



# PROFILING TRAILBLAZING WOMEN WHO SERVE AS ROLE MODELS FOR ALL

When the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) coined the term “Glass Ceiling” almost 40 years ago to describe the barriers that prevent women from reaching the top of the corporate hierarchy, the paper sparked a debate to increase diversity in top management jobs in the private and public sector.

Well before the WSJ coined the term, South African women had rallied “When you strike the women, you strike a rock, you will be crushed, and you will die!”

This was the message from the women of all colours and classes who converged on the Union Buildings in Pretoria on August 9, 1956 to tell white minority rulers that women were saying no to pass laws being extended to them.

Since democracy in 1994, there have been several advancements in women occupying leadership positions. In the economy, gender mainstreaming strategies and laws – like the amended Employment Equity Act, are being used to rectify gender disparity. However, much remains to be done.

The matter of women and workplace diversity has been and rightly remains an important source of discussion among researchers, practitioners, as well as big and small organisations. Although women continue to encounter serious obstacles on their path to key influential positions, growing numbers of women have been advancing to these ranks.

In this edition, we celebrate Women’s Month by featuring a number of women who wield power and influence in the FP&M SETA’s sub-sectors, including IT, Forestry, Print Media, Furniture and others.

After all, over two thirds of the FP&M SETA’s employees are women. I believe that drawing on their experience might help pave the way for larger numbers of women to attain key positions. To that end, it is crucial to understand the obstacles that phenomenal women such as Amukelani Mutaung, Khosi Mavimbela, Mildred Bilsted, Pamela Naidoo, Olga Bezuidenhout, Jennifer Choice, Peggy Sithole, Angel Mudzingwa and Dimakatso Mathe, have faced on their way to the top of the ranks, as well as the factors that made it possible for them to overcome such hurdles.

These are just a few of our women being profiled this month. We will profile more of our women in the future.

Women’s Month will come and go. We still have a long way to go to achieve what the women who marched in 1956 wanted. As our women in this edition say, the ball is in our court to change the narrative on women parity.

Happy reading.

FELLENG YENDE  
FP&M SETA CEO



# OLGA BEZUIDENHOUT

*“Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.”*

Paper is part of so many of our daily activities. While the introduction of electronic alternatives has driven down total consumption of paper products, paper continues to touch our lives many times a day – from a morning newspaper to cash register receipts to packaging, and Olga Bezuidenhout, enjoys the continued opportunities of the industry.

Ms Bezuidenhout, who is a Manager for Education & Training for the FP&M SETA’s Pulp and Paper subsector, believes she is blessed to work for an industry that is filled with so many diverse and amazing people. She is happy that women are an invaluable piece of the paper and wood products industry.

## DRIVERS OF CHANGE

How does she see women being an asset to the industry? “Women have long been drivers of change in the natural resource sectors. South Africa needs transformational leadership.

“There are a lot of women with great potential who are capable of great things and just need the opportunity and guidance to flourish. We need to reflect on the diverse backgrounds, orientations, and ethnicities of our key stakeholders. In this sector, a career can be quite varied. It’s a fantastic opportunity for women to show they can succeed in many areas,” she said.

“I have managed many projects that have given back to the industry, and through it assisted many learners in furthering their education, giving them better opportunities for their future,” said Ms Bezuidenhout, who has a BCom in Industrial and Organisational Psychology and a BTech in Project Management, Office Management & Technology.

“Taking a person with a lot of potential and developing and supporting them to see them flourish, is very rewarding,” she said.

## EMPLOYING INSPIRING WOMEN

She is happy that the industry employs many inspiring women who develop, manufacture, design and market the pulp and paper products that South Africa relies on.

What are Ms Bezuidenhout’s thoughts on this year’s theme, Generation equality: Realising Women’s Rights for an Equal future? “There is still so much to do, but we must start at home and we need to change stereotypes and gender roles of girls and their roles, capabilities and the value they add to society.”

Ms Bezuidenhout cites Maya Angelou as a woman she looks up to for inspiration. As Ms Angelou once said, “Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.”

*“Taking a person with a lot of potential and developing and supporting them to see them flourish, is very rewarding.”*  
**Ms Bezuidenhout**



# PEGGY SITHOLE

*Helping society appreciate trees for the natural wonder they are*

Wood is appreciated and respected not only for its functionality but also for its beauty, for the wonder of its formation, and for its ability to connect us with the natural world.

Peggy Sithole is a Managing Director of Learning and Development at Assured Vocational Skills Institute, (AVSI), which is involved in the FP&M SETA’s four subsectors of Forestry, Wood Products, Furniture and Clothing.

Ms Sithole believes wood is appreciated not so much for its inherent characteristics but more for what can be done with it. She enjoys helping society appreciate trees for the natural wonder that they are.

## AGENT OF TRANSFORMATION

“I chose this industry to be an agent of transformation in the country. We all know that the forestry industry was a mainly white and male dominated industry. There were few black people let alone black women. We teamed up with our five forestry academic institutions to profile the Forestry and Wood technology careers among blacks. Today we are a force to be reckoned with,” said Ms Sithole, who has a Bachelor’s Degree in Education and further studies in Human Resources.

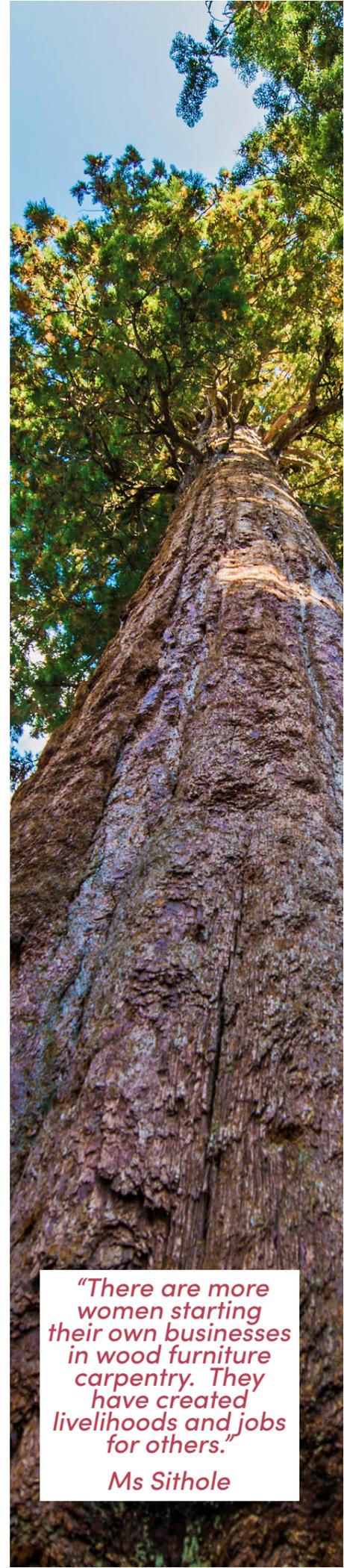
“Now there are more black women gaining skills in the Wood and Furniture industry, thanks to the learnership and skills programmes we are delivering through the FP&M Seta banner. There are more women starting their own businesses in wood furniture carpentry. They have created livelihoods and jobs for others.

“Also, in the clothing industry, I have seen gender role shifts. More men are getting into the clothing manufacturing sector which was mostly dominated by women generally in most black communities,” said Ms Sithole.

## WOMEN OPRESSING OTHER WOMEN

“Women in South Africa have a tendency to oppress and suppress other women. This must change. This should start inside our homes, in our communities right through to our workplaces. If we can only realise that we will not lose anything by helping each other grow, instead we will grow more together,” she said.

Who is a woman she looks up to for inspiration or mentorship? “In the skills development space, I look up to Ms Felleng Yende, the CEO of the FP&M SETA. She is a great role model to me and many women in the SETAs.



*“There are more women starting their own businesses in wood furniture carpentry. They have created livelihoods and jobs for others.”*  
**Ms Sithole**



## PAMELA NAIDOO

*Living the economic and social benefits of forestry*

Pamela Naidoo is passionate about forestry. She is always ready to remind people, especially those who live in cities and towns, of the importance of the sector to economic development, and its extensive and valuable resources, and valuable biological diversity.

"I love this industry. Very few people realise that as well as providing a supply of timber, modern forests create habitats for biodiversity, water management, areas for recreation and they clean the air we breathe" said Ms. Naidoo, Development Manager for South African Forestry Contractors Association (SAFCA), part of FP&M SETA's forestry subsector.

***"We are blessed that in the forestry sector we have a platform to celebrate women"***

She believes female empowerment in the workplace is very important. "For too long, women were outside of the decision-making process, finding it difficult to be heard. It's our time now, we must be heard," said Ms Naidoo.

"We are blessed that in the forestry sector we have a platform to celebrate women and we are doing this with the following themes: The future of forestry is female, Elevating the Girl Child through Education and Walking in the Boots of Women in forestry, to mention but a few," she said.

Ms Naidoo has been instrumental in securing funding from the FP&M SETA and the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) and has been leading the development of curricula and material for the forestry industry.

In the time that she has been employed in the forestry industry, Ms Naidoo has seen thousands of contractors trained and skilled through learnerships, skills programmes, work integrated learning and shorts courses.

"As a Manager, I lead the SAFCA team by managing and overseeing the implementation of Grower contractor worker training (Mondi) and capacity development (Sappi) programmes.

"I have served as Chairperson of the Forestry Industries Training Providers Association (FITPA) for many terms and I am currently a Member of the FP&M SETA's Quality Assurance Committee," said Ms Naidoo.

What are her goals? "One of my goals is for the SAFCA to be registered as an assessment centre and I long to see the first learners from the forestry sector receive occupational certification in the qualifications that have and are being registered with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) through the QCTO."



## KHOSI MAVIMBELA

*Appreciating women who are caring, powerful, dynamic, determined and self-driven*

Makhosazana Khosi Mavimbela is passionate about natural resource management and rural development. Working in forestry allows her to combine the two.

"I believe a key aspect of natural resource management is the human and social capital aspect as it is humans who are ultimately responsible for sustainable or unsustainable use of our resources," said Ms Mavimbela, Executive Director for the Forestry subsector at the FPMSETA.

"The most exciting thing about this industry in particular is that it operates mostly in the outskirts of the busy towns. It's a sector that interacts and engages with its people as most operations are in the rural areas...I believe our stakeholders have gained more confidence from us as the Forest Sector Charter Council," she said.

Ms Mavimbela would like to see the empowerment of more women and to see more women owned businesses in the Forest Industry while absolutely responding to inequality, poverty alleviation and job creation.

***"Times have changed, women are becoming equally capable as their counterparts and taking more roles and responsibilities"***

She believes women are taking the centre stage now in terms of career choices. "Women are choosing careers which were traditionally known to be for "men". The times have changed, women are becoming equally capable as their counterparts and taking more roles and responsibilities. As such we need to realise and acknowledge they can do the same job equally so or even better and empower them so as to build confidence on the younger generation of women.

Her view of the role of women in South Africa: "I think women in South Africa are generally caring, powerful, dynamic, determined, self-driven and more are taking up the centre stage not because they want to prove a point. One thing that may be lagging is how we support and criticise each other constructively. We are a majority in society and our impact should be realised by the good things we do and the learnings from one another."



# DIMAKATSO MATHE

*Dedicated to seeing youth complete diplomas and degrees in critical and scarce skills list.*

Technology is changing the way people consume media. A future paperless society is not improbable given strong evidence from various studies showing news consumption rapidly shifting from print to online.

According to Statistics South Africa, 40% of South Africa’s population are active social media users, that’s 22.89 million people out of an estimated population of over 57 million. For Dimakatso Mathe, a Director at Botshegetse, the scenario of a digital invasion is still far off.

## ATTRACTING DISADVANTAGED YOUTH

Working with the FP&M SETA’s Print Media subsector of, TETA and MICT SETA, Ms Mathe is dedicated to attracting disadvantaged and unemployed youth to complete diplomas and degrees on the country’s critical and scarce skills list.

“I have raised funds for more than 630 bursary learners within both public and private institutions and placed more than 500 unemployed learners on programmes with different host companies within different sectors,” said Ms Mathe who holds a Bachelor Arts Degree, a BA Hons in Human Resources and a Diploma in Teaching.

She is grateful for the FP&M SETA’s quest to empower women. In November 2019, she was selected to attend a Women’s Forum in Paris where women from around the world came up with tangible recommendations, innovative solutions

and commitments on key social, economic and environmental issues from inequality to climate change.

She believes women should be role models for the youth – particularly young women, and should support and contribute to their goals and have an influence in South Africa’s economic development.

Her goals? “To bring more innovative ideas within FP&M SETA that will promote the Fourth Industrial Revolution and make our sector compete in the global world.”

## FEMALE EMPOWERMENT AND GENDER EQUALITY

Ms Mathe believes female empowerment in the workplace is important to not only promote gender equality, enable women to possess self-worth, confidence and freedom to choose what they want with regard to their professional careers, but to address the hidden talents women have in the workplace and recognise their equal intelligence.

“I believe that diversity in the work place brings better quality of service,” she said. Her views on the 2020 women’s month’s theme of “Generation equality: Realising Women’s Rights for an Equal future,” Ms Mathe said: “The government systems need to change. Cultural ideologies that justify inequality need to change. We need to raise our voices more. We need to educate the next generation and know our rights.”

*“I believe that diversity in the workplace brings better quality of service.”*

to possess self-worth, confidence and freedom to choose what they want with regard to their professional careers, but to



# ANGEL MUDZINGWA

*Women need to own their assertiveness.*

Ms Angel Mudzingwa, believes women need to own the courage of their own convictions and realise that assertiveness promotes self-respect, enhances reputation and makes one an asset to an organisation.

“South African women are very strong but always shy away from it. We are struggling to create a balance as women. We always have to have a male figure to complete us. Is it because of the way we were raised that a male figure is more important than a female one,” said Ms Mudzingwa, a Skills Development Administrator for Media24, part of the Print Media subsector of FP&M SETA.

## CREATING A BALANCE

“I think once we manage to create a balance and believe in who we are, and not who society thinks we are, we will be able to excel in every aspect of our lives. For example, Michelle Obama is known as Michelle Obama, not as the wife of Barack Obama, former President of the United States,” said Ms Mudzingwa, whose goal is to register as a Skill Development Facilitator by the end of the year.

What is an accomplishment Angel is most proud of? “Seeing learners achieving their qualifications makes

me very proud as I know one way or the other I impacted their life,” said Ms Mudzingwa, who holds a Diploma in Human Resources from the University of South Africa.

## FEMALE EMPOWERMENT

Ms Mudzingwa believes female empowerment in the workplace is important because it promotes gender equality, reduces sexual abuse and creates more options for women.

“Society needs to listen to us and take us seriously. We are not taken seriously as women everywhere we go, even in the boardroom.

*“Society needs to listen to us and take us seriously.”*

Our grievances are not heard. We are not given opportunities to demonstrate our worth,” says Ms Mudzingwa.

Who does she look up to for inspiration or mentorship and why: “My mother. She is a strong woman. Even as a single parent, she taught me to be firm, hardworking and to never give up. She is a woman of integrity very firm and yet so humble. I am what I am because of her,” says Ms Mudzingwa.





## JENNIFER CHOICE

*An ardent supporter of skills development and creating jobs for a better life*

Learnerships and apprenticeships are vital in developing and securing the skilled workforce which is crucial to a successful South African economy.

“Driven by my passion for making a difference in other peoples’ lives, I joined TVET South Africa in 2012 to focus on skills development,” said Jennifer Choice, Managing Director of Thandeka Vocational Education Trust – part of the FP&M SETA Clothing subsector.

“In my role, I’ve met many individuals who are learning their trade through an apprenticeship. It’s clear from meeting them that the programmes they have embarked upon are teaching them new skills, developing their knowledge and making a real difference to their future prospects,” said Ms Choice.

*“The advancement of women in the workplace is critical in advancing the need for equality within our society”*

“I firmly believe in, and am an ardent supporter of skills development in delivering exceptional service,” she said.

How does she keep herself motivated? “Being able to make a difference in peoples’ lives. It is the unemployed youth that keeps me motivated. I am passionate about working with them and preparing them for the workplace with our signature three-week workplace readiness programme which we have developed to ensure a sound understanding of expectations in the workplace and creating jobs for them to have a better life,” she said.

Why does Ms Choice believe that female empowerment in the workplace is important? “The advancement of women in the workplace is critical in advancing the need for equality within our society. This is demonstrated by my all-female management team, and a female dominated workforce in general.

“The confidence and strength shown by my female counterparts within the college have seen all of them actively contributing toward our successes and achievements, setting new benchmarks for best practice, embracing challenges and continuously striving to improve what we do,” she said.

For inspiration or mentorship, Ms Choice looks up to many community leaders, political leaders and business leaders who influence her thought processes. They include Michelle Obama; Jacinda Arden, Prime Minister of New Zealand; and former Public Protector, Thuli Madonsela.

“These women all have drive and passion and are fierce within their respective fields. They display strong leadership skills and are influential and critical thinkers. They are solutions driven and decisive in their approach, and moreover are humanitarians of note,” she said.



## MILDRED BILSTED

*“An empowered woman becomes and empowered wife, mother and community builder”*

Mildred Bilsted believes that for a nation to prosper, it has to be inclusive and utilise the talent and the skills of each and every member of the society, and most of all, it must not underestimate the power of what a woman can do.

“An empowered woman becomes and empowered wife, mother and community builder,” said Ms Bilsted, Managing Director in the Furniture Making and Clothing Manufacturing, FP& M SETA subsectors.

“I believe that with this career I will be able to accomplish my wish of equipping women and youth with the skills that will enable them to earn a living through self-employment for a long time to come,” she said.

“I have also successfully trained and mentored more than 50 women in the rural areas. Their lives have changed and improved for the better and they are also improving the lives of others as well. I feel I have added quality skills transfer to the sectors where I am involved,” said Ms Bilsted, a 14 year veteran of the sector.

*“I believe that with this career I will be able to accomplish my wish of equipping women and youth with skills that will enable them to earn a living”*

Who is a woman she looks up to for inspiration or mentorship? “The FP&M SETA’s CEO, Ms Yende. I have for a long time tried to find someone who understands human nature, a visionary, she is a person with empathy but still with strong professional leadership abilities, she is a good listener and also provides guidance and support without compromising her position.

“Ms Yende has an interesting way of giving constructive feedback. To her, everybody matters, she is not judgemental. Under her mentorship, I have come to realise that there are many ways to handle challenges,” said Ms Bilsted.

Her thoughts on this year’s Women’s Month theme, Generation equality: Realising Women’s Rights for an Equal future? “Women always have to prove themselves of what they are capable of. Women must be understood when they say ‘NO’. Women must be allowed to own land. Women must be allowed to have children only when they feel they are ready to do so. There is no equality as long as women are not getting the respect and recognition that they deserve,” she said.



# AMUKELANI MUTAUNG

*Connecting people and  
co-ordinating the flow of  
information and loving it*

In this increasingly connected world, the role of Information Technology (IT) Administrator has never been more crucial. Businesses and organisations depend heavily on interconnectivity.

Amukelani Mutaung is excited to play that role, helping oversee the FP&M SETA's internal servers, installation of hardware and software, setup and management of user accounts, and performing backups and recoveries.

*"I chose this industry because I grew up playing games and was very much interested in how technology works."*

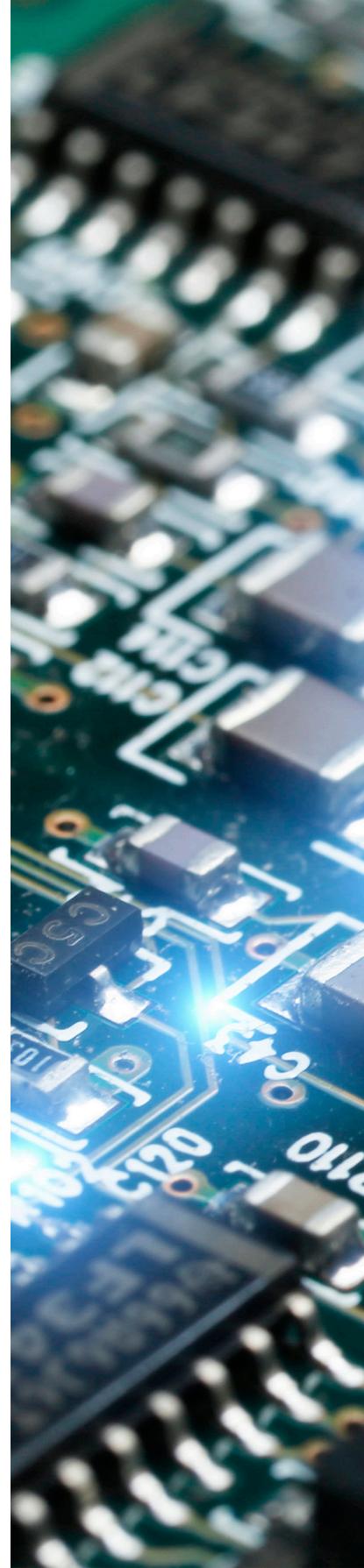
"I joined FP& M SETA in December 2018 as an Intern. That's when I began to acquire my skills. In 2019 I got a position to be an IT Administrator. Slowly but surely my role has become vast, including troubleshooting problems, updating and maintaining client accounts, administration of client services duties on a day to day basis, serving as administrative and operational support to the team; co-ordinating the flow of information from the client, to the company and back to the client and many other duties," said Ms Mutaung.

Why did she choose this career and industry? "I chose this industry because I grew up playing games and was very much interested in how technology works," she said.

Ms Mutaung believes it is important that women shouldn't feel that they can't achieve anything.

"We need to stay empowered so that we can show that women have the same abilities as men" said Ms Mutaung, who has a National Diploma in Information Technology and is currently enrolled for a BTech. "My goal is to secure a position as an IT specialist. I plan on gaining additional skills by taking related classes and continuing my involvement with a variety of professional associations," she said.

Her thoughts on this year's theme, Generation equality: Realising Women's Rights for an Equal future? "Women have equal rights to men. We need to be given an opportunity to show that we can do better and we can rule the nation," says Ms Mutaung.



## FP&M SETA NEWS

### South African Book Fair Goes Virtual

The 2020 The South African Book Fair (SABF) has gone virtual.

The online three-day event taking place between September 11 and 13, is presented by the South African Book Development Council, with the support of the FP&M SETA.

The event has been curated to offer an extensive engaging and entertaining literary experience to a large audience at the click of a button.

Tickets for the book fair are now available for R50 for the full three-day event.