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## 2020/21 REPORT

### INTRODUCTION

Since our establishment more than 15 years ago it has been our vision to pull together our resources to advance the promotion of gender equality and human rights in the legal services sector and society. Regardless of the challenges in the process, we have remained steadfast in our efforts to provide support to our members as well as serving the community with a focus on women and children.

2020 and 2021 have been the most difficult years to everyone, globally. The world has been hit hard by COVID-19 pandemic where many of our plans were put on hold, changed the work world as we knew it. We were directed to working remotely, court proceedings being conducted virtually in order to adhere to lockdown regulations which included social distancing to minimize exposure to and prevent the spread of this disease. The pandemic has intensified challenges that women legal practitioners and women in general already faced.

During this period, we saw the rise of cases in gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF). There has not been a day that passed-by without the news of a woman or a girl child being raped or killed. We acknowledge and applaud the efforts that our government is making in dealing with this pandemic called gender-based violence and femicide however there is a lot that can be done.

Gender inequality remains a concern to us. Strides have been made however there are fewer women advancing to higher levels. We are meeting today under the theme **"Fixing the broken rung" to shatter the glass ceiling**. The gap pattern repeats itself across all businesses in every industry including the legal profession. It comes at the very beginning where women legal practitioners are not given complex

cases and same opportunities as their male counterparts. The gap adversely impacts positions and compensation for women legal practitioners. To get to gender parity the broken rung must be fixed.

### **SAWLA DEVELOPMENT FUND**

Having received more and more concerns from members regarding lack of funding due to not meeting the requirements of financial institutions, President Nomaswazi Shabangu-Mndawe came up with an idea to establish a development fund in a form of a trust. Amongst other things the development fund is to assist our members with start-up equipment (laptop, printer, software etc) to those who are struggling to acquire same. The trustees are to come up with terms and conditions of the assistance.

The fund is also to be used for outreach and various empowerment workshops for women and children.

### **COLLABORATION WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS**

It was in 2021 when we became stakeholders of the High Court, Gauteng Division where we will be invited and informed whenever there are issues of concern and any development regarding the operation of the court. We had an opportunity to propose solutions on how to have a well-functioning court. This relationship between legal practitioners and the court worked well and same is to be rolled out to other divisions as we are in consultation with respective Judge Presidents.

On 01<sup>st</sup> October 2020 we had a meeting with members of Portfolio Committee of Justice and Correctional Services (ANC Component) wherein they undertook to work with us in realizing the empowerment of women lawyers and the transformation of the judiciary. We have since made submissions of what we believe should be attended immediately. We are steadily making strides in this collaboration.

Amongst other strategic institutions that we built a relationship with in this financial year was Department of Justice and Correctional Services, JUTA, Allan Gray and

Eskom.

## **INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF WOMEN LAWYERS (FIDA)**

SAWLA is now an affiliate of FIDA, an international organisation with same objectives as ours. FIDA had its 37<sup>th</sup> Convention on 15 to 17 February 2021, virtually. SAWLA was given a platform to introduce itself as a new affiliate. Dr Naledi Mqhayi on behalf of SAWLA presented a topic "*Women Mental Health and Well-being: Connecting Mind, Body and Spirit*".

Since then, the collaboration has been growing in leaps and bounds.

## **ACTING JUDGES**

Having realised that opportunities are mostly given to male legal practitioners to act as Judges in preparing them to be appointed permanent Judges, SAWLA approached Judge Presidents in different courts with a proposal of having women legal practitioners to be considered for this opportunity.

Through this project, we had twenty-three (23) women legal practitioners who got opportunity to act in different courts in South Africa.

## **TRAINING FOR ACTING JUDGES**

JP Mlambo with the assistance of other Judges presented an intense judicial skills training for our Acting Judges. The training was part of development of SAWLA members from all corners of the country. It was held at Indaba Hotel, Fourways for five days from 29 March to 01 April 2021. A big thank you to JP Mlambo in his passion and dedication to empower women lawyers.

## **PROJECTS**

During May 2020 we embarked on the masks project wherein provinces were called upon to donate masks to female inmates in prisons chosen by their respective

Provinces. SAWLA members in different provinces responded to the call by the NEC, masks, hand sanitizers and sanitary towels were donated in different prisons by SAWLA branches.

In August 2020 we embarked on the school shoes project in honour of Victoria Mxenge who was assassinated on 1 August 1985 by the apartheid regime. Members donated school shoes in their respective provinces. We declared the August month a Victoria Mxenge Month where every year a school shoes program will be embarked on under her name.

On 26 March 2021 Minister Ronald Lamola officially opened the Point Branch Court which offers Family Law Services at the Magistrate Court in Durban. Department of Justice partnered with us and SAWLA KZN made the project possible. SAWLA donated furniture and toys for the play room for children when their parents are attending court.

### **RADIO TALKSHOW PROJECT**

We have partnered with the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disability (DWYPD) in a radio talk show and public education and awareness programme. The radio talk show will run for ten (10) months in all eleven (11) official languages of South Africa.

The talk show covers the following topics: Economic Empowerment and Business Development; Child Maintenance; Gender-Based Violence and Femicide; Trafficking; Divorces and Administration of Deceased Estates. Each topic will run for two months.

The first topic being Economic Empowerment and Business Development went on air on 02 August 2021 and will run until end of September. Fifty-five (55) members will participate and benefit out of this program while women and children being taught of their legal rights.

## **BILLS AND POLICIES**

The Legal and Research Committee responsible for bills and policies has been responding on every call for proposed amendments in all provincial and national bills and policies proposed by the government.

This is making SAWLA to participate in the making of laws of the country. We understand that we are not yet where we want to be but strides have been made.

## **TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

We had the following trainings since our time in office:

1. POPI Act which was held on 12 October 2020 via virtual platform. It was presented by Adv. Pansy Tlakula, the Chairperson of the Information Regulator of South Africa. The webinar was sponsored by Allan Gray who also had a presentation on investments and benefits thereof. The webinar went well, and we had a positive response.
2. Motion Court Practice which was presented by Judge Modiba on 15 May 2021. The attendance was overwhelming and the feedback we received was that same must be done again. The Judge undertook to present an intense training under the same topic.
3. Tax Law Litigation presented by Judge Mali on 12 June 2021. The attendance was exceptional and the members and friends of SAWLA appreciated that we have brought the untapped area of the law which has very few women legal practitioners. We have promised to have a second session in the new year.
4. Maritime Law presented by Acting Judge Thato Tsautse on 26 June 2021. Most of our members and friends of SAWLA attended this session and they felt it was informative and the are opportunities which could benefit our women legal

practitioners at large. The NEC has since had an engagement with Acting Judge Tsautse to have a strategy on how to tap into those opportunities.

5. Medical Negligence presented by Judge Majiki on 17 July 2021. Participants benefited from her invaluable knowledge and experience. She also undertook to present an intense follow up training.

The upcoming trainings are the following:

1. Competition Law will be presented by Judge Victor on 16 October 2021.
2. Cyber Law will be presented by Judge Boqwana on 20 November 2021.
3. Caseline training will be presented by JP Mlambo on a date to be agreed on.

Deputy President, Ms Malatsi-Teffo and the Chairperson of Training and Development, Adv. Soraya Hassim are in the process of getting SAWLA accredited with SASSETA. This will allow us through SAWLA Development Fund to present accredited trainings. Our vision is to have full-time trainers who will be earning an income.

We believe this will alleviate issues of unemployment and will upskill our members so that they are competitive in the profession.

### **PRO BONO WORK**

SAWLA is engaged in pro bono work assisting women who find themselves on the wrong side of the law while protecting themselves against gender violence inflicted on them. Members are also encouraged to do watch-in-brief in matters where an accused on a gender-based violence case is appearing before court.

Our members in the Eastern Cape represented a 23-year-old female student from WSU, who was arrested on 10 September 2020, for having assaulted a man (who later died) whom she caught attempting to rape her sister's one-year old baby girl who was

left in her care at her home in King William's Town. SAWLA, EC Executive members acted promptly during the weekend by contacting the investigating officer, holding consultations and preparing for bail application. With the assistance of SAWLA bail was secured at R500.00 of which SAWLA members came together and paid the bail money

## **MENTAL HEALTH WELLNESS**

The Mental Health Wellness project was piloted in the Eastern Cape. Numerous sessions took place with panellists being experts in the topic. Participants were allowed to find themselves and dealt with their fears.

We are ready to roll out the project to all provinces with Adv. Tozama Mqobi heading this project. We have since approached Lifeline South Africa to collaborate with us.

We are in the process of putting together a list of experts who will be in our panel and members will be able to consult at a minimal fee. Members will also be able to make use of Lifeline South Africa's experts.

## **EVENTS**

On 16<sup>th</sup> June 2020, we hosted a youth month celebration via webinar under the theme **Challenges Faced by Young Women Lawyers When Entering the Profession.**

The Facilitator was the Chairperson of the Events and Program Committee, Ms Kegomoditswe Mere. We had three young women who were the speakers of the day and they were:

- Adv. Lethu Magadlela
- Lerato Lelaka (Young Attorney)
- Ronewa Maduwa (Final year Law student)

The event was well attended, we had 100 participants. On the same day we were on Power FM and continued with our discussions on challenges faced by women lawyers when entering the profession. The event was also published on De Rebus.

On 8 August 2020 we celebrated the Women's Day via webinar under the theme: **Gender Equality is a Human Right not a Female Fight**. We were also honoring uMama Nonyamezelo Victoria Mxenge, a lawyer and a human right activist who was assassinated by the apartheid government on 1 August 1985. We had four speakers and their discussions were as follows:

- Ms Matsego Ramagaga – Director of Matsego Ramagaga Attorney *A fraternity in perversely literal sense*.
- Adv. Mojankunyana Gumbi – Chancellor of University of Venda *Substantive Equality: legal concepts*
- Dr. Brigalia Bam – Human right activist and former IEC Chairperson *Gender Equality and Human rights in society*.
- Dr Amaleya Goneos-Malka from Womanity – Women in Unity *'Journey to Equality: "Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to Victory"*

On 8 March 2021 we celebrated the International Women's Day under the theme "**Gender Inequalities: Current Realities and Future Possibilities**". We had three speakers:

- Ms Kathleen Dlepu, Chairperson of the LPC spoke about: Access to justice for women.
- Ms Nondumiso Ngqulunga from the Department of Women, Youth and People with Disability spoke about combating gender stereotypes and sexism.
- Adv. Doc Mashabane, Director General of the Department of Justice spoke about participating in governance and decision making.

The webinar went well and we had also international participants from FIDA who gave us messages of support.

On 27 April 2021 we celebrated the Freedom Day under the theme: "**Promoting Judicial Independence and Impartiality**" and was presented by: Judge President D. Mlambo of North/South Gauteng High Court.



On 16 June 2021 we celebrated the Youth Day under the theme: ***Empowering Ethically and Professionally Driven Young Lawyers***". We had six panelists and Candidate Attorney, Sihle Dlamini set the tone of the day by articulating its purpose.

The panelists were:-

- Attorney: S. Rajaruthnam (Chairperson of KZN SAWLA branch)
- Chairperson of LPC: Ms K. Matolo-Dlepu
- Head of National Consumer Council: Prudence Moilwa
- Legal Aid SA: C. Mathivhithivhi
- National Prosecution Authority: Adv L. Botha
- Adv L. Tsatsi (Senior Counsel)

### **LEGAL SECTOR CODE**

The Legal Practice Council has established the Legal Sector Code: Steering Committee. The President of SAWLA has since been invited to be part of this committee.

South Africa has a policy called Broad – Based Black Economic Empowerment however the legal profession does not benefit on it. It is on this reason that the Legal Practice Council established Legal Sector Code to deal with parity in the legal profession in particular in sharing the work equally amongst black or white and men or women legal professionals.

There is a draft Legal Sector Code that has been put together thus far to be circulated for comments.

### **IN MEMORIA**

Since 1 April 2020 to date we lost two members:

- Adv. Joy Mashego (MP)
- Adv. Zandile Ndesi-Gilikidla (EC Deputy Chairperson)

May their souls rest in peace.

We also pay tribute to all the frontliners who lost their lives while helping others during the fight of COVID-19 pandemic. They fought a good fight; they did not surrender but they died with their boots on. We also pay tributes to all who succumb to this deadly virus also those who died during the recent unrest in KZN and Gauteng.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

Thank you very much to my Executive for their hard work and undying support. It is a privilege to work with such competent people.

Thank you so much to the Provincial Chairpersons and Committee Chairpersons for making sure that SAWLA in your respective provinces is relevant and visible.

A big thank you to all our members for the support they are giving us and the hard work they are putting in making sure that SAWLA remain in existence, there is no SAWLA without you.

***"Collaboration is the new currency and I believe we would not be able to achieve without it. You are all individually important and in SAWLA there is space for each and everyone of us. Together we can do it."***

***"When women work together history is made"***

*N Shabangu-Mndawe*

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**Nomaswazi Shabangu-Mndawe**

**SAWLA President**

**11 September 2021**

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## 2021/22 REPORT

### **INTRODUCTION**

This is our second annual general meeting since we took office. Strides have been made in achieving the goals and objectives of the association. However, there is a lot to be done as we still experiencing unemployment of young women law graduates. The number is and will continue rising unless vigorous steps are taken to deal with this problem.

This year's annual general meeting is a build up to the celebration of hundred (100) years of women legal practitioners. Before 1923 women were not allowed to practice law, they were not 'persons' in the eyes of the law. Judges would refuse to admit woman as an attorney but would be willing to admit black male attorney. The courts refused Wookey's application for articles of clerkship, holding that the term 'person' excluded women. Today we are looking on how history has shaped our past, present and our future as women leaders and lawmakers.

### **MEMBERSHIP**

Our membership has increased in all provinces. The Recruitment Committee with the assistance of the NEC are doing tremendous work in increasing the membership of SAWLA. We have also received requests from male colleagues who have applied for membership as friends of SAWLA, thereby affirming the recognition of SAWLA in the legal profession. We have achieved and exceeded our target of three hundred members.

## **CHALLENGES**

- Payment of subscriptions remain to be a challenge.
- Our members are still overlooked at when one considers briefing patterns.
- Our members are still recovering from the effects of COVID-19.
- The disparity between women and men lawyers remains the major challenge.
- Gender-based violence and femicide remain a thorn on our neck where everyday a woman or a girl child becomes a victim of this barbaric act.

## **SAWLA DEVELOPMENT FUND**

Development Fund is one of the important tool that this leadership established to assist members in building their firms, making them competitive with other big law firms.

The Development Fund was officially launched at Sun City on 10 September 2021 and raised more than R100 000-00 from the golf fundraising event.

The Trustees have resolved to host a fundraising golf day or any event depending on the hosting province every year prior to the Annual General Meeting.

An advert will be out soon to members who need minimal assistance, like purchasing of laptop, software and any other asset that is required to develop a member in her practice. This will be in a form of a loan which is payable after twelve months from receiving assistance.

The Chairperson of the development fund has identified and engaging companies in the likes of LexisNexis, AJS and Juta to collaborate with SAWLA in achieving this goal.

## **BURSARY FUND**

In this financial year again President Nomaswazi Shabangu-Mndawe initiated a bursary fund to assist in contributing towards tuition fee for needy students who are pursuing their legal studies.

Our Bursary Fund has since been registered as a Non-Profit Company (NPC) with its directors being:

Puleng Keetse;

Pertunia Thulare; and

Nomaswazi Shabangu-Mndawe.

We are in talks with different organisations with similar objectives and those which can be in a position to donate funds.

In this financial year through the assistance of SAWLA Development Fund we managed to contribute towards tuition fee of four (4) students. Each student was assisted with R10 000 (Ten Thousand Rands only).

Our vision for 2023 is to contribute towards the tuition fee of nine students, one from each province.

## **COLLABORATION WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS**

There is a phrase that says "*the sum of the whole is bigger than the sum of each part*". Combining efforts collaboratively can result in bigger achievements as compared to each organization working separately on its own.

Our goal is to collaborate with various stakeholders who share a common goal to SAWLA, thereby sharing the resources and enhancing the capabilities of each other. Therefore, in line with the Association's objective of encouraging growth, cooperation and collaboration we deemed it fit to collaborate with various stakeholders. We have thus made strides with the following organisations.

### **1. LEGAL AID SOUTH AFRICA**

- We have signed a Memorandum of Understanding
- Our goal is to work together on issues of GBV and avail legal assistance for women in that regard in all provinces.
- Legal aid to empower our members by providing training on matters of interest and to allocate work to our members through *judicare*.

## **OUR BENEFIT**

1. Legal Aid is an established brand which would thus boost SAWLA's visibility
2. Utilising its current media partnership for educational and creating awareness
3. SAWLA will avail its members to participate in all those lobbied radio talk shows.

We will be meeting soon with their team to discuss a plan of action for the upcoming 16 days of Activism

## **2. BEE CHAMBER**

1. We have recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding
2. This organisation provides BEE Practitioners with access to advanced B-BBEE information, guidance, support and B-BBEE software to monitor and evaluate B-BBEE.

## **OUR BENEFIT**

- This will be a new area of learning for our members
- We will be working together towards the promotion of Broad-Based Economic Empowerment in line with the B-BBEE Act:
- Joint free webinars on B-BBEE topical issues
- Provide B-BBEE legislative updates
- Experts from both organisations will participate as speakers, in forums, webinars, media platforms (all these will be organised by THE CHAMBER)
- SAWLA members will attend the quarterly TFM (Talking Transformation) summit free of charge

## **3. DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN, YOUTH AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

Last year during the 16 days of activism, DWYPD invited SAWLA to partner with them as they hosted a session on Enforcement of the Maintenance Act against the child maintenance payment defaulter.

The purpose of this was to work closely with the Department to address many challenges faced by the country's child maintenance system.

The discussion focused on the tactics to address the challenges experienced by women in enforcing child maintenance orders and looking into ways of unblocking the bottlenecks in the maintenance court. SAWLA delivered a paper in that regard.

#### **4. SASSETA**

We are faced with a great challenge in that our graduates are unable to secure articles because most of our members are unable to afford the stipend. SAWLA has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with SASSETA who will pay candidate attorneys contracted to our members. We are in the process of submitting final documents required by SASSETA. We are aiming for our first intake to be at the beginning of 2023.

#### **5. DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION**

Directors Association will provide trainings to members who wants to pursue secondary career of sitting in boards.

The initiative's main objectives are as follows:

- (a) To raise awareness and to encourage female lawyers to enter the board market and serve as directors on various boards;
- (b) To develop female lawyers into professional directors and equip them with the requisite skills-set to enable them to serve on boards; and
- (c) To provide female lawyers with basic governance knowledge that would assist them in running their law firm

#### **INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF WOMEN LAWYERS (FIDA)**

This collaboration is growing in leaps and bounds. In this calendar year we hosted two successful online events wherein FIDA President, Caroline Rios Villota was one of the speakers. We commemorated International Women's Day which was on 8

March 2022 in partnership with DOJ and FIDA. FIDA also hosted various trainings through media platform wherein SAWLA members were invited to attend and participate. We are currently looking at other projects that will benefit our members, including exchange programs where members will be placed in international law firms for a certain period to acquire skill.

## **MORNITORING AND COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE**

We have established a Monitoring and Compliance Committee that evaluate as to whether members comply with policies of the Association.

The committee has since had sessions with all committees, and they are in the process of compiling recommendations to the NEC.

The committee will before the end of this calendar year have sessions with all provinces to make sure that provinces are functional and comply with the policies of the association. The committee comprises of:

Lilly Malatsi-Teffo            Chairperson  
Daphne Pick  
Lulama Mbangeni.

In assisting the provinces, we have deployed the Executive and Senior members of the association in each province being:

Nomaswazi Shabangu-Mndawe	Western Cape
Lilly Malatsi-Teffo	Northern Cape
Hlaleleni Matolo-Dlepu	Mpumalanga
Ncumisa Nongogo	North West
Puleng Keetse	Limpopo
Mpho Kgabi	Eastern Cape
Nomahlubi Khwinana	Free State
Daphne Pick	KwaZulu Natal
Asha Sewpersad	Gauteng



The deployees must assist members in growing the association in their respective provinces and to make sure that all rules and regulations of the Association are complied with. Terms of reference for the deployees have been drawn and submitted to provinces for adoption during the AGM.

## **BILLS AND POLICIES**

The Legal and Research Committee is responsible to comment whenever there is a call for submissions. Each province has its sub-committee where it comments on Provincial bills and policies. During this calendar year the National Committee has not responded in any call for submission. We urge members of this Committee to fulfil their mandate as this talks to our objective of participating in decision making.

L & R Committee has drafted policies for the association to be adopted at this annual general meeting. This committee has one member who does all the work therefore we are calling on members to avail themselves to serve in this committee.

## **TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

The backbone of this association is training and development of our members. The Training and Development Committee is mandated to organise as many trainings as possible for our members. For this year there has been a slow start to our training programme.

To date we only had three training sessions:

- Bail Law presented by senior attorney, Mr K SEABI.
- Legal Practice Fidelity Fund and Legal Practice indemnity Insurance Fund by Mr Hendrick Van Royen
- Motion Court Proceedings by Adv Soraya Hassim

## **UNEMPLOYED WOMEN LAW GRADUATES**

The unemployment rate of law graduates is growing by day. This is a concern to all of us. Statistics shows that female students are many at the university but few

women legal practitioners. The question is where are they?

As SAWLA we have established a committee that will collect and create a database of unemployed women law graduates. We are engaging with institutions and law firms to take the graduates on internship program so to assist them in acquiring the necessary experience that is required.

Committee members are:

Denise Greyling      Chairperson

Babalwa Malgas

Ipeleng Balang

Lerato Letsoalo

### **EMPOWERMENT AND DEPLOYMENT COMMITTEE**

One of our objectives is to empower our members and make sure that deserving members are deployed in different positions. The NEC has been attending to this task however, we realised that we need a committee that will focus on this task. A committee was established and directed to come up with a policy/guidelines

Members of this committee are:

Zoliswa Taba

Nthabiseng Raphuthi

Marisa Paulson

Lindy Langner

### **PRO BONO WORK**

SAWLA members continue to provide pro bono work to women and children. We are in discussion with pro bono.org to collaborate with them in providing services to society, particularly women and children.

SAWLA assisted a woman who was embroiled in a battle of custody of her children. Her estranged husband took the children and refused her access to the children.

SAWLA was approached and Deputy President was requested to assist as the matter emanated in Gauteng Province. The children have since been returned to the mother and she has written a letter of appreciation for good work done by SAWLA.

We appreciate work done by members of SAWLA in giving legal assistance to all deserving women and children on pro bono basis.

### **MENTORING PROGRAM**

We have collaborated with Vance Center in their two-year project entitled Advancing Women in the Workplace. This project is supported by the US Embassy in Pretoria.

This project is aimed at addressing the gender gap in legal leadership positions in South Africa. It also includes a mentorship program, gender diversity and inclusion survey and other activities.

Each year, the project will pair 20 mentees from all provinces with mentors to guide and support them as they navigate their career paths and enhance their professional and leadership skills.

We are grateful that our members responded to the call which saw some of them being selected as Mentors and others as part of the Mentorship Support Committee.

On 17 and 25 August Vance and SAWLA hosted webinar on Eliminating Sexual Harassment in the Workplace. The webinar was to commemorate National Women's Month in highlighting the code of good practice on preventing and eliminating harassment in the workplace, which came into effect on March 2022.

### **GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

This is an area of concern for all women living in South Africa. Strides have been made in combating this gruesome act of gender-based violence however this barbaric act continues showing its ugly head. Around May in the province of the

Northern Cape a pregnant woman was killed by her partner. This is not an isolated case as many women are still being raped and killed, children are still getting missing and found raped and killed days after. However, this incident happened days before our general meeting in Kimberly.

We collaborated with SAPS, NGOs and the community to have a prayer and lay a wreath where the woman took her last breath. It was a touching moment to see the minor children of the deceased. We further donated food parcels to three families.

## **EVENTS**

On 6 November 2021 members gathered at Emperors Palace, Gauteng under the theme: Pull as you Rise "My sister's Keeper". The event was well attended. Our Guest Speaker was Justice Yvonne Mokgoro. We also had Adv. Mojanku Gumbi and Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka whom they also shared wisdom with us. At the end members had a session with Clinical Psychologist, Naledi Mqhayi.

On 8 March 2022 we celebrated the International Women's Day in collaboration with FIDA and DoJ. The event was well attended

On 12 March 2022 a further celebration of International Women's Day under the theme, Gender Equality Today for a Sustainable Tomorrow. We collaborated with FIDA and Allan Gray. The event was graced by the President of FIDA, Carolina Rios Villota and other FIDA Africa executives.

## **VICTORIA MXENGE SCHOOL SHOES PROJECT**

Chief Justice Zondo donated an amount of R12 000 towards the development fund and the Victoria Mxenge School Shoes Project. National Executive Committee in collaboration with SAWLA KZN identified a school called Day Dawn Special School. More than 30 students received school shoes. We thank Chief Justice Zondo and SAWLA KZN for contributing towards this cause and made it possible for SAWLA to put a smile on someone's face.

## **BOSBERAAD**

On 23 – 24 March 2022 the National and Provincial executives met at Sarabi Lodge and Guest House in Kempton Park for leadership training and planning for the year ahead. The facilitator was Mngqobi Nyembe kaNtombela, a CEO at Atlas 1. Africa.

We came out well trained and having something to incorporate in our leadership style. This training forced us to do some introspection and reflect on our mistakes in the way of our leadership tenure. The bosberaad will be an annual event to be held at the beginning of the year, not later than April each year.

## **LEGAL PRACTICE COUNCIL**

We had elections again this year as the term of the previous council members came to an end. Our members again prevailed. Women are now in majority in the Provincial Chairperson's position.

We congratulate all our members who were elected. We are looking on you in empowering other women and pull them with you as you rise.

## **STUDENT CHAPTER**

SAWLA launched its first Student Chapter this year. The event was held at UNISA, Main Campus in Pretoria. It was a successful event and the following students were elected to leadership positions:

Nomagugu Mahlangu	President
Nomvelo Mjadu	Deputy President
Noluyolo Mabuza	Secretary General
Mamello Ramasike	Deputy Secretary
Marcia Mathebula	Treasurer

### *Additional members:*

Keitumetse Sekoele	Communications
Gomolemo Mabitsila	Policy and Research
Selinah Rabutho	Programs

The Executive is hard at work recruiting in other province's institutions. Their aim is to have SAWLA student chapter in all institutions where there's a faculty of law. Let us work hand in hand in grooming our future leaders.

### **IN MEMORIA**

We pay tribute to all those who lost their lives during the flood disaster in KZN and the Eastern Cape. We also remember our colleagues, friends and families who lost their lives during this current year MAY THEIR SOULS REST IN PEACE.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

We thank the Provincial Chairpersons and Committee Chairpersons for making sure that SAWLA in your respective provinces is relevant and visible.

A big thank you to all our members for the support you are giving us and the hard work and efforts you selflessly put in to make sure that SAWLA remains in existence and is relevant, there is no SAWLA without you.

***"One Woman Can Make a Difference But Together We Can Rock The World"***

*N Shabangu-Mndawe*

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**Nomaswazi Shabangu-Mndawe**

**SAWLA President**

**10 SEPTEMBER 2022**

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## 2022/23 REPORT

### **INTRODUCTION**

This is the end of the term of the current leadership. We have accomplished more than we thought. Some of the goals we set for ourselves when adopting the strategic plan were achieved and some is still work in progress. SAWLA is now vibrant and visible.

This year we celebration hundred (100) years of women legal practitioners. Before 1923 women were not allowed to practice law, they were not 'persons' in the eyes of the law. Judges would refuse to admit woman as an attorney but would be willing to admit black male attorney. The courts refused Wookey's application for articles of clerkship, holding that the term 'person' excluded women. Today we are looking on how history has shaped our past, present and our future as women leaders and lawmakers.

### **100 YEARS CELEBRATION OF WOMEN LEGAL PRACTITIONER**

Members of SAWLA from all corners of South Africa gathered in Emperors Palace, Gauteng for three (3) days in celebrating 100 years of being recognized as persons before the law and allowed to be legal practitioners. The celebration took place on 30 March to 01 April 2023. We had Justice M Victor, Justice Yvonne Mogoro and MEC Mazibuko as our guest speakers.

The trailblazers were recognized and honored for their resistance of making sure that they make it possible for the next generation to have a leveled field to be the best legal practitioners.

Throughout the year we had special sittings in all our high court divisions including Supreme Court of Appeal and the Constitutional Court in celebration of the centenary of women legal practitioners.

SAWLA was instrumental and made history in putting pressure to the President of the country to confer a silk status to the first black woman who was admitted as an Advocate, Adv. Nona Goso. The event took place in the High Court, Mthatha, EC on 8 September 2023. This was indeed historical and a well-thought idea of honoring her while still alive.

### **COLLABORATIONS**

Our relationship with all the institutions continues growing by the day. This executive has done well in making SAWLA visible. In this current financial year, we collaborated with PABASA in celebrating women's month. We agreed that we will have programs together that are of common interest.

We continue strengthening our relationship with the Department of Justice. We are in the process of solidifying our relationship with the Parliament of South Africa in which we had sessions together in WC, Gauteng and EC in which we received a report from the Speaker of Parliament that SAWLA was brilliant in those engagements. Our WC Chairperson is engaging the Parliament in partnering with us in training programs.

### **WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS**

When we took over as new executive in 2020, we had only two women who were heads of court, one Judge President and the President of the Supreme Court of Appeal.

SAWLA played a crucial role in seeing that women take leading positions in law firms, judiciary and government institutions. We are taking part in nominating and comment in the appointment of the Judges.

In this financial year we saw the appointment of the first women Deputy Chief Justice.



We saw the number of women head of courts increasing, we currently have five (5) women heads of court and we pride ourselves in having played a roll.

SAWLA also nominated and supported the appointment of the Public Protector who was also a member of SAWLA.

We also celebrated the appointment of two (2) Human Rights Commissioners who are also our members. The President of Sawla, Nomaswazi Shabangu-Mndawe was appointed by President Cyril Ramaphosa to serve in the Judicial Service Commission.

We agree that strides have been made but there is still a lot to be done. We are working on having the first woman Chief Justice.

### **ACTING JUDGES**

In 2020 we started a process of engaging heads of the high courts to give our deserving and willing members an opportunity to act as judges. The Gauteng Division JP was the first one to respond to the call. A big number of our members were given an opportunity to act and this arrangement is currently still continuing. We have a very good working relationship with the high courts regarding to this project.

This project has borne fruits in that in October 2022 one of our member was appointed a permanent Judge. In April this year, two of our members through this project were also appointed as permanent Judges. In October again one member was appointed as a permanent Judge.

We believe that, through this project, we will have many more members who will be appointed as permanent Judges and acting Judges.

### **LAW CLINIC**

SAWLA through its development fund and in partnership with Adv Nxumalo is in negotiations in establishing a SAWLA Law Clinic. A memorandum of understating was

signed and an office space has been allocated by Skills Village. We are also in discussion with Department of Justice in Mpumalanga with regards to a space for this purpose in Mpumalanga Province.

The purpose of the Law Clinic is to alleviate the unemployment of our graduates and also assist in pro bono work in particular gender-based violence cases and sexual harassment. The Unemployed Women Law Graduate will work closely with the Law Clinic. The Skills Village has been tasked with fundraising for this project.

## **FIDA**

As an affiliate of FIDA, we received an invitation from FIDA Africa to attend a conference which was held in Abuja, Nigeria. This was a successful event and an eye opening one. We took a resolution to unite all African women associations. We realized that we can learn from each other. We learnt that it was important that we speak in one voice to fight the disparity of women lawyers. SAWLA was represented by its President.

We also attended a conference in Zanzibar organized by Zanziba Female Lawyers (ZAFELA) also an affiliate of FIDA. SAWLA was represented by its President, Chairperson of Western Cape branch and two members.

## **SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

SAWLA is engage in many projects to keep up with its social responsibility. We continue with our school project every year. Provinces have their own projects that suits the needs of its respective provinces.

We continue assisting students with tuition fee through the Bursary Fund.

Having put SAWLA where it is now, the next step now should be the bread-and-butter issues of our members who are in private practices. A number of institutions have been approached of which some will be opening their panels soon. We spoke about

requirements of the tenders that are excluding our members on its nature and we received a positive response that those requirements will be looked at.

### Acknowledgment

We thank all our members for having worked with us in making sure that our work as leaders is done.

It has been a tough journey but with your support we are here where we are today. We thank our families and friends for the support they have given us to make sure that we dedicate our time in building SAWLA. There is no SAWLA without me and you.

***"One Woman Can Make a Difference But Together We Can Rock The World"***

*N Shabangu-Mndawe*

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**Nomaswazi Shabangu-Mndawe**

**SAWLA President**

**16 SEPTEMBER 2023**

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## 2023/24 REPORT

### **INTRODUCTION**

The leadership of 2020/2023 came to an end and new leadership was elected into office. On 03 February 2024 the National Elective conference took place at East London and the current National Executive Committee (NEC) was elected. President Nomaswazi Shabangu-Mndawe retained her position as the president for the second term. Other executive members were:

Ncumisa Nongogo	Deputy President;
Zodwa Maluleke	Secretary General
Ayesha Royker	Deputy Secretary General
Thandi Makweya	Treasurer.

### **BOSBERAAD / LEADERSHIP INDUCTION**

As part of our strategic planning and inducting new executive a Bosberaad was held with the support of the department of justice. The training was facilitated by Mr. Anthony Canham from the Brigitte Mabandla Justice College and President Nomaswazi Shabangu-Mndawe. We made sure that student leadership were also part of this training. We concluded that a follow up leadership induction workshop will be held.

### **BRIGITTE MABANDLA JUSTICE COLLEGE**

Our Patron and the first woman Minister of the department of justice and who was instrumental in establishing SAWLA was honoured by the department for having named the Justice College after her.

24 May 2024 was when the college was renamed after our Patron. It was on this day that our organization was offered an office at the Brigitte Mabandla Justice College. We have been also offered to be furnished with staff members who are to be paid by the department of justice at the College. We appreciate the leadership of the college and the department of justice.

This college will help in mitigating the unemployment of our women graduates and those who want to enter the legal profession as interpreters.

## **COLLABORATIONS**

We continue collaborating with other institutions as we believe that combining efforts collaboratively can result in bigger achievements as compared to each organization working separately on its own.

## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION**

It has become prevalent that young women legal practitioners will be victims of sexual harassment in the hands of senior male legal practitioners. SAWLA has decided to dedicate this year in fighting and exposing senior legal practitioners who sexually harassed women legal practitioners.

We collaborated with Democratic Governance and Rights Unit (DGRU) in fighting this monster called sexual harassment. On 29 June 2024 all members of the executive and members of gender-based violence committee from all nine provinces met with DGRU in solidifying the relationship in fighting sexual harassment in the legal profession.

In 2023 a case of sexual harassment was reported to the Judicial Service Commission (JSC) against the Judge President. There was a dragging of feet in attending this case in that instead of suspending the judge he was given a long leave. SAWLA challenged the JSC and demanded answers as to why the judge was not suspended and when is the enquiry going to begin. We looking forward on the findings of the enquiry as the date has been announced.

## **APPOINTMENT OF THE FIRST WOMAN CHIEF JUSTICE**

History has been made in our life time where we saw the appointment of a black woman to the highest office of judiciary in South Africa.

SAWLA was instrumental in her appointment by supporting her appointment and being vocal in all media platform. 101 years since women were allowed to be legal practitioners we saw the appointment of one of us as Chief Justice. It took long but the fight was not in vain. We looking forward to a justice system that takes women as capable legal practitioners.

## **GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

On 23 September 2023 we woke up with devastating news that Magistrate Mamello Thamae was killed and her body was found in a boot of the motor vehicle of her husband in Botswana. The man had guts to put a lifeless body in a car and cross the border to Botswana.

SAWLA felt that enough was enough that women are being killed like animals every day in South Africa. A candlelight in memory of Magistrate Thamae took place on 28 September 2023 in all nine province high courts sittings with the main one in the Constitutional Court. This unity of women from all walks of life in South Africa was to register our concern with the government that something must be done in combating this barbaric act against women.

The husband was arrested in Botswana and he has since been extradited to South Africa to stand trial.

On 13 December 2023 the Parole Board was to decide on the application by Marius van der Westhuizen to be released on parole. He had only served one third of his prison term for killing three of his children in front of their mother and lock her for a night in that room with lifeless bodies of her children. He knew that the mother loves her children and to inflict a pain into her was to take what she loves most, her children.

SAWLA wrote a letter to the Parole Board opposing the release of Marius van der Westhuizen on parole. We also did a petition and collected signatures from concerned individuals. The parole hearing was postponed to 6 June 2024. In June the Parole Board granted Marius parole but the pressure from all of us made the Parole Board to change its mind and withdrew the parole. Marius van der Westhuizen is back in prison serving his term.

### **MARCH AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

On 7 December 2023 SAWLA organised a march to the Union Building to raise their concerns regarding the layback attempts in dealing with gender-based violence. Amongst other things we demanded that gender-based violence cases must be attended with speed. We need specialized investigating officers to investigate these cases. That perpetrators must not be granted bail and must not be eligible for parole.

Our fight against gender-based violence is still on until we prevail.

### **MEMORIAL CANDLELIGHT: IN MEMORY OF HONOURABLE LATE JUSTICE MOGORO**

We wish to take a deep breath and a moment of silent in remembrance of our leader, amongst others, the stalwart, mentor and icon late Justice Yvonne Mogoro.

Justice Mogoro was the first woman to be appointed a Constitutional Court Justice by the then President Mandela. She was involved in a car accident after having celebrated with us 100 years of women legal practitioners and having accepted our request to be SAWLA Patron.

We had the memorial candlelight in different universities throughout the country. We appreciate the support we have received at the time we needed it the most from all provinces in joining us in hosting a memorial candlelight for our icon on 15 May 2024.

## **LAW CLINIC**

Finally the SAWLA Law Clinic will be launched through the development fund on 25 November 2024. The first law clinic will be launched at the Northern Cape as the rate of gender-based violence is high. The clinic will focus on gender-based violence cases and any other cases against women and children.

***"When women work together history is made"***

*N Shabangu-Mndawe*

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**Nomaswazi Shabangu-Mndawe**

**SAWLA President**

**13 September 2024**