



Biographies



science, technology
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Department:
Science, Technology and Innovation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



HSRC
Human Sciences
Research Council



Professor Narnia Bohler-Muller

Professor Narnia Bohler-Muller (BJuris LLB LLM LLD) is Divisional Executive of the Developmental, Capable and Ethical State research programme at the HSRC, and a Research Fellow with the Centre for Gender and Africa Studies, University of Free State. Formerly a Professor of Law (UPE and then NMMU), her research interests include international and constitutional law, human rights, democracy, governance and social justice. She is an admitted Advocate of the of the High Court of South Africa. Prof Bohler-Muller has worked on issues of gender equality from a law and human rights perspective for more than two decades and has been South Africa's W20 head of delegation for the past five years. She holds this position for South Africa's Presidency in 2025.



Ms Sibulele Poswayo

Ms Sibulele Nomahlubi Poswayo is an African womanist and founding Executive Chairperson of the Inequality Movement – a global grassroots movement on gender equality. As the co-Chair of W20SA-2025, her role is coordinating the W20SA-2025. She leads the Gender Equality Working Group of the Civil BRICS and the South African civil society in the United Nations' (UN) evaluation process of South Africa's compliance with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Her contribution to the plight women and girls in Least Developed Countries (LDC's) saw her lead African civil society in ensuring that the 46 LDC's are not left behind. Her passion is in fighting against all forms of Gender Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) and advocating for rural women and the girl child's sexual & reproductive health rights and access means of production like land and finance towards sustain their own livelihoods through their women-led business entities.





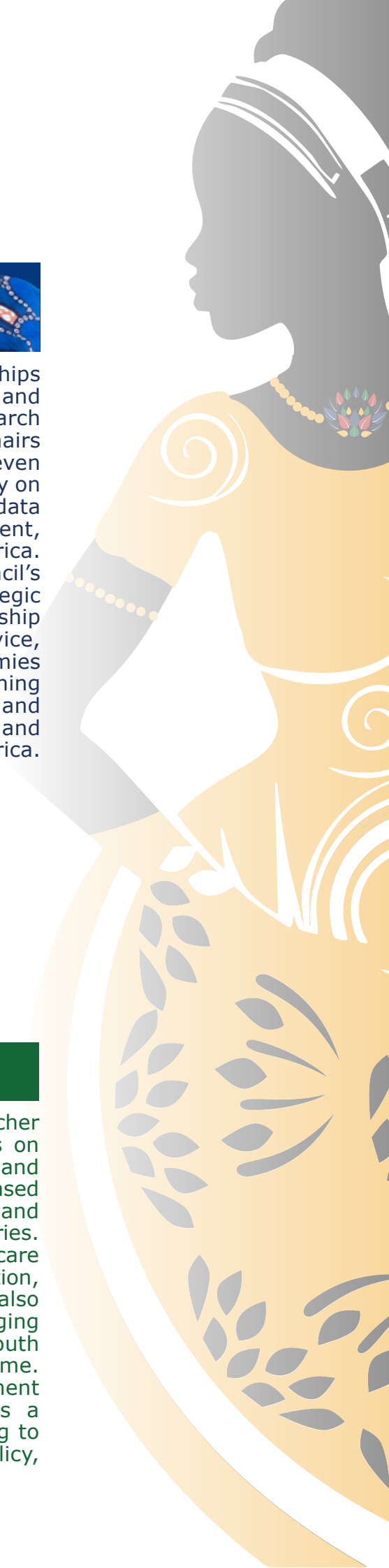
Dr Dorothy Ngilale

Dr Dorothy Ngila is a leader in global science partnerships and programme management. As Director of Knowledge and Institutional Networks at South Africa's National Research Foundation (NRF), she led the O.R. Tambo Africa Research Chairs Initiative (ORTARChI), establishing ten research chairs in seven African countries. Dr Ngila coordinated the first global survey on trends in science funding agencies' gender-disaggregated data practices and has forged strategic partnerships with government, science funders and philanthropy, within and beyond Africa. Since 2023, she has been part of the Global Research Council's (GRC) Executive Support Group, contributing to strategic policy, science diplomacy, and supporting NRF leadership within GRC structures. Her expertise spans strategic advice, fundraising, and advancing mandates for science academies and public science funders. Passionate about strengthening Africa's scientific institutions, Dr Ngila champions gender and intersectionality in science. Dr Ngila holds a PhD (Science and Technology Studies) from Stellenbosch University in South Africa.



Dr Zaynab Essack

Dr Zaynab Essack (PhD) is a socio-behavioural researcher based in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. Her work focuses on advancing inclusive approaches in health research, policy, and practice. She is particularly passionate about community-based participatory research, ethical public health practices, and optimizing interventions in low- and middle-income countries. Zaynab's projects include addressing barriers to healthcare access, such as through innovative models for HIV prevention, with a focus on adolescents and young women. Zaynab is also an academic leader, heading initiatives that support emerging researchers in health research ethics through the South African Research Ethics Training Initiative Masters programme. Her community-driven work demonstrates her commitment to fostering dialogue and empowerment. Zaynab brings a thoughtful and intersectional lens to the W20 goals, aiming to integrate considerations of inclusivity and equity into policy, practice, and global discussions.





Dr Lorenza Fluks

Dr Lorenza Fluks holds a PhD in Psychology from Stellenbosch University and serves as a Senior Research Specialist in the Impact Centre at the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC). With a strong foundation in community engagement, Dr Fluks is dedicated to action-oriented research that drives social change and equity. Her current work centers on promoting gender equality and inclusivity within African science granting councils and the broader science ecosystem. She explores themes of intersectionality in research and grant-making, as well as engaged research practices, aiming to create systems that empower diverse voices and perspectives. A wife and mother of two young children, Lorenza brings her lived experiences into her advocacy for women in science. Her work is driven by a commitment to fostering supportive and inclusive scientific environments where individuals can thrive both personally and professionally.



Ms Vonani Rikhotso

Ms Vonani Rikhotso is the Chief Executive Officer of Handza, where she collaborates with clients to develop strategies for reducing energy costs, transitioning to sustainable energy, and enhancing the efficiency of electrical systems. With a robust background in Electrical and Mechanical Engineering, Vonani also holds an MBA from Henley Business School. Her diverse work experience includes manufacturing vehicles in the automotive industry, serving as a railway track engineer, and engaging in management consulting to boost profitability in the manufacturing, logistics, and mining sectors. In addition to her expertise in solar energy, Vonani is actively exploring the application of domestic biogas in rural areas and leveraging hydrogen to enhance solar energy access. Through her leadership at Handza, she is dedicated to contributing to the transition towards sustainable and affordable energy solutions.



Dr Odilele Ayodele

Dr Odilele Ayodele is a Senior Research Specialist at the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in the Developmental, Capable, and Ethical State (DCES) research division. With a PhD in Political Studies from the University of Johannesburg and an MA in International Relations from the University of the Witwatersrand, she specialises in African international relations, digital politics, and innovation. Her research examines how African states engage with global technological governance while bringing innovative perspectives to public sector development. In her role within DCES, Dr Ayodele analyses complex intersections of technology and public policy to advance equitable digital solutions for the continent.



Ms Zanele Mabaso

Ms Zanele Mabaso is currently the Head of Policy Development Unit at a leading development agency in South Africa with +10 years work experience in civil society, INGOs, advisory & technical support to national government and international development agencies. Prior to this, she served as an independent expert at the EU Commission, Senior Program Officer at PATH, Country Engagement Lead at World Health Organisation (WHO) and Policy Development and Advocacy Specialist at Sonke Gender Justice. She holds three Masters degrees from University of Cape Town, University of Stellenbosch and University of Pretoria, respectively, and currently enrolled towards an MCom in Inequality Studies at Witwatersrand University.





Dr Rachel Adams

Dr Rachel Adams, PhD is the Founder and CEO of the Global Centre on AI Governance. She is a Research Associate of the Leverhulme Center for the Future of Intelligence, University of Cambridge, and of The Ethics Lab at the University of Cape Town. She holds degrees in English Literature, International Human Rights Law and Philosophy. She serves on numerous international expert committees including UNESCO, the UN, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Global Partnership on AI. She advises policy-makers around the world on AI governance, and was one of the lead drafters of the African Union Commission's Continental AI Strategy. In November 2024, Rachel's third book *The New Empire of AI: The Future of Global Inequality* will be published with Polity Press.



Dr Nthabiseng Moleko

Dr Nthabiseng Moleko is a Development Economist who joined Stellenbosch Business School in 2017 as core Faculty. She has worked in macroeconomic, development finance, public finance, economic development, and econometrics fields for 18 years. In 2018 she was appointed as a Board of Trustee for the National Empowerment Fund, where she Chaired the Boards Investment Committee. In 2021 she was appointed the Chairperson of the National Empowerment Fund and has also been appointed to the Presidential B-BBEE Advisory Council. She also serves in the strategic advisory committee of the Development Bank of Southern Africa's Infrastructure Fund. Nthabiseng holds an Honours in Business Science (Economics) from University of Cape Town and an MPhil in Development Finance from Stellenbosch Business School. She completed her PhD in Development Finance at USB in 2019 and is the first South African woman to be conferred a doctorate in this discipline.





Ms Victoria Duncan is Head of Research at Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator, a not-for-profit social enterprise that works with partners to find solutions to address the challenge of South Africa's systemic youth unemployment. Her work within Harambee has a focus on labour market demand and supply-side research, measuring impact and enabling the organisation's systems change agenda. She has been responsible for a number of qualitative and quantitative studies conducted through Harambee's SA Youth Platform on gender and socio-economic inclusion, income and job opportunity pathways. She has also supported with catalysing Harambee's systems change work within the early childhood development (ECD) sector, working as the ECD Lead under the Presidential Youth Employment Initiative. Victoria has worked with a range of local and international research institutions and funders, as well as partners in the private, public and social space. She holds a Masters in Economics from Stellenbosch University.



Professor Ruth Hall holds the [South African Research Chair in Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies](#), funded by the Department of Science and Innovation, and the National Research Foundation, and is Acting Director at the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies ([PLAAS](#)) at the University of the Western Cape in Cape Town, South Africa, where she has worked for over 20 years. She holds a B1 NRF rating. She is a partner in the Network of Excellence in Land Governance in Africa ([NELGA](#)) and leads training courses for policy makers and professionals on the political economy of land governance in Africa. She has published several books, including [Africa's Land Rush](#), [Global Land Grabbing and Political Reactions from Below](#), [Another Countryside?](#) and [The Land Question in South Africa](#). She has co-founded and -led several regional and global research networks: the Land Deal Politics Initiative ([LDPI](#)), the BRICS Initiative in Critical Agrarian Studies ([BICAS](#)), the Emancipatory Rural Politics Initiative ([ERPI](#)). Ruth served as a member of President Cyril Ramaphosa's [Presidential Advisory Panel on Land Reform and Agriculture](#) and is an Editor of the [Journal of Peasant Studies](#).





Dr Lesley Ann Foster

Dr Lesley Ann Foster is the founder and Director of Masimanyane Women's Rights International. This is a feminist, equality and social justice organisation working to end violence against women and girls. Masimanyane Women's Rights International is at the forefront of work to advance gender equality and the human rights of women in African societies and globally. She has worked across the African continent and has programmes in twelve (12) African countries on Access to Justice and Gender Based Violence (GBV and Femicide). Dr Foster was elected the first African president of Amanitare, a Pan African network of organisations operating in 28 countries on the African continent. She is the founder and host of the International Network to end violence against women and girls which coordinates campaigns in the global South. In 2019 Dr Foster was appointed to the Interim Steering Committee established by President Cyril Ramaphosa to develop the current National Strategic Plan (NSP) on Gender Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF). She has since been appointed to the Board of the Presidential Gender Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) Fund. Dr Foster hosts the INEVAWG across 5 continents in the South.



Dr Funeka Yazini April

Dr Funeka Yazini April's research expertise lies in industrialization with a focus on mining and Special Economic Zones (SEZs). She expanded her work from minerals into the energy industrial complex with a focus on issues such as value chains, economic clusters, manufacturing and social inclusion. In 2022, she implemented a project on Just Energy Transition from Coal to Renewables: The Case of Eskom in Waterberg and Nkangala Districts which is ongoing. In 2023, she headed a scoping exercise with a research team to Lephalale, Limpopo, on coal and just energy transition. In 2022, she also led an NRF Global Dynamics of SA Just Transition from Coal to Hydrogen Energy proposal which culminated in a hydrogen Conference which was inclusive of the South African Parliament. Parliament was given a Declaration for submission towards COP 28. In 2019, she also headed a research team on Economic Transformation through the NDP project with a focus on agriculture and land reform, SME Development, and Community participation, for the South Korean Embassy.



Ms Zaynah Khanbhai

Ms Zaynah Khanbhai is an African woman of 3rd generation Kenyan-Indian descent, connecting continents through business and policy. Her professional life centres on making an empowering and inspiring contribution to human dignity through the values of interconnectedness, passion, purpose, courage and alignment. She challenges herself in projects, which support elevating people to their maximum potential and fulfillment, delivering results grounded in a vision for collective accomplishment. Her company, Merging Mundos and Merging Mundos Safaris grows commercial cooperation and designs personalised travel experiences between Africa and Latin America. She has supported the G20 Empower and W20 Working Group Chairs for Argentina and South Africa in Indonesia 2022 and in India 2023.



Dr Dane Isaacs

Dr Dane Isaacs is a Senior Research Specialist in the Developmental, Capable and Ethical State Division at the Human Sciences Research Council of South Africa. Before joining the HSRC, Dane was a postdoctoral fellow and lecturer in the Desmond Tutu Centre for Religion and Social Justice at the University of the Western Cape. Dane holds a Masters and PhD in Psychology from the University of Cape Town and Stellenbosch University, respectively. His research interests include disability studies and issues of social justice, specifically in the context of people who stutter. He also has an interest in the study of masculinities, particularly within the South African context, men's perpetration of intimate partner violence against women, and mental health. To date, Dane has co-authored two book chapters and published thirteen peer review articles in both local and international journals. He has presented his research at local as well as international conferences.

