

HANDS - THE WOMEN'S MONTH SPECIAL



INSIDE UL

newsLetter

Volume 2: 2026



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A TAPESTRY OF STRENGTH, RESILIENCE, AND CONTRIBUTION

Welcome to this follow-up edition of Hands for Women's Month—a moment to reflect on the legacy of resilience and celebrate the tangible power of female leadership. At the University of Limpopo (UL), our commitment to women's issues goes beyond mere advocacy; it is reflected in our deliberate drive to elevate women into senior positions of authority. Today, brilliant female minds and visionary leaders sit at the helm of decision-making, actively shaping the future of UL, steering its strategic direction, and dismantling the systemic barriers that once restricted their ascent.

Building on the foundation of our maiden edition, this volume continues to honour the hands that nurture, lead, and transform. The story of South Africa, and indeed the story of UL, remains an ongoing human development narrative where women are no longer just the background architects of society, but the visible pioneers in governance, research, and institutional policy.

As we turn these pages, we celebrate the ongoing victory of those who broke through patriarchal ceilings, honouring both our historical icons and the contemporary trailblazers occupying executive seats across our campus. Yet, our celebration remains anchored in purpose. We reaffirm our collective stance against gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF), ensuring that our halls of learning remain safe spaces for female excellence to thrive without fear.

May this edition inspire us to keep widening the corridors of authority for the women coming after us. As the timeless chant echoes through our history, Wathint' abafazi, wathint' imbhokodo! May this month be a powerful reminder of our shared responsibility to honour, elevate, and empower the hands that build our future.

WOMEN'S MONTH: EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH EDUCATION, RESEARCH AND LEADERSHIP

"Our responsibility is not only to celebrate women's achievements, but to create opportunities that enable women to lead, succeed and make a lasting impact on society."

Prof Marlise van Staden

Deputy Vice-Chancellor:
Research, Innovation and Partnerships



Women's Month is a time to celebrate the achievements of women and reflect on the progress made towards gender equality, while recognising the work that still needs to be done. It also honours the courage of more than 20,000 women who marched to the Union Buildings on 9 August 1956 in protest against apartheid pass laws. Their legacy lives on through the powerful words, "You strike a woman, you strike a rock," a lasting symbol of the strength and resilience of South African women

At the University of Limpopo, Women's Month provides an opportunity to recognise the important role women play in teaching, research, leadership and community development. While celebrating these achievements, the University also acknowledges that many women continue to face challenges such as gender-based violence, discrimination, economic inequality and unequal access to opportunities.

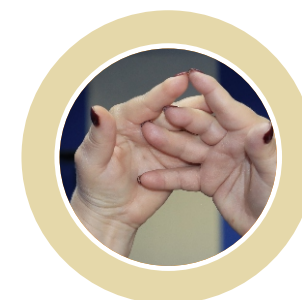
The University continues to empower women through education, research and leadership development. Across its four faculties, women researchers are making significant contributions to knowledge that addresses societal challenges and supports national development. This year, Professor Tebogo Mothiba, holder of a Research Chair in the Faculty of Health Sciences, and Ms V. Hlope, a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Science and Agriculture, have been named finalists in the Women in Science Awards, highlighting the quality of research produced by women at the university.

The university promotes gender equity in recruitment and encourages women's participation in research projects, academic appointments and leadership positions.

Women academics are supported through programmes such as HERSSA, the Higher Education Leadership and Management (HELM) Programme and the Universities

South Africa (USAf) Women in Leadership Programme. In addition, Professor Satsope Maoto leads an institutional initiative that develops women leaders in academia, while the University of Limpopo Women's Academic Solidarity Association (ULWASA) provides mentorship, networking and professional support.

Women serve as Executive Deans, School Directors, Heads of Department and research leaders, and the University continues to work towards equitable representation of women at all levels of decision-making. Through these efforts, the University of Limpopo is creating an environment where women can contribute, lead and inspire future generations.



WOMEN'S MONTH CELEBRATES THOSE WHO INSPIRE THE NEXT GENERATION

"True leadership is not about standing above others, but about creating opportunities for those who come after you."

Dr Izelque Botha

Acting Head of Department:
Geography and Environmental Studies
(School of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences)



For Dr Izelque Botha, the month is about celebrating the resilience and contribution of women while encouraging young women to believe in their own potential

"Women's Month gives me an opportunity to recognise the women who have shaped my journey and to invest in the next generation through mentorship and encouragement," she says.

Although women have made significant strides in many sectors, Dr Botha believes there is still work to be done to achieve equal opportunities and greater representation in leadership.

She credits much of her personal and professional development to her mother, whose example continues to influence the way she leads and supports others.

"My mother successfully managed her own business while always making time for her family. Whether she was cheering from the sidelines

at a sports field, taking us to debating competitions or simply being present, she showed me that success is measured not only by career achievements but also by the time and care we invest in others," she says.

Those lessons continue to shape her approach to leadership, mentoring and service.

Dr Botha says many women continue to encounter barriers to leadership, unequal opportunities and the challenge of balancing professional and family responsibilities.

She believes creating supportive workplaces, expanding mentorship opportunities and ensuring equal access to leadership positions are essential to unlocking the full potential of women.

"Women thrive when they are given opportunities to lead, supported in their careers and encouraged to develop their talents," she says.

Her message to young women is to have confidence in themselves and never allow others to determine their value.

"Never stop learning, believe in your abilities and never allow anyone else to define your worth," she says. "Leadership is not about personal success alone. It is about opening doors for others and helping them realise their potential."

If she could give women one gift, Dr Botha says it would be the confidence to embrace one of their greatest strengths: the ability to lead with conviction while remaining compassionate.



WOMEN'S MONTH CELEBRATES WOMEN WHO DARE TO LEAD

"Nothing is impossible for a woman who believes in herself."

Itumeleng Chidi

Sociology Lecturer:
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
(School of Social Sciences)



Women's Month is a reminder that every opportunity won by women today was earned through courage, determination and the refusal to accept limitations. "It is a time to celebrate women who continue to lead, inspire and create opportunities for others despite the challenges they face," says Itumeleng Chidi

To Chidi, Women's Month represents the courage to dream, take initiative and persevere through adversity, self-doubt and imposter syndrome. She believes women continue to shape families, communities and institutions through their leadership, resilience and willingness to uplift others.

Rather than limiting her contribution to Women's Month, Chidi has made women's empowerment part of her everyday work. She hosts seminars that encourage women to recognise their potential, support one another and pursue their goals with confidence.

"Women's empowerment begins when women believe in themselves and create opportunities for others to succeed," she says.

Throughout her academic journey, Chidi has been inspired by women who have broken barriers in higher education. Among them is Professor Satsope Maoto, Executive Dean of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Limpopo.

"The Executive Dean represents a woman who leads with purpose, confidence and courage. She occupies leadership spaces unapologetically and demonstrates that women belong wherever important decisions are made," she highlights.

Chidi believes role models such as Prof Maoto are changing perceptions about women's leadership and proving that women are equally capable of leading institutions, influencing policy and driving social change.

Despite this progress, she says many women continue to face challenges, including gender stereotypes, single parenthood, discrimination, unequal opportunities and the lingering effects of patriarchal attitudes.

"As women, we continue to overcome these obstacles every day. Today women are CEOs, academics, entrepreneurs, community leaders and mothers."

As an academic, author and motivational speaker, Chidi encourages women to invest in education, believe in their abilities and build networks that support personal and professional growth.



WOMEN'S MONTH HONOURS THE WOMEN WHO FOUGHT FOR TODAY'S FREEDOMS

"Women are more powerful than they often realise. We must also learn to give ourselves the same care and compassion we so freely give to others."

Dr Yvette Chetty

Sociology Lecturer:
Department of Physiology and Environmental Health
(School of Molecular and Life Sciences)



Dr Yvette Chetty has welcomed the month as an opportunity to honour the women who challenged injustice and opened doors for future generations

"I pause to remember the hardships and struggles that women before me faced, and I am grateful for the life and opportunities I have today because of them," she says.

Dr Chetty believes Women's Month should encourage South Africans not only to celebrate progress but also to reflect on the responsibility of protecting and advancing the rights women have fought so hard to achieve.

She draws inspiration from many strong women who shaped her life, especially her late mother.

"My mother was wise beyond her years and had a warmth that drew people to her. Whenever I face challenges, I remember her resilience and it gives me the strength to keep going," she says.

While acknowledging the progress women have made, Dr Chetty says gender-based violence remains one of the greatest challenges facing women in South Africa.

She believes many women remain trapped in abusive relationships because they lack financial security, support systems and safe places to turn to.

"We need stronger support structures and resources for women who choose to leave abusive relationships. No woman should feel she has to remain in an unsafe environment because she has nowhere else to go," she says.

Dr Chetty encourages women to recognise their own strength and reject stereotypes that portray them as less capable. Drawing on a story from Hindu tradition, she explains how the goddess Durga defeated a powerful demon king who believed no woman could challenge him.

"The story reminds us never to underestimate the strength of women," she says.

If she could offer women one gift, it would be self-love.

"Women spend so much of their lives caring for others that they often forget to care for themselves," she says. "We need to show ourselves the same kindness, patience and grace that we so willingly extend to others."



WOMEN'S MONTH IS A TIME TO CELEBRATE COURAGE, LEADERSHIP AND OPPORTUNITY

"Education is one gift that no one can take away. It empowers women to build better futures for themselves, their families and their communities."

Prof Tebogo Mothiba

SARChI Research Chair:
Prevention, Control and Management of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)



This is the message from Professor Tebogo Mothiba, who says Women's Month is a time to celebrate courage, leadership and resilience while reminding society that women must continue to be given equal opportunities to reach their full potential

Prof Mothiba says Women's Month honours women who have broken barriers and those who continue to lead in families, communities, workplaces and society despite the challenges they face.

"It reminds us of the sacrifices, resilience and determination of women who fought for equality, dignity and opportunities that many of us enjoy today," she says.

Supporting and developing future women leaders has been central to her career. Through postgraduate supervision, research mentorship and leadership development, she has guided many young academics.

Several women academics in the Faculty of Health Sciences who now hold doctoral degrees were either supervised or mentored by her.

Prof Mothiba says her commitment to empowering women was shaped by her upbringing. She credits her mother, who raised eight children under difficult circumstances, teaching her the values of perseverance and hard work.

"She ensured that we all had the opportunity to pursue our dreams. That taught me that success is not determined by where you come from, but by perseverance, hard work and faith," she says.

She also acknowledges the mentors in the nursing profession who shaped her career by instilling discipline, integrity and a strong work ethic. One lesson has stayed with her throughout her academic journey: "Academia is not for the faint-hearted."

Although South Africa has made progress in advancing women's rights, Prof Mothiba believes gender inequality, gender-based violence, limited access to leadership positions and economic disparities continue to affect many women.

She says these challenges can be addressed through greater investment in education, mentorship, leadership development and workplace environments that provide equal opportunities.

"Education is one gift that no one can take away. It empowers women to make informed decisions, achieve financial independence and create better futures for themselves, their families and their communities."



WOMEN'S MONTH CALLS FOR ACTION ON GENDER EQUALITY

"Education opens doors. When women are given opportunities to learn and lead, they transform families, communities and society."

Prof Owence Chabaya

Acting Director:
Centre for Academic Excellence (CAE)



Women's Month is more than a celebration. It is a time to recognise the progress made towards gender equality, reflect on the challenges that remain, and renew efforts to advance the rights and opportunities of women

This is the view of Prof Owence Chabaya, who believes the month should honour women's contributions to society while encouraging meaningful action to remove barriers that continue to limit their potential.

"Women's Month celebrates the role women play in the social, economic, cultural and political development of society, while promoting gender equality," she says.

Advocating for women is not limited to August, according to Prof Chabaya. Throughout her academic career, she has encouraged women to pursue postgraduate studies and leadership positions. Her research has focused on gender equity,

examining the challenges women face and identifying practical solutions to overcome them.

Over several decades in higher education, she has supervised, coached and mentored women academics, encouraging them to further their studies and build successful careers. This Women's Month, she continues that work by speaking to church groups, women's organisations and community forums, sharing her experiences to inspire women and encourage parents to support the education of their daughters and granddaughters. Prof Chabaya credits much of her success to the women who shaped her life, particularly her mother.

"My mother's strength, resilience and wisdom shaped both my personal and professional life. Despite the challenges of growing up in a rural community, she taught me the value of hard work, humility and determination," she says.

One lesson from her mother continues to guide her: "Look at

those who perform better than you, learn from them and follow their example."

Although South Africa has made progress in promoting gender equality, Prof Chabaya says women continue to face barriers, including underrepresentation in leadership and decision-making, gender-based violence, harmful stereotypes and the challenge of balancing work and family responsibilities.

Society, government, educational institutions and the private sector all have a role to play by expanding access to education, creating equal opportunities and supporting women to reach leadership positions.



WOMEN'S MONTH CALLS ON WOMEN TO SHAPE A BETTER FUTURE

"True success is not measured by what you own, but by the wisdom, character and purpose with which you live your life."

Dr Ruth Emsley

Senior Lecturer:
Department of Languages
(School of Languages and Communication Studies)



Women's Month is, for Dr Maletšema Emsley, a time for both gratitude and reflection

"Women's Month reminds me of the sacrifices made by South African women who stood against injustice. Their courage gave future generations opportunities that many of us now enjoy," she says.

The annual commemoration also encourages her to think about the responsibility of advancing the development and well-being of women.

"I often wonder what our society would look like had those women remained silent. Their bravery changed the course of history and reminds us that every generation has a responsibility to continue building a better future," she says.

Rather than following a fixed tradition, Dr Emsley marks Women's Month by participating in community gatherings, professional

associations, church events and networking activities that celebrate women's contributions. She also spends time writing and engaging in conversations about women's experiences.

"For me, Women's Month is a season of learning, appreciation, connection and inspiration," she says.

Among the women who have shaped her life are her mother, research supervisors and spiritual mentors. However, she says her greatest inspiration is her grandmother, whose resilience in the face of unimaginable hardship continues to guide her.

"My grandmother raised a large family and endured the heartbreaking loss of many of her children, yet she remained strong, wise and compassionate. Her resilience, indigenous knowledge and generosity continue to influence the way I live and work," she says.

Dr Emsley believes women continue to shoulder multiple responsibilities as professionals, mothers, caregivers, leaders and community members, often balancing competing demands that affect their well-being.

She encourages women to remain true to themselves while embracing growth and change.

"You do not need to become someone else to succeed. Trust your instincts, value your humanity and pursue your purpose with confidence," she says.

Her advice to young women is to live with integrity, respect others and never lose sight of their own worth.



WOMEN'S MONTH HONOURS THE WOMEN WHO SHAPE FAMILIES, WORKPLACES AND COMMUNITIES

"Women should support one another, embrace leadership opportunities and remain committed to their goals."

Felicity Mathye

Faculty Assistant Registrar:
Faculty of Health Sciences



Felicity Mathye says women's month is an opportunity to honour the resilience, strength and contribution of women in every sphere of society

"Women's Month reminds us of the sacrifices made by women who fought for equality, dignity and opportunities that many of us benefit from today," she says.

Mathye believes the annual commemoration is about empowerment, unity and recognising the role women play in families, communities, workplaces and institutions of learning.

She marks Women's Month by supporting young women and students as they pursue their academic and career ambitions. Through community and university initiatives, she promotes mentorship, leadership development and programmes that encourage women to realise their potential.

"I also use this time to reflect on how far women have come and on the work that still lies ahead," she says. Mathye draws inspiration from women leaders in higher education whose resilience, professionalism and integrity continue to influence her own career.

"Their commitment encourages me to pursue excellence, continue learning and support other women as they work towards their own success," she says.

While acknowledging the gains made over the years, Mathye says many women still encounter discrimination, gender inequality, gender-based violence and limited opportunities to advance into leadership positions. Balancing professional responsibilities with family commitments also remains a reality for many.

She believes these challenges require a collective response. Expanding access to education, strengthening mentorship programmes, creating supportive workplaces and enforcing policies that promote equality are essential to improving the lives of women.

"Success requires hard work, discipline, perseverance and a willingness to keep learning. Believe in yourself, pursue your education and never allow circumstances to limit your potential. When women support one another and step forward as leaders, they help build stronger families, institutions and communities."



WOMEN'S MONTH HONOURS THE WOMEN WHO SHAPE GENERATIONS

"Stay true to who you are. Do not hide your gifts to fit in. Believe in yourself, keep learning and lift other women as you rise."

Annelize Potgieter

Manager: University of Limpopo Science Centre
Lecturer: Postgraduate Diploma in Science Communication



Behind every successful woman are often other women whose courage, sacrifices and quiet determination made that success possible. For Annelize Potgieter, Women's Month is an opportunity to honour those women and recognise the lasting impact they have on families, communities and future generations

She reflects on the women who shaped her life, beginning with her two grandmothers. One raised her family alone while her husband was away at war. The other pursued a music degree at a time when few women had that opportunity and later served as a church organist.

"They showed me that resilience comes in different forms. Their lives remind me that courage is often found in ordinary women who refuse to give up," she says.

Potgieter also pays tribute to her 85-year-old mother, whose life continues to inspire her.

"My mother built her career as a nurse, supported my father throughout their lives together and never lost her sense of dignity. She still carries a tube of lipstick in her handbag and continues to pray for me and shower my daughters with love."

Another woman who left a lasting impression is the caregiver who helped raise her children. After leaving an abusive marriage, she raised four children on her own with remarkable courage and determination.

"These women taught me that strength is not about never struggling. It is about finding the courage to keep going."

She also values the support of the women around her, family, friends and colleagues, whose encouragement has sustained her throughout her life.

Potgieter believes many workplaces were designed without recognising the realities women face. As a result, some women feel pressured to change who they are in order to succeed. She is particularly concerned about young women in rural communities who may believe their dreams are limited by their circumstances.

"We can make a difference by believing in one woman, mentoring one girl and creating opportunities for them to succeed."



WOMEN'S MONTH HONOURS THE COURAGE OF THE WOMEN OF 1956

"The rights and opportunities we enjoy today were earned through the courage and sacrifice of the women who marched in 1956. We honour them by empowering those who come after us."

Lerato Moloto

SLP Coordinator:
Turfloop Graduate School of Leadership

As Lerato Moloto puts it, *Women's Month is about recognising the courage of the women who marched in 1956 and carrying their legacy forward*

"The women of 1956 stood together against injustice and proved that united voices can change the course of history," she says.

Moloto believes the annual commemoration is more than a celebration. It is an opportunity to reflect on the sacrifices that secured many of the rights women enjoy today and a reminder that the work of achieving equality is not yet complete.

"As I reflect on their legacy, I am reminded that the opportunities available to my generation exist because women before us refused to accept injustice."

She marks Women's Month by recognising the women who influence her life, including family members, colleagues, mentors and friends whose resilience, compassion and integrity continue to inspire her.

"They have shown me that leadership is not measured by personal success alone, but by the opportunities we create for others," she says.

Although South Africa has made progress in advancing women's rights, Moloto says many women still face gender inequality, gender-based violence and unequal opportunities.

She believes these challenges require sustained commitment through education, mentorship, inclusive policies and environments where women feel safe, respected and supported.

Her advice to young women is to believe in themselves, pursue every opportunity to learn and never doubt the value of their voice.

"Be courageous enough to follow your dreams and remember to support other women as you succeed," she says.

If she could give women one gift, Moloto says it would be confidence. "Confidence gives women the courage to pursue their ambitions, trust their abilities and recognise their worth without seeking approval from others."



WOMEN'S MONTH CELEBRATES WOMEN WHO OPEN DOORS FOR OTHERS

"Believe in yourself, pursue your goals and lift others as you rise. When women support one another, everyone benefits."

Prof Wilmien Luus-Powell

DSTI-NRF SARCHI Chair in Aquatic Ecosystem Health

Women's Month is more than a celebration of women's achievements. It is a reminder of the courage, determination and sacrifices of the women who created opportunities for future generations. It is also a call to ensure that more women are empowered to lead, innovate and make a lasting contribution to society

For Prof Wilmien Luus-Powell, Women's Month is an opportunity to recognise the women who have shaped her life and career while encouraging the next generation to believe in their own potential.

As an academic and researcher, she marks the month by mentoring young women pursuing careers in science, helping them build confidence and encouraging them to embrace opportunities in fields where women are still underrepresented.

"Women's Month celebrates the achievements, resilience and contribution of women in every sphere of society. It is also a time to reflect on the women who came before us and created opportunities that many of us enjoy today," she says.

Prof Luus-Powell says she has been inspired by many women throughout her life, including colleagues, mentors, students and family members. Their perseverance, compassion and determination continue to influence her approach to leadership and mentorship.

"I am particularly inspired by women who overcome challenges and use their success to create opportunities for others."

Although women have made significant progress, she believes many still encounter barriers to leadership positions, unequal access to resources, gender bias and the demands of balancing professional and personal responsibilities.

She says these challenges require more than policy changes. They call for workplaces and institutions that provide equal opportunities, value women's contributions and invest in mentorship. Equally important, she is encouraging women to celebrate one another's achievements instead of viewing each other as competitors.

"In a world that constantly demands more from women, I would give them the gift of time—time to breathe, to dream, to heal and to grow. Time allows us to reconnect with ourselves, pursue what matters most and shape the future we want."



WOMEN'S MONTH CALLS FOR ACTION TO UPLIFT THE NEXT GENERATION

"Never underestimate your worth. Pursue your goals with confidence and courage, support one another and remember that every achievement helps pave the way for those who follow."

Lizzy Lemao

Principal Admin Officer:
Certification and Student Records
University of Limpopo



Women's Month is more than a celebration of women's achievements. It is also a reminder of the responsibility to uplift, inspire and empower one another, particularly young women who are preparing to shape South Africa's future

According to Lizzy Lemao, Women's Month honours the resilience, determination and contribution of women in every sector of society, while recognising the work that remains to achieve equality.

"Women's Month gives us an opportunity to reflect on how far women have come and to renew our commitment to creating opportunities for those who follow," she says.

At the University of Limpopo, Lemao marks the month by mentoring students and encouraging young women to pursue their ambitions. She believes creating spaces where

women can share ideas, express themselves and develop confidence is an important part of building future leaders.

"Through my work, I see the challenges that many women face in education and the workplace. That strengthens my commitment to providing guidance, encouragement and support," she says.

Lemao credits her mother as the greatest influence in her life. Working as a domestic worker while selling goods to support the family, she demonstrated resilience, dignity and determination.

"Her sacrifices laid the foundation for my success and inspired me to help others pursue their own dreams," she says.

Although South Africa has made progress in advancing women's rights, Lemao says many women continue to experience gender-

based violence, workplace inequality and limited representation in leadership positions.

She believes addressing these challenges requires more than legislation. Expanding access to education, strengthening mentorship, creating equal opportunities and building communities that promote respect and inclusion are equally important. Lemao says that Women's Month should inspire women to support one another rather than compete against one another.



WOMEN'S MONTH HONOURS THE WOMEN WHO PAVED THE WAY

"Believe in your worth, continue learning, support one another, and never underestimate the value of your voice."

Prof Gertruida van Niekerk

Associate Professor:
Department of Mercantile and Labour Law
(School of Law)



The freedoms and opportunities enjoyed by many women today did not come easily. They were earned through the courage, sacrifice and determination of women who refused to give up in the face of hardship. As South Africa marks Women's Month, Professor Gertruida van Niekerk, says it is time to honour those women while continuing the work of building a more equal society

According to Prof van Niekerk, Women's Month is both a celebration and a time for reflection. It recognises the women who opened doors for future generations and reminds society that gender equality remains a work in progress.

She marks the month by celebrating the women in her life, colleagues, friends, family members and students, who make a positive difference every day.

She believes simple acts of encouragement, kindness and support can have a lasting impact.

One woman who continues to inspire her is her great-grandmother, although they never met. Growing up, she heard stories of how her great-grandmother and her children were forced off their farm and taken to a concentration camp during the South African War.

"I grew up hearing stories about her experiences during the South African War, when she and her children were forced off their farm and taken to a concentration camp," she says. Her great-grandmother's courage and resilience continue to shape her outlook on life.

"It reminds me that what may appear easy from the outside is often built on the struggles and perseverance of those who came before us," she notes.

Prof van Niekerk believes women still face significant challenges, including inequality, discrimination, gender-based violence and limited opportunities in some sectors. She says meaningful progress depends on expanding access to education, strengthening mentorship, creating equal opportunities and ensuring that women are respected, heard and supported.

She encourages women, particularly young women, to have confidence in themselves and to continue investing in their personal and professional growth.



WOMEN'S MONTH CELEBRATES WOMEN WHO DARE TO DREAM AND LEAD

"Believe in your worth and never allow anyone to define your potential. Dream boldly, work diligently and keep moving forward with courage."

Lerato Tsotetsi

Senior Lecturer:
Department of Optometry
(School of Health Care Sciences)



Recognising the women who shaped the past, celebrating those making a difference today and inspiring future generations defines the meaning of Women's Month for Lerato Tsotetsi

"It is a time to honour the women who were bold enough to stand up for our rights, celebrate the women who continue to lead and inspire today, and encourage young girls to believe that they, too, have something meaningful to contribute to the world," she says.

Tsotetsi marks Women's Month by spending time with other women, sharing words of encouragement and strengthening bonds of sisterhood. "As women of faith, we also pray for one another because we all face different challenges. Supporting each other reminds us that we are stronger when we stand together," she says.

The women who have had the greatest influence on her life are her late mother, her mom's twin sister and other women in her family, whose examples taught her compassion, integrity, perseverance and the value of hard work.

Professionally, she draws inspiration from women who continue to excel in healthcare, science and leadership.

"Their commitment to research, education and community service motivates me to pursue excellence and use my knowledge to improve lives through eye health promotion," she says.

Although progress has been made towards gender equality, Tsotetsi believes many women still face unequal access to education and economic opportunities, workplace discrimination, unequal pay, underrepresentation in leadership and the ongoing burden of balancing careers with family responsibilities.

Gender-based violence, she adds, remains one of the greatest obstacles to women's safety and advancement.

She believes lasting change requires collective action from families, communities, employers, educational institutions and government.

"Strong policies that promote equal opportunities, safe workplaces and fairness must be supported by quality education because education remains one of the most powerful tools for empowering women and girls," she says.



WOMEN'S MONTH IS ABOUT CELEBRATING PROGRESS WHILE CONFRONTING INEQUALITY

"Women's Month is a reminder of the importance of uplifting one another, breaking barriers and ensuring that future generations of women have greater opportunities to succeed."

Kgahliso Maoto

Head of Department:
Department of Business Management
(School of Economics and Management)



According to University of Limpopo academic, Kgahliso Maoto, the month is about recognising the strength, resilience and contribution of women, as well as honouring those who fought for the rights and freedoms enjoyed today

"Women's Month is not only about celebrating success but also about recognising the ongoing journey towards gender equality," she explains.

Maoto believes the annual commemoration should inspire women to support one another and create opportunities for future generations.

"Women's Month is a reminder of the importance of uplifting one another, breaking barriers and ensuring that future generations of women have greater opportunities to succeed."

She marks the month by participating in mentorship programmes, teaching, community engagement and professional development initiatives that encourage young women and students to pursue their ambitions with confidence.

"I also take time to celebrate the achievements of the women around me, acknowledge their contributions and create spaces where their voices can be heard," she says.

Maoto credits her late mother for instilling the values of hard work, perseverance, humility and determination. She also acknowledges the influence of academics such as Professor Satsope Maoto and Professor Thobeka Ncanywa, whose leadership and commitment to excellence have shaped her academic journey.

Maoto says many women continue to face unequal access to leadership positions, gender pay disparities, gender-based violence and the challenge of balancing professional and family responsibilities.

She believes meaningful progress depends on stronger policies, access to education, mentorship and workplaces that value women's contributions.



WOMEN'S MONTH REMINDS WOMEN THAT NO DREAM IS OUT OF REACH

"If I could give every woman one gift, it would be self-belief. When a woman truly believes in herself, very little can stand in the way of what she can achieve."

Dr Mapelo Tlowane

Senior Lecturer:
Department of Cultural and Political Studies
(School of Social Sciences)



According to Dr Mapelo Tlowane, the month reinforces the belief that women can build successful careers while raising families and contributing to their communities

"As a woman, a wife and a mother, Women's Month reminds me that it is possible to pursue my ambitions while embracing the responsibilities that come with family life," she says. Balancing a career with motherhood is not always easy, she admits, but the annual commemoration encourages her to remain focused on her goals and celebrate the resilience of women.

Dr Tlowane marks Women's Month by reflecting on the women who have shaped her life and by mentoring young women, particularly girls from her home village of Ga-Ledwaba.

"Growing up in a rural community taught me how important it is for young girls to see women who have overcome challenges and created opportunities for themselves," she says.

The greatest influence in her life is her mother, Florah Thipe, whose determination continues to inspire her.

"At the age of 43, my mother decided to train as a nurse after working as a laundry worker. She studied while raising two children and later obtained her driver's licence at the age of 52. She taught me that it is never too late to chase your dreams."

Although South Africa has made progress in advancing women's rights, Dr Tlowane says many women still face gender-based violence,

unequal opportunities and the expectation that they shoulder most family responsibilities.

She believes these challenges require a collective response that includes creating safer communities, expanding opportunities for women and ensuring equal treatment in the workplace and society.



WOMEN'S MONTH HONOURS COURAGE, RESILIENCE AND THE PURSUIT OF EQUALITY

"Believe in your abilities, embrace lifelong learning and never allow fear or self-doubt to define your potential. Your voice matters, your dreams are valid, and your contribution is essential."

Prof Khomotjo Phalane

Associate Professor:
Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice
(School of Social Sciences)



Professor Khomotjo Phalane says that Women's Month is both a celebration of women's achievements and a reminder that the journey towards gender equality is far from over

"Women's Month reminds us of the courage, resilience and determination of the women who fought for justice. It also honours the countless women who continue to make meaningful contributions to their families, communities, workplaces and society despite the challenges they face," she says.

Professor Phalane marks the month by mentoring young women, supporting initiatives that promote women's empowerment and encouraging women to pursue education, leadership and professional excellence.

"I believe that empowering one woman creates a ripple effect that strengthens families, communities and the nation," she says.

She credits much of her academic journey to the late Professor Cornelis Roelofse, whom she describes as a mentor who recognised her potential even when she doubted herself.

"Professor Roelofse taught me that academic success is not measured only by publications or titles, but by the impact we make in society and the opportunities we create for others," she says.

His guidance, she adds, shaped her commitment to scholarship, integrity and mentoring future generations.

Although South Africa has made important strides towards gender equality, Professor Phalane says

women continue to face gender-based violence, workplace discrimination, unequal access to leadership positions and harmful stereotypes.

She believes addressing these challenges requires stronger policies, quality education, mentorship and institutions that refuse to tolerate discrimination or violence against women.

"Believe in yourself, continue learning and never let self-doubt define your future. Lift others as you rise because true success is measured by the lives we help transform," she says.



WOMEN'S MONTH SHOULD HONOUR THE PAST WHILE EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION

"We should not only celebrate past achievements but also inspire women and young girls to shape a better future."

Millicent Letsoalo

Executive Secretary:
Department of Marketing and Communication



Women's Month should be more than an annual commemoration. It should remind South Africans of the courage of the women who marched to the Union Buildings in 1956 while encouraging a new generation to confront the challenges that continue to affect women today

Millicent Letsoalo of the University of Limpopo says the annual observance honours the sacrifices of the more than 20,000 women who protested against the apartheid pass laws, an act that became a defining moment in South Africa's struggle for freedom and equality.

"The courage and determination shown by those women not only advanced women's rights but also contributed to the broader liberation of communities across South Africa," she says.

This year's Women's Month carries added significance as South Africa marks another milestone in remembering the historic march led

by women such as Lilian Ngoyi, Sophia de Bruyn, Rahima Moosa and Helen Joseph.

Letsoalo believes the relevance of Women's Month depends on its ability to inspire hope and create opportunities for women to learn from those who have broken barriers in different fields.

She points to women leaders such as Limpopo Premier Dr Phophi Ramathuba, Chief Justice Mandisa Maya, mining entrepreneur Daphne Mashile-Nkosi and Professor Puleng Lenkabula, the first woman Vice-Chancellor of the University of South Africa, as examples of what young women can aspire to achieve.

"These women demonstrate that success is built on hard work, perseverance and determination," she says.

Despite progress since the advent of democracy, Letsoalo says many South African women continue to face poverty, inequality and unemployment, while gender-based violence and femicide remain among the country's most pressing social challenges.

She believes Women's Month should also be a time for practical action. Successful women, she says, have a responsibility to mentor young women, support girls' education and create spaces where women can share knowledge, experiences and opportunities.



THE MONTH IS A SIGNIFICANT TIME FOR CELEBRATING ACCOMPLISHMENTS

"We have risen. We are finally heard. We are finally seen. We can finally stand up for ourselves. We don't just give birth and stay home anymore - we are educated and blessed enough to go and bring the bread to the table."

Tsetyane Manzana

Attorney:
Legal Aid Clinic (School of Law)



Women's Month to me is a very powerful and significant time dedicated to honouring and celebrating achievements, struggles and contributions which have been made by women in society

Tsetyane Manzana celebrates Women's Month by donating sanitary pads to young learners at schools, a gesture that reflects the importance of women supporting one another and standing together.

Her greatest inspiration is her mother, who, despite facing financial hardship, worked tirelessly to provide for her family.

"You could never look at her children and conclude that they came from a poor background. She constantly demonstrated how powerful women are," she says.

According to Manzana, one of the greatest challenges women continue to face is the underrepresentation and suppression of women in leadership positions.

"Many men still do not understand why women should lead. This can be addressed by educating society that leadership is not determined by gender and that women are equally capable of leading," she says.

Reflecting on the significance of Women's Month, Manzana describes it as a powerful and meaningful time to honour the resilience, achievements, and invaluable contributions women have made to society.

Her message to women, particularly those in academia, is one of encouragement and perseverance. "In a world that still tries to suppress women, your presence in the

academic space is a powerful statement. It is an act of resilience and a commitment to building a better future. Even when the journey becomes difficult, keep going. The world needs your light."

If she could give every woman one gift, Manzana says it would be self-confidence and education. "Education empowers you, builds your confidence, and is something that no one can ever take away from you."



CELEBRATING THE UNSUNG HEROINES OF THE INFORMAL ECONOMY DURING WOMEN'S MONTH

"When we celebrate women in the informal economy, we celebrate the strength of our communities and the promise of a more inclusive and equitable South Africa."

Gloria Plaatjie

Senior Alumni and Convocation Practitioner
(Alumni and Convocation)



Women's Month is a time to recognise not only women in leadership positions but also the millions whose hard work often goes unnoticed. Across South Africa, women in the informal economy support families, create livelihoods and contribute to local economies despite significant economic challenges

According to Gloria Plaatjie, Women's Month provides an opportunity to acknowledge these entrepreneurs whose daily efforts make a difference in their communities.

"Women's Month is a time to celebrate women who have broken barriers in boardrooms, laboratories, classrooms, government and industry," she says. "But beyond these spaces are countless women whose resilience keeps households running and local economies alive."

Behind every fruit stand, food stall, clothing display or roadside kiosk is a story of determination. Many women

traders have overcome unemployment, financial hardship and personal adversity to build businesses that support their families and create opportunities for others.

Across townships, villages and peri-urban communities, women vendors are often the first to begin trading before sunrise and the last to pack up each day. Despite harsh weather, rising costs and economic uncertainty, they continue to provide affordable goods and services while earning an income to educate their children, care for extended families and build sustainable livelihoods.

Although their contribution is not always reflected in economic statistics, its impact is evident in the communities they serve.

Plaatjie says these women should be recognised not only as vendors, but also as entrepreneurs and community builders who contribute to local economic development.

She also highlights the role universities can play in supporting women in the informal economy.

"Community engagement means recognising existing knowledge and building partnerships that contribute to social and economic development."

She adds that recognition should be supported by practical interventions such as financial literacy, entrepreneurship training, mentorship, digital skills development, health and wellness programmes, and networking opportunities.

Investing in women entrepreneurs, Plaatjie says, strengthens families, communities and the economy.



WOMEN'S MONTH IS A TIME TO LIFT OTHERS AS WE RISE

"Women's Month reminds us that our greatest strength lies in supporting one another and creating opportunities for other women to succeed."

Dr Conny Mokgohloa

Postdoctoral Fellow:
Department of Chemistry
(School of Physical and Mineral Sciences)



Dr Conny Mokgohloa says the month provides an opportunity to encourage other women by sharing her experiences, knowledge and lessons learned throughout her life and career

"Women's Month celebrates the strength, resilience and contribution of women in every sphere of society. It is also a time to acknowledge the women who have shaped our lives and inspired us to become who we are."

Dr Mokgohloa draws much of her inspiration from her late mother and her late aunt MmaKgoshi, MmaMoruti Mosebjadi Georgina Matsaung who helped raise her after her mother's passing.

"My aunt welcomed me into her home and helped shape the woman I am today. Her courage, determination and commitment to

excellence taught me the value of perseverance, integrity and believing in myself, even during difficult times," she says.

While Women's Month celebrates progress, Dr Mokgohloa believes it should also focus attention on the challenges many women continue to face, including gender inequality, gender-based violence, limited access to leadership positions and the demands of balancing family and professional responsibilities.

She says meaningful change requires education, mentorship, supportive workplace policies and stronger networks that enable women to grow and lead.

"We must continue to challenge stereotypes, create equal opportunities and support women in every stage of their personal and professional lives," she says.

Dr Mokgohloa also believes that women should be equipped with practical skills to protect themselves against violence, while society strengthens efforts to prevent abuse and hold perpetrators accountable.

Her advice to women is rooted in faith and perseverance.

"I encourage women to pray continually, remain steadfast and never lose hope," she says.



WOMEN'S MONTH HONOURS THOSE WHO PAVED THE WAY AND INSPIRES THE NEXT GENERATION

"We need to honour those who paved the way before us, recognise those making a difference today, and empower the next generation to dream boldly and lead with confidence."

Maria Mochechela
Sport Officer:
Department of Sport and Recreation



The month highlights the resilience, determination and achievements of women who continue to strengthen families, communities, education, sport and leadership, this is according to Maria Mochechela

"The powerful slogan Wathint' Abafazi, Wathint' Imbokodo remains a fitting tribute to the courage and determination of women," she says.

At the University of Limpopo, Mochechela celebrates Women's Month by recognising the contribution of female student-athletes, coaches, academics and support staff who continue to excel in their respective fields.

Working in sport, she uses the platform to encourage young women to participate with confidence, pursue leadership opportunities and believe in their abilities.

"Sport teaches discipline, resilience and teamwork. It also shows young women that they are capable of achieving far more than they sometimes imagine," she says.

Mochechela draws inspiration from the women in her own family, particularly her mother, who instilled the values of perseverance, humility and hard work. She also admires South African sporting icons Caster Semenya and Tatjana Smith, whose commitment and resilience continue to inspire young athletes.

She believes women also have a responsibility to encourage and support one another.

Quoting former United States First Lady Michelle Obama, she says, "There is no limit to what we, as women, can accomplish." She also reflects on the words of tennis legend Serena Williams, who reminds women that "Every woman's success should be an inspiration to another."

Despite significant progress, Mochechela says women continue to face gender-based violence, discrimination and unequal access to leadership opportunities.

She believes these challenges require collective action through education, mentorship, supportive policies and inclusive environments where women can thrive.

Her message to women and girls is to remain confident in who they are. "Believe in yourself, embrace your strengths and never allow anyone to limit your dreams," she says.



WOMEN'S MONTH HONOURS THE WOMEN WHO CHANGED HISTORY AND CHALLENGES A NEW GENERATION TO LEAD

"Your education can never be taken from you. Be bold, remain curious and never allow societal expectations to limit your ambitions."

Abigail Nkoe
Project Coordinator:
UCDP University Led-Collaborative
Projects (DGMO)



Women's Month is more than a celebration of women's achievements. It is a tribute to more than 20,000 women who marched to the Union Buildings in 1956 in protest against apartheid pass laws, and a reminder that the struggle for equality continues

Abigail Nkoe says that month of August honours the courage of the women who challenged injustice and demonstrated that women have the power to shape society.

"The women of 1956 proved that collective action can bring about lasting change. Their legacy continues to inspire women to speak out, lead and create opportunities for others," she says.

Nkoe believes Women's Month should encourage South Africans to reflect on the barriers that still prevent many women from reaching their full potential. While progress has been made, she says women continue to face unequal access to opportunities, particularly in science, technology, engineering

and mathematics (STEM), as well as the persistent challenge of breaking through leadership barriers.

She marks the month by reading about pioneering South African women and participating in community discussions that promote financial literacy and the use of educational technology to improve opportunities for underserved women.

Among the women who inspire her is Charlotte Maxeke, the first Black South African woman to obtain a university degree. She also admires Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng for demonstrating that women can excel in the sciences without compromising their identity, and Graça Machel for her lifelong commitment to advancing education for girls across Africa.

Nkoe says gender-based violence remains one of the greatest threats to women's safety and freedom.

"No woman should have to choose between her education, career and personal safety," she says.

She also points to the digital divide as a barrier that continues to disadvantage women, particularly those in rural communities. Expanding access to affordable digital devices, internet connectivity and educational resources, she argues, is essential if women are to participate fully in the modern economy.

Nkoe adds: "Allow me to honour my powerful mother, Grace Mamogale, who left us in June 2026. Her wisdom and belief in education inspired every one of her children to become graduates. Her greatest legacy lives on in us. This Women's Month, I celebrate her and every woman whose strength has shaped the lives of others."



WOMEN'S MONTH CALLS ON WOMEN TO SHAPE A BETTER FUTURE

"Our presence at this university is both a privilege and a responsibility. Every act of integrity, fairness and compassion helps build the future we want to see."

Joy Sixholo

Executive Director:
Strategy, Performance and Risk Management



The annual commemoration (Women's Month) is, in the view of Joy Sixholo, as much about action as it is about remembrance

"Women's Month reminds us not only of the courage and sacrifices of the women who came before us, but also of the responsibility we carry to shape a better future for those who will follow," she says.

Sixholo believes women at the University of Limpopo occupy a unique position within society. As students, academics, researchers, professional support staff and leaders, they have access to opportunities that remain beyond the reach of many young women across the country.

"South Africa continues to face high levels of unemployment, especially among young people, and many talented young women never have the opportunity to study at university. We should never take our place here for granted," she says.

She believes that privilege comes with responsibility. According to Sixholo, the university should reflect the values it seeks to promote rather than mirror the inequalities that continue to divide society.

"The University of Limpopo must be a place where fairness, respect and inclusion are lived every day. As an institution committed to finding solutions for Africa, some of those solutions begin with how we treat one another," she says.

She encourages every woman at the university to use her influence, knowledge and leadership to strengthen the institution and the communities it serves.

Whether through mentoring students, supporting colleagues, promoting ethical leadership or standing up against injustice, she says every contribution helps create a culture where everyone has the opportunity to succeed.

"Leadership is not always found in big moments. Sometimes it is reflected in simple acts of kindness, listening with empathy, opening doors for others and treating every person with dignity," she says.

WOMEN'S MONTH INVITES REFLECTION ON THE LEGACY WE LEAVE BEHIND

"Women's Month should not only celebrate what women have achieved. It should also challenge us to ask what kind of world we are leaving for the generations that follow."

Cuzette du Plessis

Acting Director:
Rural Development and Innovation Hub



GratITUDE and reflection define Women's Month for Cuzette du Plessis, who believes the annual commemoration should inspire honest conversations about the legacy society leaves behind

"Women's Month gives me an opportunity to celebrate the women and men who shaped my life, guided me, protected me and believed in me," she says.

Beyond celebrating achievements, she believes the month should encourage honest reflection about the example today's generation is setting for tomorrow.

"Our children learn far more from what we do than from what we say," she says. "We should ask ourselves whether we are teaching them kindness, respect for others, responsibility and care for the environment."

Du Plessis believes the legacy of Women's Month should extend beyond recognising individual success stories. Instead, it should inspire our young men and women to become active citizens who lead by example through compassion, integrity and everyday acts of service.

She draws inspiration from scientists and scholars whose work highlights both the uniqueness of human life and humanity's shared responsibility to care for one another and the planet. For her, this understanding reinforces the importance of humility and collective responsibility.

She also reflects on the teachings of the Dalai Lama, whose message of compassion, forgiveness and shared humanity continues to influence her outlook on life. The writings of Virginia Woolf and Jane Austen, she says, demonstrate that equality is built on mutual respect, understanding and partnership rather than division.

Closer to home, she finds inspiration in the words of Professor Mzubanzi Bismark Tyobeka, who reminds society that the Earth is borrowed from future generations.

The people who have influenced her most, however, are her parents, grandparents and great-grandparents. From them she learned the values of hard work, integrity, independence, respect for others and responsible stewardship of the environment.

She hopes society will continue promoting respect, environmental responsibility, ethical leadership and care for vulnerable communities long after August has passed.



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