



# OWSD SA NC NEWSLETTER

2024

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Welcome to the vibrant world of the South African National Chapter for the Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World (OWSD SA NC). In this edition of our newsletter, we are thrilled to bring you a curated roundup of the incredible events and milestones shaping our community.



*Empowering Women & Advancing Science:  
The OWSD SA NC Newsletter*



science & innovation

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OWSD  
South Africa National Chapter



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# TRAILBLAZING COMMITMENT

## OWSD SA NC EXCO Meeting Ignites Progress for Women in Science

We were greatly inspired by the OWSD EXCO meeting held on March 3rd, 2023 at the ASSAf offices in Perseus Park. Under the guidance of the Chair Dr. Caroline Pule and our esteemed members—Dr. Dorothy Ngila, Prof. Tricia Naicker, Dr. Awelani Mutshembele, Dr. Natisha Dukhi, Dr. Sayuri Pillay, and Ms. Ntokozo Msiza— OWSD SA NC showcased an unwavering dedication to advancing women in science. Their commitment extends to fostering initiatives that nurture the STEMI landscape not only in South Africa but also in neighboring countries. One remarkable highlight from the meeting was the support extended to 41 fellows pursuing studies at South African universities, surpassing support provided in any other global region. Additionally, Dr. Pule's impactful presentation on OWSD's initiatives to the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Higher Education, Science, and Innovation during ASSAf's engagement on February 17th showcased the organization's pivotal role in advocating for women in science. The dedication and enthusiasm displayed during this meeting reaffirm our shared commitment to empowering women in science and advancing the scientific landscape in our region and beyond.



## Insights from 'The Big Talk' Webinar by OWSD SA NC

In honor of Women's Month, OWSD SA NC and ASSAf co-hosted "Women in Science in Conversation: The Big Talk" on August 30, 2023. Dr. Caroline Pule, Chair of OWSD SA NC, moderated a panel featuring Prof Olubukola Oluranti Babalola, Prof Puleng Segalo, Prof Anusuya Chinsamy-Turan, and Ms Leisl Hillman. The panelists shared their experiences in balancing work and life. Prof. Babalola stressed the importance of support networks and delegation, while Prof. Segalo highlighted the value of conducive environments and mentorship. Prof. Chinsamy-Turan emphasized the impact of sharing research, and Ms. Hillman tackled stereotypes about female scientists, focusing on confidence and appearance. The event concluded with an engaging quiz that showcased the audience's knowledge of OWSD SA NC, revealing their enthusiastic participation.

## OWSD SA NC'S "MEET & GREET"

### Mentorship Insights & Community Engagement

OWSD SA National Chapter hosted its inaugural virtual "Meet and Greet" on June 24, 2023, chaired by Dr. Caroline Pule and co-facilitated by Ms. Ntokozo Msiza. The event aimed to unite members, fostering networking and discussions on their experiences within the organization. Dr. Pule provided an organisational overview, introduced the EXCO members, and outlined OWSD SA NC's scope and membership options. Dr.

Awelani Mutshembele delivered a compelling talk, "The Importance of Finding Mentors as Women in Science," sharing insights on mentorship's impact. Attendees actively engaged, expressing interest in mentorship initiatives, job postings, and workshops on interview skills and work-life balance during PhD studies. They sought information on industry opportunities for scientists. With over 47 attendees, the webinar showcased a keen awareness of OWSD SA NC's impact, reflected in growing engagement on social media and increased membership interest.



*Dr. Awelani Mutshembele  
HDI's Representation  
Activities,  
OWSD SA NC*

## Empowering Young Scientists Through OWSD SA NC Collaboration

The 2023 Annual Young Scientists' (AYS) Conference, a collaboration between South African Young Academy of Science (SAYAS), the South African Department of Science and Innovation (DSI), ASSAf, UNIVEN, and partners, convened on June 12-13 at UNIVEN. This marked SAYAS' first in-person Annual Young Conference since the 2020 COVID-19 outbreak. Focused on amplifying emerging scientists' voices, the event reflected on their contributions and challenges within South Africa's scientific realm. In a strategic move toward societal improvement and scientific progress, SAYAS teamed up with OWSD SA National Chapter for a significant panel discussion on the conference's first day. Named "The Young Scientist Pathway to Excellence," the session featured five distinguished OWSD members sharing brief career journeys. Subsequently, a moderator (an OWSD member) engaged the panel on advancing women in STEM, overcoming obstacles, and offered advice, sparking an engaging Q&A session. The discussion resonated positively, fostering valuable dialogue among emerging and established researchers.



**OWSD Panel at AYSC 2023**

*Prof Thashree Marimuthu, Dr Marizvikuru Manjoro, Prof Makondelele Radzilani, Dr Grace Manyelo, Prof Tricia Naicker, Dr Natisha Dukhi*

# OVERCOMING STEM CHALLENGES

## Perspectives from OWSD SA NC's Youth Month Webinar

On June 29, 2023, OWSD hosted a Youth Month Webinar, delving into the critical theme of 'Navigating Gender Disparities: Overcoming Challenges for Women in Science.' The panel featured two distinguished speakers who shared poignant insights from their academic and professional journeys. Ms. Z. Mfule spotlighted the hurdles she conquered as a student, emphasizing the essential need for mental health support among postgraduate students. Professor Phaswana shed light on gender disparities in various spheres of science, from visibility and funding to scholarships and recommendation letters. She underscored the significance of mentorship in navigating these challenges. Ntokozo facilitated engaging discussions on addressing disparities and overcoming obstacles in STEM. The webinar attracted participation from 30 individuals, fostering an impactful exchange of ideas and experiences.

## COLLABORATIVE IMPACT

## OWSD-TCA Science Communication Workshop for Fellowship Holders

For years, OWSD SA NC, through Dr Dorothy Ngila, and The Conversation Africa (TCA) have fostered partnerships, organising impactful science communication workshops. On June 30, 2023, a specialised workshop targeted OWSD fellowship holders. OWSD extends fellowships to students from Africa, enabling them to pursue Masters and PhD qualifications in South African higher education institutions. Presently, 41 fellowship holders are enrolled in these programs. The workshop drew over 50 delegates, offering practical guidance for fellows to translate their research into tangible outputs, emphasizing effective writing for online media platforms. Anticipated outcomes include collaboration between some fellows and TCA, crafting insightful pieces for forthcoming publication.



*Dr Dorothy Ngila,  
Mentorship Activities,  
OWSD SA NC*

# MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

## Introducing OWSD SA NC's Ongoing Mentorship Program for Emerging STEM Talent



is looking for  
**MENTORS**

We are looking for mentors from all levels of our organisation who have experience and skills that could benefit others through teaching and learning

### WHAT WOULD THIS INCLUDE?

Mentoring one or more mentees through their work and research journeys  
Providing guidance and support to young women in STEAM

### HOW WOULD THIS BENEFIT YOU?

Develop your leadership and management skills  
Develop your communication and personal skills  
Engage in a volunteering opportunity  
CV enhancement

OWSD SA NC proudly launched its inaugural mentorship program in August 2023, aimed at nurturing emerging STEM talent. Seeking mentors nationwide, the initiative fosters STEM excellence by addressing unique needs. Esteemed mentors from diverse backgrounds passionately guide the next generation. As of September 2023, the program invites emerging scientists to join this transformative journey, providing tailored guidance for scientific endeavors. Mentors offer unwavering support, aiding in complex research or career shaping in the dynamic STEM landscape. OWSD SA NC's robust monitoring ensures program refinement, reinforcing commitment to advancing women in STEM and fortifying the scientific community. Together, they drive progress and excellence in science and technology.

# EMPOWERMENT FOCUS

## UP's 5th Women in Science Symposium

Dr. Sayuri Pillay joined the University of Pretoria's 5th Women in Science Symposium in August 2023, themed "Innovate. Demonstrate. Elevate. Advance. Sustain. (I.D.E.A.S.) - Bringing Everyone Forward for Sustainable and Equitable Development." The event emphasized collaboration, equality, and women's empowerment in science. As an OWSD representative, she presented "Perspectives of Women in Science in the Developing World", highlighting challenges and emerging opportunities for women in developing nations. The symposium fostered sharing experiences, underscoring women's role in scientific innovation and sustainability. Participants explored strategies to advance women in science, echoing a commitment to societal progress. It served as a call to action, urging contributions for equitable STEM development. The collaborative spirit demonstrated its transformative impact, leaving a lasting impression on all involved.



# AWARDS SEASON

## South African Women in Science Awards (SAWISA) 2023



OWSD SA NC was represented at the SAWISA 2023 event by Chairperson, Dr Caroline Pule, and Vice-Chair, Prof Tricia Naicker (pictured left). The SAWISA 2023 event was held in Durban, SA on the 9th September 2023 with the theme of “Harnessing technological change and innovation to achieve gender and equality and empower women and girls”. The SAWISA mandate supports some of OWSD SA NC objectives and forms part of the great work relationship it has with SA Department of Science and Innovation (DSI), which is the founder and sponsor of this prestigious event. Additionally, the awards celebrate the achievement of South African women scientists and researchers, and profile their roles to inspire emerging scientists and researchers to enter and transform the national research and scientific landscape. Well done to all finalists and thank you to DSI for hosting such a remarkable event.

## SPREADING THE NEWS

## South African Women In Science Media breakfast Show with SABC News

OWSD SA Chairperson, Dr Caroline Pule, and ASSAf CEO Prof Himla (pictured right) represented at the SAWISA media breakfast show with SABC News, which was held on the 10th September 2023, echoing SAWISA’s theme of “Harnessing technological change and innovation to achieve gender equality and empower women and girls”. The breakfast show had different organisations, universities and research institutes represented including OWSD, ASSAf and DSI featuring the Wits Chancellor, Dr N Dlamini, as one of the panellists. The event was great, with insightful and empowering discussions, which will hopefully lead to further discussions on gender equality and GBV.



## Webinar Highlights Gender Disparity on International Literacy Day

TCC Africa and OWSD teamed up for a webinar on International Literacy Day, delving into the intersection of literacy and gender equality in the Global South. Despite global progress, 773 million adults grapple with illiteracy, with two-thirds being women. Youth illiteracy affects 123 million, 76 million of whom are female. Although the global illiteracy rate dropped, women's proportion remains high at 63% to 64%. Recent UNESCO data highlights progress in adult literacy rates, notably in Central and Southern Asia (73%) and sub-Saharan Africa (64%) despite a rise in illiterate adults in the latter. The webinar featured OWSD speakers from Zambia, Kenya, South Africa and Jordan, showcasing impactful initiatives combating illiteracy and promoting gender parity. Dr. Awelani Mutshembele, Ms. Wezi Nyimbili, and Dr. Rana Dajani shared insights and initiatives from their respective chapters.

## SCIENCE FORUM SOUTH AFRICA 2023

### Fostering Brilliance Through Mentorship!



*OWSD SA NC Science Forum Panel*

OWSD SA was proud to participate in the Science Forum held from 5th- 8th December 2023, at the CSIR ICC in Pretoria. Our presence radiated with the brilliance of our impactful work, captivating participants, and fostering meaningful connections and collaborations. A highlight of the event was the panel discussion titled "Building Human Capacities in STI," moderated by Dr. Dukhi. Distinguished speakers from various fields explored the transformative power of mentorship (pictured left).

Prof. Mafuya shared a poignant perspective, depicting mentorship as a labor of love and a reflection of one's potential. Dr. Phalane emphasized the importance of self-awareness and the pursuit of excellence, while Dr. Awelani highlighted OWSD SA NC's commitment to supporting young women through its mentorship program. The discourse extended beyond science, emphasizing the importance of developing essential soft skills, as advocated by Prof. Babalola, and Dr Pule shared her insightful experiences as an emerging mentor and the essential lessons learned from her journey as a mentee. This discussion clarified the multifaceted nature of mentorship and its pivotal role in nurturing a vibrant community.

## Prof Tricia Naicker's Inspirational Journey in Science

In celebration of International Women's Month, ASSAf Newsletter featured Professor Tricia Naicker's journey—an accomplished chemist with a cum laude M.Sc. and a Ph.D. in Pharmaceutical Chemistry from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Her expertise is reflected in 100+ publications, three book chapters, and patented work focused on vital drug synthesis. Currently the youngest full professor at UKZN, Naicker is recognized by various honors, she led as the first female editor-in-chief of the South African Journal of Chemistry. Engaged in science education and as vice-chair for OWSD's South African Chapter, her latest achievement includes being inaugurated into the African Academy of Sciences' 2022-2026 affiliates.



*Prof Tricia Naicker,  
Co-Chair, OWSD SA NC*

## A Global Engagement at the Brazilian Agricultural Summer School



*Ntokozo Msiza,  
Public Relations,  
Advocacy and Outreach,  
OWSD SA NC*

Ntokozo Msiza was one of only four young people who were selected to represent South Africa at an agricultural summer school held at the University of São Paulo in Brazil. The PhD candidate (North-West University) attended the summer school from July 21st-August 4th, 2023, as part of a joint effort between the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) and the University of São Paulo to foster agricultural expertise and knowledge exchange. The program, titled "Tropical Bio-based Production Systems," provided a unique opportunity for young individuals with a strong agricultural background and impact. For Ntokozo, being selected for this program was meaningful as it offered an opportunity to expand her knowledge beyond South Africa's agricultural landscape. She aims to apply the skills and insights acquired in Brazil to benefit her country's agricultural sector.

## Double Scientific Triumph

There was a double scientific celebration for Dr Natisha Dukhi late last year and early in 2024. Natisha was elected as the co-chair for SAYAS in November 2023 and in January 2024, she was notified of her successful selection as a member of the Global Young Academy (GYA).

Natisha was one of the 45 new members who were selected from numerous applications received globally, based on the excellence of their scientific research, as well as on their demonstrated societal engagement. Natisha, a behavioural scientist at the Human Sciences Research Council, was ecstatic to have both these national and global prestigious memberships under her belt. She is one of few young scientists to have these memberships, including being an affiliate of the African Academy of Science (regional). Natisha wants to use these “awards from God” to empower more women in the STEM fields, especially in leadership, mentorship, and collaboration.



*Dr Natisha Dukhi,  
Visibility Activities,  
OWSD SA NC*

## Standard Bank’s Top Women Leaders of 2023



*Dr Caroline Pule,  
Chair,  
OWSD SA NC*

Dr Caroline Pule, Chair of OWSD SA NC was featured as one of the Standard bank’s “Top Women Across The Board” and profiled under burner “Paving The way For Aspiring Women In STEM” in August 2023, Women’s Month, Standard Bank Top Women Leaders Magazine publication 2023. Dr Caroline Pule is a biomedical scientist who is paving the way for many aspiring women in the STEM sector, a philanthropist, women in STEM advocate and a chairperson of the OWSD SA NC. She is a X2 finalists for Standard Bank Top Women Leaders Awards, 2022 and 2023, respectively, under the category (i) Young top women leader achievers and (ii) Top women leader in STEM careers. Dr Pule is currently affiliated with TASK South Africa, TB Research Institute, conducting research on TB clinical trials and drug-resistant TB drug development. She has demonstrated her love for science by not only being an advocate for women in STEM but also doing incredible research, travelling the world, sharing her work and also inspiring young women to follow careers in this field.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## OWSD SA NC's 2024 Planned Events

MARCH

*"Research Visibility as Women Scientists" - Webinar*

APRIL

*"Grant proposal writing: Secrets to a winning proposal" - Virtual Training*

MAY

*"Interview Skills- tips on how to ace your interview" - Webinar*

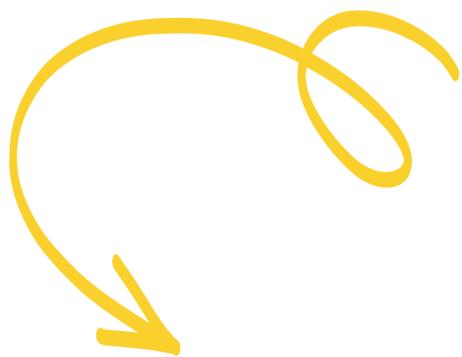
JUNE

*"Being an academic and an entrepreneur /Research commercialization - Webinar*

JULY

*"Finished a MSc/PhD degree, what now? Information on job opportunities for scientists" - Webinar*

**Thank You for Reading the OWSD SA NC Newsletter**



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