA FOR PEOPLE FOR PLANET

SDGs QUOTES BOOKLET



DECADE
OF **>>>**
ACTION