



SANORD Webinar: Her Impact, Our Future: Women at the Forefront of African Higher Education

Monday 25th May 2026 11.00-12.30 SAST | 12.00-13.30 EEST

Theme: Celebrating Women Who Have Advanced African Higher Education

Women in African Higher Education

Ms Roseanna Avento opened the SANORD webinar "Her Impact, Our Future, Women at the Forefront of African Higher Education" to celebrate women advancing African higher education in honor of Africa Day. She established the session as a safe environment for discussion and introduced Dr. Tasmeeera Singh, Director of the SANORD Network and Director for International Relations at the University of the Western Cape, who would deliver opening remarks about transformation, diversity, and inclusivity in higher education from a feminist perspective.

Women in African Higher Education

Dr. Tasmeeera Singh opened the webinar "Her Impact, Our Future, Women at the Forefront of African Higher Education" on Africa Day, emphasizing the importance of addressing continental challenges while celebrating African culture and knowledge. She highlighted the central role of African higher education institutions in driving innovation and socio-economic transformation, as outlined in Agenda 2063. Roseanna introduced Dr. Mlambo Ngcuka, the Chancellor of the University of Johannesburg and former UN Women Executive Director, who was set to deliver the keynote address, detailing her extensive career in human rights and gender equality.

Women's Leadership in African Development

Dr. Mlambo Ngcuka delivered a keynote address on Africa Day highlighting challenges facing the continent including health crises like Ebola, conflicts, and resource exploitation, emphasizing the critical role of women in higher education in addressing these issues.



She stressed that women must advocate for their inclusion in peace processes and leverage their positions to impact communities, while also noting that African universities need to strengthen their global presence while maintaining local identity. The discussion concluded with Phumzile identifying young women and pioneering female leaders like Pregalia Bam, Musimbi Kanyoro, and Gertrude Mongerra as her role models.

Africa's Education Agenda 2063 Changes

Refilwe moderated a discussion on institutional changes needed to realize Africa's Agenda 2063 education goals, with Proscovia highlighting the importance of reviewing policies, implementing gender-focused recruitment processes, and ensuring gender-friendly academic content. Dr Normah Zondo discussed how networks like SANORD can support women in higher education by promoting intellectual agency and equitable internationalization models grounded in African realities and values. The conversation emphasized the role of African value systems like Ubuntu in advancing education and leadership within the continent.

African Women Leadership Support Strategies

Ms Orla Quinlan discussed the need for African institutions to support women leaders and scholars by addressing gender equity at multiple levels, including personal agency, institutional roles, and community contexts. She emphasized the importance of developing new tools to map out influencing points and promote equitable opportunities. Ms Orla Quinlan suggested starting with personal actions and supporting other women through sharing experiences, providing opportunities, and building networks.

Elevating African Knowledge in Academia

Ms Orla Quinlan discussed the importance of uncovering and elevating African knowledge in global academic spaces, suggesting a focus on both African and Global South knowledge systems while emphasizing international solidarity. Dr Normah Zondo agreed on the need for mutual collaboration and co-creation in academic partnerships, highlighting the importance of dignity, equity, and recognition for African knowledge.



Both speakers stressed the need for African scholars to contribute to and help define global conversations rather than just contribute to them.

African Knowledge and Gender Equity

The panel discussed elevating and protecting African knowledge, with Prof. Prescovia Namubiru Ssentamu highlighting the importance of incorporating indigenous knowledge into education and using technology like AI to preserve local languages. The discussion emphasized the need for genuine allyship and intra-African solidarity to address gender injustice and create space for women's leadership in higher education. Dr. Divinia Jithoo concluded by calling for building a sisterhood for Africa in academia that actively works against challenges facing women on the continent. The session concluded with plans to create a cantered gender award and continued collaboration on gender equality initiatives.