

BREAKING DOWN GENDER BARRIERS IN PEACEKEEPING

Empowerment of women a priority for the government

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ACCELERATING the United Nations 2030 Agenda, the new global development framework, is the theme of International Women's Day today.

This is welcome as the 2030 Agenda's goals on gender equality and on peace, governance and justice are an important tool to advance the gender, peace and security agenda within South Africa and through its international peace-building efforts.

SA has championed gender equality domestically and internationally and great advances have been made to increase women's political participation and mainstream gender into the peace and security sector.

Yet more can still be done to translate these achievements into peace gains for women on the ground. For example, the levels of sexual and gender-based violence remain disturbingly high with a female homicide rate six times the global average.

South Africans continue to benefit from the legacy of the women's movement in post-apartheid SA. Colonialism and apartheid saw women, particularly black women in SA, going through a triple oppression – race, class and gender – which perpetuated their socio-economic exclusion and vulnerability to violence.

This propelled women to resist racial oppression but also to fight for women's rights. The Women's National Coalition Defence of the Constitution League and women within the ANC among others helped South Africans to form a progressive constitution that protects all women in the country.

The significant role of the women's movement in the post-apartheid transition to democracy has made gender equality and empowerment of women a priority for the South African government.

Women's representation in politics and the peace and security sector has increased and several progressive laws and policies protecting women's rights have been adopted.

In addition, SA has signed up to a range of relevant international policy frameworks related to gender, peace and security and is in the process of developing a national action plan for implementing the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which seeks to mainstream gender into the security sector.

But in spite of these gains, a number of obstacles to gender equality remain. One is the mismatch between the high number of women in the military and police sectors

“ Sexual assault, female homicide still remain remarkably high

and policies and programmes on sexual and gender-based violence, and the actual security of women in the country as a whole.

Sexual assault and female homicide remain remarkably high with 56 272 cases of rape reported between 2010 and 2011. Although sexual and gender-based violence figures in SA are disputed, the figures are especially disturbing in light of the fact that these crimes are always under-reported.

The patriarchal culture in the military and police remains a challenge, with men in the military often displaying negative attitudes towards women and with male peacekeepers and policing staff being implicated in sexual exploitation and abuse.

Thus, SA's domestic gender dynamics impact on its international engagement on peace and security. This is particularly significant as SA is a formidable actor in peace



NEW ROLES: Women's representation in politics and the peace and security sector has increased and several progressive laws and policies protecting their rights have been adopted PHOTO: SIMON MATHEBULA

and security on the continent.

The 2030 Agenda provides a global commitment to gender, peace and security and offers a comprehensive vision of conflict prevention. It also recognises women as key stakeholders in this quest and includes provisions to empower women and to realise their rights in times of both peace and conflict.

Indeed, evidence has demonstrated that conflict and gender inequality tend to be mutually reinforcing.

Conflict can exacerbate gender inequality – for example, increases in gender-based violence and women's double burden of productive and reproductive labour are seen during armed conflict.

At the same time, patriarchal gender norms which lie at the heart of gender inequality can fuel violence and insecurity, particularly when militarised notions of masculinity are prevalent.

Given the nexus between peace, security and development, a focus on peace, security and justice under Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda, together with a focus on gender equality under Goal 5, should mobilise civil society and government to take action on the gendered nature of conflict and insecurity and mainstream gender into peace and security interventions.

The 2030 Agenda should help strengthen the national action plan, as well as advance the gender, peace and security agenda

and address sexual and gender-based violence in South Africa. It is commendable that the South African government has begun designing this kind of intervention and civil society should engage more with this process.

The global development agenda and the national action plan offer an opportunity to civil society and the government to find new ways of working together.

Realising this opportunity will require the forging of cooperative partnerships that could turn the good intentions of policy into collaborative practice that makes tangible, material differences to the lives of both women and men.

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“ The agenda and national action plan is a chance to work together

It's very far from being uhuru for exploited female singers

IT'S a tragedy that South Africans suddenly had to be awakened to the long known fact that local artists are exploited, only after jazz legend Don Laka spoke about this recently on social media.

Although I hold bra Don in high regard, it's still the male voice that has to speak out on behalf of the worse off female artists in the male-dominated industry.

Recently, in a meeting to discuss my new ventures and projects, my publicist asked me: “Jacqui, what's happening with the music thing now, is it still your first love?”

I was immediately caught off-guard and had to think carefully about my response. As I was about to open my mouth and



JACQUI CARPEDE

answer, I felt a lump in my throat and my eyes welled-up as I said: “It's just too draining and it's not inclusive and most of all is not fair and I think maybe music doesn't love me back. He looked at me stunned and asked, why?”

Where do I even begin? Well you only need to turn on your radio and hear that I and many other truly talented artists have no place in this industry, which belongs to at least three people and their stables, and none of them are women.

Don't bother trying to subscribe to this boy's club. It is not looking for new members.

The pain I feel comes from just having to look at my inbox on my social media platforms and even my personal e-mails where I am inundated with fans asking questions.

“Jacqui, what about us who want to hear different music, timeless voices and meaningful messages that inspire us to be good to one another as people. We don't have any beef, we also want something that includes us, what about us!”

And what should be my

response to those loyal fans who believed in our music and supported us by purchasing a platinum-selling album?

As a woman artist I'm supposed to suppress my pain and wait for my fellow male counterpart to speak out on my behalf for my struggles, for fear that I could be called a bitter fallen star who couldn't sustain her success.

Not sure what to do with that Sama award, any takers?

The truth is there are forces out there that make it their mission to make sure that some talented

“ As a woman artist I'm supposed to suppress my pain

artists are not heard.

I was born to sing and most of all to inspire people. I'm not here to propagate the latest brands the new “it girls” are wearing. Life has become so cheap and shallow it's embarrassing.

I am a woman, a dark black woman and an artist to top it off. Why on earth didn't I become a school teacher? Where do I fit in? Who fights for me? I am yet to work with a female music producer or meet a female music compiler; and to be interviewed on prime time by a female radio presenter.

How about when you try and reach your fans on television platforms these days. You get responses like: “Well, so what makes you relevant? Sorry, is it play-

ing on radio? Is it charting? What did you say your name was again?”

There you go, paying someone to drop off your new expensive piece of plastic (CD) at all the nearby radio stations and weeks go by, months go by, before you know it it's the new year and guess what?

Your new single and album is now officially old. No response as to why your music is not being played. And, actually, it is a prerequisite for them to let you know that it won't be played.

It's not yet uhuru for female artists who are still treated by the industry as only consumers of and not producers of music.

■ *Carpede is a businesswoman and former member of Jamali*