

Tshwaranang Legal Advocacy Centre Dinner

30 June 2016

DHOM Speech

**Placing women's empowerment
at the forefront of the development agenda**

Advocate Thuli Madonsela, Public Protector;

Kusile Mtunzi-Hairwadzi, Chairperson of the Tshwaranang Legal
Advocacy Centre Board;

Nondumiso Nisabande, Executive Director of the Tshwaranang Legal
Advocacy Centre;

Kusile and Nondumiso's colleagues on the Board and staff of the
Tshwaranang Legal Advocacy Centre;

Ladies and gentleman;

I was particularly honoured when Nondumiso asked me to speak this evening on the importance of placing women's empowerment at the forefront of the development agenda, both because the opportunity to share a podium with Advocate Madonsela does not present itself every day, and because standing at this podium allows me to recognise the outstanding work done by the Tshwaranang Legal Advocacy Centre.

Having been the butt of a lawyer joke or two myself, I can attest that we lawyers are sometimes maligned for feeding on others' misfortune. In sharp contrast, both Advocate Madonsela and the Tshwaranang Legal Advocacy Centre are shining examples of the positive contribution that the legal profession can make towards realising a more just and equitable society.

It's not my place as an Australian diplomat to explain to a room of South Africans the contribution that Advocate Madonsela has made to this country, and will doubtless continue to make in a different capacity when her term as Public Protector ends this October.

What I will say is that we have a longstanding debate in Australia about whether we should establish a national anti-corruption watchdog. Several Australian states, the equivalent of provinces here in South Africa, have strong and effective anti-corruption commissions. At the headline grabbing end of the scale, their findings have forced Premiers and Ministers to leave office, and, in some cases, face criminal charges.

But we currently have no national equivalent. If and when an Australian Government does decide to establish a national anti-corruption body, I believe Australia could learn a good deal both from the office of the Public Protector here in South Africa; and from the manner in which you, Advocate Madonsela, have filled that office. And if and when we do establish a national anti-corruption body, we will be on the lookout for a suitably qualified individual to lead its work. On

the safe assumption that nothing will happen before October, I would be very pleased to forward you the application paperwork.

I am no less honoured to be here this evening with friends from the Tshwaranang Legal Advocacy Centre. We at the Australian High Commission are very proud to support the Centre through the placement of an Australian volunteer. We applaud its efforts to provide legal services to survivors of gender-based violence, promote equality, and end gender-based violence in South Africa.

Yet I also speak this evening with some trepidation. I stand before you as a white male, born into a middle class household in suburban Perth, whose parents remain happily married, who attended a private school before graduating from one of the world's top 100 universities, and who is now an Australian diplomat. With just a little more grey hair, I will have almost all the attributes of the stereotypical privileged male who has too often brushed off concerns about women's empowerment, or, worse still, has 'mansplained' his way through a speech about gender equality. And my temples attest that the grey hair is well on its way.

I will hopefully manage to convince you that I'm a little more progressive than the stereotype might suggest, not only in consciously advocating for women's empowerment, but also in rejecting the unconscious gender bias that continues to plague even the more enlightened members of my demographic.

I will aim to do so by sharing some experiences from Australia. I will begin by explaining the challenges that we face back home in terms of women's empowerment, before outlining why we should all be concerned about those challenges, and noting a number of Australian initiatives to overcome them. Hopefully some of Australia's experiences will prove useful for our friends here in South Africa. So what do the challenges look like in Australia?

In the workplace, Australian women still earn an average of 18 per cent less than Australian men. While women fill 45.8 per cent of all jobs in Australia, several sectors remain male domains. Women accounted for only 15 per cent of the Australian Defence Force in 2014, and currently occupy only 14.6 per cent of all jobs in Australia's notoriously blokey mining sector. Across all science, technology, engineering and maths related sectors, women filled only 28 per cent of all jobs in 2011, below the OECD average of 30 per cent.

But it is in the home where the challenges that we face in Australia are most troubling. One in four Australian women have experienced violence at the hands of their partner, and 53 Australian women die each year as a result of domestic violence. Tragically, Australia essentially reflects the global average, with estimates that more than one in every three women has been abused in some way, usually by someone they know.

Aside from domestic violence, life in many Australian homes also still reflects gender stereotypes. Women continue to carry a disproportionate share of the work involved in raising children,

maintaining the household, and caring for the elderly. As a result, women disproportionately suffer the effects of a disjointed career, with promotions and opportunities that much harder to come by.

Meanwhile, men who choose to take on greater family responsibilities can still be looked down upon by their male peers.

So why should we be concerned about the challenges that I've just outlined?

There are some fundamental moral reasons why we should be concerned about women's empowerment, from the lack of any rational explanation for a man and a woman doing the same job to earn different wages; to the similar lack of any rational explanation why a certain job should be done by a man rather than a woman; to the fact that domestic violence constitutes a significant human rights violation. I suspect that the moral necessity of women's empowerment is both familiar to, and more than enough to convince, this audience.

But, for anyone who needs further convincing, being concerned about women's empowerment goes well beyond morality. Failing to empower women has more tangible results. By failing to take advantage of all its citizens, a society diminishes itself, undermining its own cohesion and limiting its own economic growth. As the current Australian Foreign Minister, Julie Bishop, said in 2014, 'all people prosper when women are equal participants in society, including in politics and in the economy'. Any number of studies prove Minister Bishop right.

According to a recent report by the McKinsey Global Institute, as much as US\$28 trillion, or 26 per cent, could be added to global annual GDP by 2025 if women participated in the labour force at the same rate as men. And providing female farmers with equal access to resources could reduce hunger for up to 150 million people. It follows that if governments and societies are serious about development, and serious about living up to oft-quoted pledges to ‘make poverty history’, they need to focus on improving the lives of women and girls.

The impact of domestic violence on women and girls is particularly devastating. It creates fear and uncertainty in victims, undermining their self-belief and grinding down their confidence. It can have a particularly long lasting impact on children, either as a result of being the direct victim of domestic violence, or as a result of witnessing violence in the home. And domestic violence can be largely invisible. It is not confined to women who lack education or employment. It can, and does, happen in Australia and elsewhere to successful women who appear, outside the home, to have it all.

The centrality of women’s empowerment to development is appropriately reflected in the Millennium Development Goals, and the Sustainable Development goals that have now replaced them. Both documents call upon governments to achieve gender equality, and to empower all women and girls. If ever there was a clear signal that those of us who work in government and are engaged in development work should be concerned about women’s empowerment, this is it.

So how do we all go about ensuring that women's empowerment is, in fact, at the forefront of the development agenda?

While it is an ongoing project, the good news is that we have already made much progress, in Australia, South Africa and elsewhere. I venture that most of you in this room are already deeply engaged in ensuring women's empowerment, and certainly better qualified than me to discuss what is going on in South Africa. I will instead continue to focus on Australia, where there is a renewed push to focus on women's empowerment as a priority for government, the private sector and civil society alike.

We have seen substantial efforts over the last couple of years to raise the profile of women's empowerment in Australia, from the top down. Our current Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, is a self-declared feminist, beating, I think, the Canadian Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, to the call.

Of particular relevance to me as an Australian diplomat, we have a female Foreign Minister, Minister Bishop, with a deep commitment to placing women's empowerment at the centre of our foreign and aid policy. And we have a dedicated Ambassador for Women and Girls, Natasha Stott Despoja, to ensure that policy is implemented, particularly by advocating for women's empowerment in the Indo-Pacific region, and at multilateral fora.

I'm pleased to report that the Ambassador's position enjoys strong support across the Australian political spectrum, and is no passing fad. The position was established by a Labor Government in 2010, maintained by our current Liberal-National Coalition Government when it came to office in 2013, and Ambassador Stott Despoja is herself a former Senator from the Australian Democrats. She is also the founder of Our Watch, a foundation to prevent violence against women and girls. We were pleased to have both Minister Bishop and Ambassador Stott Despoja visit South Africa in September 2014.

Through the efforts of Ambassador Stott Despoja and others, community awareness in Australia of domestic violence has never been higher. Rosie Batty, who was herself a victim and whose son died at the hands of his father, was named Australian of the Year in 2015 for her tireless efforts to raise awareness in the wake of her son's murder. She has remained a leading advocate for measures to prevent domestic violence.

Our current Australian of the Year is another advocate for women's empowerment in an entirely different context. Retired Lieutenant General David Morrison became a household name in Australia in 2013 when, as Chief of the Army, he expressed his commitment to the Army being 'an inclusive organisation, in which every soldier, man and woman, is able to reach their full potential and is encouraged to do so'. He bluntly advised, or perhaps that should be ordered, any soldier whom that didn't suit to 'get out'. He has remained a vocal supporter of gender equality in the Australian Defence Force.

Lieutenant General Morrison is also an active participant in the Male Champions of Change program. The innovative program was founded in 2010 by the former Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Elizabeth Broderick, together with a group of senior Australian businessmen committed to increasing women's representation in leadership positions. The program was born from Ms Broderick's conviction that women could not achieve gender equality by acting alone, but also had to engage men in leadership positions to, in turn, empower women.

The Male Champions of Change program has grown steadily since its inception, finding a receptive audience amongst male leaders in the public and private sectors. It would be remiss of me not to mention the Secretary of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Peter Varghese, who is an enthusiastic Male Champion of Change, and one who has made a real difference within my own organisation.

He has insisted that managers commit to gender equality objectives, and rightly affirmed that success relies on 'all staff taking personal responsibility for cultural change', be that through approving flexible work arrangements that allow greater time for family responsibilities, mentoring women leaders, or counselling colleagues when their behaviour is lacking. Peter retires tomorrow, but I am in no small part channelling him while speaking to you this evening.

Male Champions of Change have now spoken at over 350 events globally, including at the Commission on the Status of Women and the International Monetary Fund. Perhaps more tangibly, they have also driven reform within their own organisations to address gender equality, and promote women into leadership positions. And they have established systems by which their organisations can evaluate progress against commitments.

Within government, we have also focussed on ensuring that our noble rhetoric around women's empowerment is reflected in our actions. The Council of Australian Governments, consisting of the equivalents of the national and provincial governments in South Africa, has adopted a National Plan on Reducing Violence Against Women and Their Children. The National Plan covers the period 2010 to 2022, and coordinates the actions of governments across Australia to increase women's safety. It is being delivered through a series of three-year Action Plans, the third of which will be released later this year.

During the second Action Plan, which is currently on foot, the Council of Australian Governments adopted several measures in December last year to reduce violence against women, including National Outcome Standards for Perpetrator Interventions to improve the ways in which authorities intervene with men who use violence against women; actions to limit the use of technology, including social media, to facilitate stalking and other forms of abuse; and a commitment to introduce a National Domestic Violence Order scheme, which will give national recognition in all Australian jurisdictions to a Domestic Violence Order issued by any one of them.

Also during the second Action Plan, the Australian Government launched the ‘stop it at the start’ national awareness campaign in April this year, aimed at generating long-term cultural change and breaking the cycle of violence. And the Council of Australian Governments has agreed to hold a domestic violence summit in October to review progress and share best practice.

Separate from the National Plan, the Victorian State Government, which is the equivalent of a provincial government in South Africa, established a Royal Commission into Family Violence in February last year, with the aim of improving Victoria’s response to family violence.

The report of the Royal Commission was released on 30 March this year, and is now being considered by the Victorian Government. The report included no fewer than 227 recommendations, including for a mandatory curriculum in all schools and at all year levels addressing respectful and healthy relationships; transformation of Victoria’s family violence services, including through the establishment of 17 support and safety hubs, and more resources for legal services; and equipping police with mobile technology to reduce paperwork, and body-worn cameras to make the gathering of evidence easier.

Turning back to my own line of work, allow me to delve into a little more detail on our efforts to embed women’s empowerment in our foreign and aid policy.

Minister Bishop launched our Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy in February this year. The Strategy establishes three priorities to guide the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's work on gender equality: enhancing women's voices in decision-making, leadership and peace-building; promoting women's economic empowerment; and ending violence against women and girls.

The Strategy also requires all our diplomatic missions to sustain their engagement on gender equality and women's empowerment, across the breadth of our bilateral and multilateral engagements. In the austere conference rooms of G20 meetings, Australia was a firm advocate for establishing the 'Women 20' to ensure that women's empowerment is embedded across the breadth of the G20's agenda.

At a more grassroots level, we are working towards awarding half of our Australia Awards masters scholarships and short course fellowships to women. I'm pleased to report that 48 per cent of all Awards recipients in sub-Saharan Africa this year were women, and in South Africa we achieved the 50 per cent target.

We also use our Australian Volunteers for International Development program to support organisations in sub-Saharan Africa, like the Tshwaranang Legal Advocacy Centre here in South Africa, that give women a voice. Sarah Patterson, our Australian volunteer who is somewhere in the room, is doing excellent work to support the Centre's vision.

Making women's empowerment a central aim of our Australia Awards and Australian Volunteers programs is part of a broader performance target for our aid program. We now require that 80 per cent of all our aid investments, regardless of their objectives, address gender issues in their implementation. And we have updated our monitoring and evaluation methods so that we don't just measure expenditure on gender related investments, but we have a team of dedicated gender specialists who assess their quality and effectiveness.

In our most recent national budget for the 2016-17 financial year, we put aside A\$55 million for the Gender Equality Fund established by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to support existing or planned flagship investments that promote gender equality in the Asia Pacific region. This is on top of the A\$50 million that we used to establish the fund in 2015.

Australia supports the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women, a grant-making facility that works with governments and non-government organisations to prevent violence against women and girls. Ms Bishop announced a further contribution of A\$6 million to the Fund in November 2015, bringing Australia's total contribution to A\$13.11 million since November 2012.

Australia has also made a A\$2.5 million contribution to phase two of the Joint United Nations Program on Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence. The Program works at a global level to ensure that women and girls who are sadly subjected to violence at least receive the best possible care.

Looking beyond our administration of the Australian aid program, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has adopted a Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy to ensure that our organisation as a whole, including in our policy work and internal governance, pays attention to these issues.

You can see that we have a fair bit going on within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and more broadly in the Australian Government and community, to realise our commitment to putting women's empowerment at the forefront of the development agenda. But that activity can't be a flash in the pan.

The challenge for all of us, in Australia, South Africa or elsewhere, is to ensure a culture of continuous improvement. That requires a commensurate commitment of resources and effort over time. It also requires a recognition that women's empowerment is not a discrete issue that stands alone, or an issue that is someone else's problem. Instead, women's empowerment is an issue that needs to be enmeshed into every aspect of an organisation, and actively cultivated by every person within it.

The aim of ensuring women's development, and putting it at the forefront of the development agenda, is one to which we all must strive, men and women alike. The Tshwaranang Legal Advocacy Centre is most certainly doing its part, and we at the Australian High Commission are proud to join it hand-in-hand.

Thank you.