

Women's soccer changes lives



Jacqueline Gertze
Photo by Kevin Crowe

By Jimmy Rukanira

Many Namibians expected the arrival of the World Cup in South Africa to bring opportunities such as financial investment in infrastructure and the investment of resources into sports development to Namibia.

Although Jacqueline Gertze, the first and only woman to be part of the Namibia Football Association's (NFA) Executive Committee, doubted whether this would have made a difference to women's soccer.

Soccer is portrayed as a men's sport. For Gertze soccer is a platform for women to show their

skills and prove their leadership qualities. She started to play football with boys at school in the 1990's. Girls were expected to participate in cultural activities but Gertze's male counterparts pushed for her to join them on the soccer field because of her talent.

A professional teacher, she saw an opportunity in football administration when she was nominated for and given the responsibility of taking care of all soccer-related activities in schools. "I contacted the former Secretary General, Alpheus Gaweseb, of the NFA in 2005, while I was involved with the school activities. I approached him with a suggestion of starting a women's soccer competition for schools. The NFA accepted my proposal and they established women football as part of their football structure."

In the same year Gertze was approached to be part of the NFA's Executive Committee. During her tenure Gertze has opened the NFA Women's Desk and brokered strong links for the Brave Gladiators, the national women's soccer team, with the Federation International Football Association (FIFA).

Recently Gertze has been focusing on a newly established project Galz & Goals. The project is a partnership between the NFA women's desk, UNICEF and SCORE (Sport Coaches Outreach) Namibia. Galz & Goals empowers girls through promoting participation in soccer at the under 13 and under 15 level.

Through structured leagues and fun festivals, the message is that

playing soccer can be the focus of a healthy lifestyle. Playing soccer is a positive way of guarding against risk behaviours that contribute to the spread of HIV and AIDS, such as young sexual debt, "Sugar daddies" and alcohol and drug abuse.

Through participation in soccer, the NFA Women's desk has seen a marked change in the self-confidence, personal hygiene, health and physical appearance of girls in these age groups. Participation in sport provides young women with a sense of belonging, of purpose and fun that can be the key to the development of a sense of self-worth.

According to Gertze, the culture of football and all leisure and sporting pursuits hold up a mirror to the society within which it is played. "While publicly there is support for women to participate in football in Namibia, we have found that when speaking to girls in their communities, they have little support," she said.

The coverage of the women's game in relation to the men's is certainly not paralleled and needs to change. Through Galz & Goals there is an opportunity for the coverage of women's activities in general, she noted.

"Our objective is for girls to find their own space, where they can play the sport and be physically active," Gertze added.

This image then becomes an identity to associate oneself with and to aspire to. It is not a stretch then to see women as equal to men in different activities.

Looking back as we move forward

By Salome Nzuma

Art is best when it acts as a lens through which we can analyse the world we live in. The best art stands the test of time, allowing us to make connections between how we were and how we are. Sadly, sometimes art shows us things we don't always want to see.

You strike a woman, you strike a rock, the witty, fast-paced and engaging play directed by Keamogetsi J. Molapong is based on events in 1956 but the parallels with today's Africa are telling. The show set the house on fire last Friday night at the National Theatre of Namibia. Written by Phyllis Klotz, the drama was staged with an all Namibian cast in conjunction with the Namibia Women's Summit.

Highlighting issues which affected and still affect women in Sub-Saharan countries, the production was first staged in 1986 to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the march on the Pretoria Union buildings by more than 20,000 South African women in protest of laws restricting their freedom of movement. The play is set on 9 August 1956 when the original march took place.

The pass laws impinged upon the social and economic activities of women. At one point in the show, as a female vendor is being arrested she shouts: "Licence for oranges, licence for chicken, licence for fat cakes, soon you will need a licence to go to the toilet, a shit licence..."

These issues are still relevant today, although this time it's not apartheid but rather patriarchal laws and policies that keep women out of business. As the SADC Heads of State meet in Windhoek to discuss the SADC Protocol on Gender and

Development, this play is a reminder that colonialism and apartheid are over but the oppression of women remains.

The play tells the stories of three women trapped in the middle of an uprising. They are trapped in an economic struggle and abusive marriages and relationships. Throughout the play the women are faced with challenges that push them into active participation in the social and political shifts going on around them.

Despite their differences in personality and outlook on life, the characters Mampompo, Sdula and Mambhele, played by Ernilinda Thataone, Patricia Ochurus and Sevelia 'Pinky' Nanghama respectively, are forced to unite against those who oppress them in their government and the society they live in.

You strike a woman, you strike a rock has resonance for women living in the 21st century who face an ongoing battle for equality. What passes for a normal life is actually a vicious struggle against conflicting laws during the apartheid era and a battle with husbands who do not contribute to family life, leaving their wives to work and keep their families alive. Sound familiar? The struggles experienced by these women are the same battles dogging women today.

As the lives of these three women intertwine, the play becomes a clarion call for those shaping policy today. Poverty and struggle are still largely represented by a woman's face in Africa. Hopefully when this production is staged in the future we won't watch it with nods of understanding, but rather with looks of shock at how strange life once was.

Constitutional crisis in Swaziland, NGOs allege

By Kubi Rama and Danny Glenwright

By failing to deliver on the 30% quota for women, Swaziland is in breach of its constitution, according to the Swaziland Coalition of Concerned Civic Organisations (SCCO).

In an interview during the Sixth Civil Society Summit held in advance of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Heads of State summit, the organisation's coordinator, Musa Hlophe, noted that although the new constitution specifies quotas for women's representation in parliament, the king has yet to follow through. Swaziland has 22% women in its current parliament.

"Swaziland is in crisis," said Hlophe. "It is the untold story of SADC."

Velaphi Mamba, Assistant Programme Manager of Open Society Initiative Southern Africa (OSISA) noted that "the crisis now is that (women's representation) hasn't happened. Our parliament is now unconstitutional, which has a bearing on all the laws and on the bigger picture. It says a lot about women's rights in the country."

Last year Mary-Joyce Doo Aphane, a Swazi attorney, brought forward a groundbreaking challenge to the country's new constitution signed

by King Mswati III in 2005. Gender activists saw the new document as an opportunity to end years of discrimination against women, much of which was enshrined in the former constitution.

Doo Aphane was the first to challenge the new constitution. There is a constitutional provision that states that all laws prior to the adoption of the new constitution are invalid if they conflict with constitutional clauses. Her dispute was with Section 16(3), the Deeds of Registry Act, which prohibits women from registering property under their names.

"Women have no voice in Swaziland without the permission of their husbands," said Hlophe. "Culture is used as an instrument of exploitation."

Doo Aphane "won and lost" her challenge, Mamba added.

Doo Aphane won at Swaziland's High Court but was then challenged in the Supreme Court, which ruled that she was allowed to challenge the law but the High Court was not permitted to change it. Parliament has been given one year to look at the law.

"In that regard she lost," said Mamba. "But she was able to register her property on both her and her spouse's name, which is where she won."

Business unusual for Himba women

By Salome Nzuma

Himba people have a long tradition of trade. Coming from a conservative background such as the Himba community in Opuwo to Windhoek can prove to be a challenge in business but this did not deter the seven women of Oyozonezanga craft business.

Seven Himba women who are business women in Windhoek, shared their experiences with us. They sell Himba handicrafts, which they make on their own. "Oyozonezanga" is the name of the business venture owned by Dorren Mbinge, Rikaako Mbendura, Konyanya Tjipura, Ueerapopare Muhenyne, Handanda Ruhozu, Kazera Tjikundu and Ukombua Tjikundu. The youngest member of this business is 17 years old and the oldest is 35 years old.

The women cannot read or write and are, however, successfully engaged in a thriving business. Dressed in their traditional attire, selling their wares at their stall located along Fidel Castro Street near the well known 'OK parking.' The stall is a 'must stop' for most tourists, a very strategic site for their business.

All the women are single mothers. They say "Windhoek also presented a better opportunity for us to start all over our lives as single parents, make an income for ourselves and children." Some of their income goes to their parents to buy goats and cattle.



Oyozonezanga business women selling their crafts.

Photo by Salome Nzuma

The women's main inspiration is from cultural and family backgrounds which teach girls to be hard working and enterprising. "Ours is a business with a difference. We uphold, we share our culture and heritage, and make an income from it to sustain ourselves and families. We are proud today that we have come this far since 2007 and we believe there so much room for us to grow. We definitely need assistance in making our business a better one. We would want to have our own stall from which to sell our crafts, we would want help in making brochures which will showcase our products and which we can give to our customers as well," says Handanda Ruhozu.

The business started with a few

crafts being sold. Over the years the women have learnt more and added other types of crafts. The next step is to expand their business to the airport and have their crafts displayed there as well.

"There is a lot of hard work that comes with starting and running a business, and it takes up a lot of time, but if you are committed, go for it. There are so many opportunities in Windhoek. We feel now is the right time for Himba women to be in business! It is rewarding and a powerful tool for yourself and your family! And don't be afraid to ask questions or ask for help! Here we are OYOZONDANGA...we vowed never to sleep hungry," said Handanda.



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This supplement was produced by participants in the Business Unusual training workshop conducted by Gender Links, the Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network (ZWRNC) and the Polytechnic of Namibia, parallel to the SADC Heads of State Summit and annual meeting of the Southern African Gender Protocol Alliance. Diakonia and the MDG Achievement Fund supported the training workshop and printing of the supplement. The Alliance programme is supported by UKaid through the Department for International Development (DFID) and Norwegian Church Aid. Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung (FES) Botswana supported the production and launch of the 2010 SADC Gender Protocol Barometer.

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