

CONCEPT NOTE

GENERATION EQUALITY

Realising women's rights for an equal future

Thursday, 25 August 2022 || 17:30 -20:00 || Future Africa, University of Pretoria



In 1956, 200 000 women marched to Pretoria's Union Buildings to protest apartheid pass laws for black women. These laws, which initially only applied to black men before them being extended to women in the early 1950s, severely restricted the ability of black citizens to move freely in their own country. Designed to segregate people by race, these laws required them to carry passbooks when they moved outside designated areas. The march to the Union Buildings signified women taking a stand against an unjust and dehumanising system that denied them recognition, dignity and respect, and subjugated them. Since 1995, we celebrate Women's Day on 9 August every year, commemorating and honouring the sacrifice and bravery of these women in fighting apartheid and discrimination.

Unfortunately, discrimination against and exclusion of women is not merely a tragedy of the past. It is still part of our daily lives, most evident in the continued gender-based violence and femicide, unequal pay, poor representation of women in senior positions in South Africa, and the exclusion of women from economic opportunities. Sixty-six years after the march, women are still striving for an equal society in which they are fully represented as citizens.

This year, we celebrate Women's Day under the theme 'Generation equality: Realising women's rights for an equal future'. The concept of generation equality is a global campaign and links South Africa to global efforts to achieve gender equality by 2030. This theme is in line with a UN campaign launched on the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995 was endorsed by 189 governments at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China, and powered by the 21st-century women's movement. This movement is the most visionary agenda for the human rights of women and girls, everywhere. The campaign demands equal pay, equal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work, an end to sexual harassment and violence against women and girls, healthcare services that respond to their needs, and their equal participation in political life and in decision-making in all areas of life. According to Statistics South Africa, the South African parliament consists of 46% women representatives and the National Council of Provinces of 36%. Despite legislative changes in South Africa, which ensure that women are represented in national politics as members of parliament, this has not translated to economic security for the vast number of particularly, black women in the country. Gender equality is a complex issue that needs to consider class, race, rural and urban surroundings and level of education. According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey of the 2nd quarter of 2021, the unemployment rate among women was 36,8% in comparison to 32,4% amongst men according to the official definition of unemployment. Furthermore, it is significant to note the racial disparity of the unemployment rate of women. The survey asserts that the unemployment rate amongst black African women was 41,0% during this period compared to 8,2% among white women, 22,4% among Indian/Asian women and 29,9% among coloured women. Yet, South Africa has made significant progress legislatively in promoting gender equality. For example, South Africa is one of a few countries with a dedicated ministry and legislation devoted to ensuring women's equality. Unfortunately, legislation reform does not always translate into actual change if there is no political will to enforce it and buy-in from society. Gender discrimination in the country continues to be a problem in various spheres, including the entrepreneurial landscape.

OBJECTIVES

1. The purpose of this lecture is to inspire debate around gender equality, unemployment, equal pay, and representation of women in management roles.
2. Prompt the design of socio-economic plans with an intentional focus on the lives and futures of women and girls
3. Furthermore, the lecture will discuss whether gender equality is possible by 2030.

PARTNERS

Human Sciences Research Council, University of Pretoria, Embassy of Sweden, Agape, PPS and Women in Science