



## **Celebrating the role played by women in the Struggle for liberation**

The month of August is Women's Month, and 9 August was declared Women's Day by the democratically elected government of South Africa and is a public holiday. Women's Day has its roots in the political activism by women during the struggle for liberation against colonisation and apartheid which culminated in the Women's march on 9 August 1956. About 20 000 women marched to the Union Buildings on this day to protest against the inclusion of women in the pass laws that served to control the movements of Blacks.

This 1956 march was co-ordinated by the Federation of South African Women (Fedsaw) led by four women; Lillian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Rahima Moosa and Sophia Williams–De Bruyn.

On this day, these leaders delivered petitions to the then Prime Minister JG Strydom's office in the Union Buildings. Women throughout the country had put their names to these petitions indicating their anger and frustration at having their freedom of movement restricted by the hated official passes.

Women's Month is a tribute not only to the thousands of women who marched on that day in 1956, but also a tribute to the pioneers of the women's movement in this country.

The year 2014 marks 60 years since the signing of the Women's Charter on 17 April 1954 in Johannesburg to call for the uniting of women in common action for the removal of all political, legal, economic and social disabilities.

The 2014 Women's Day / Month is highly significant as we mark 20 years of freedom in South Africa since the first democratic elections were held in 27 April 1994. From the 20 Year Review it is clear that South Africa has made significant progress in achieving the emancipation and equal rights for women in the country – whilst there are many challenges that still persist.

Many women continue to remain on the margins of society and are vulnerable to social risks such as violence, abuse, rape, unemployment and poverty.

### **South Africa has witnessed another successful democratic election.**

South Africa has inaugurated its fifth democratically elected President following the successful elections. The President has appointed Cabinet Ministers to lead the implementation of the National Development Plan (NDP) in a phased approach according to the new Medium-term Strategic Framework (MTSF). Amongst the departments is a Ministry dedicated to Women in the highest office of the country - The Presidency.

The NDP outlines the country's vision and plans for the next 20 years. It is a plan to address the challenges facing South Africa. Working towards Vision 2030, the NDP aims to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality in South Africa.

The NDP highlights that if we are to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality, we need to engage seriously with the impact of gender on people's life chances and opportunities.

The factors that have determined the life chances of women are generally worse than for men. This means that gender is an integrated issue that has to be addressed; and it runs throughout the NDP.

Furthermore, South Africa needs women to play an active role in contributing towards the future development of the country towards Vision 2030.

### Related links

- [Department of Women](#)
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