

Drivers of Change

Changing lives, one woman at a time

Special Commendation — Drivers of Change Civil Society Award: The Rural Women's Movement

Yazeed Kamaldien

Rural women whose role in society is dictated by tradition have largely been left out in the cold while broader South

Africa focuses on democracy.

But the Rural Women's Movement, based in KwaZulu-Natal, has worked since 1999 to empower rural women to change this. This non-profit organisation has secured land rights for rural women and ensured that they are involved in legislative processes.

Its programmes are focused on the impact of the economy, land and governance on rural women. Its mission

is to make rural women "aware of their rights such as property ownership within land reform processes".

An influential driver of its mandate was the post-apartheid government's intention to "actively promote the principle of gender equality" in drafting new land and agriculture policies. The new South Africa needed an environment women could "access, own, control, use and manage land,

as well as access credit for productive use of land".

In reality, rural women still face harsh discrimination in communities where male-dominated leadership expects them to remain domesticated. Civil society groups report that women and girls remain victims of gender-based violence and abuse.

The response was to establish a "vibrant rural women's movement

to represent women's specific needs and aspirations and to lobby for policy changes". The organisation has enlisted 500 indigenous women's groups — double the amount it started with in 1999 — that manage a range of projects. Its membership is more than 50 000 individuals.

One of the most intensive processes it embarked on during its early years was to lobby rural women to partici-

participate in law-making that would affect their livelihood. The movement worked with the Legal Resources Centre to challenge the constitutionality of communal land-rights laws. Women were also encouraged to make submissions to Parliament on traditional leadership and governance laws.

This involved translating legislation from English into local languages so that the women could gain a deeper understanding of proposed policies.

The Rural Women's Movement connected with about 5 000 rural women who would be affected by this legislation, in the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo. Facilitators used theatre, drawing, singing and music to communicate policies and their impacts.

Rural women built the know-how and access to draw up submissions to Parliament regarding policies. The result was that they had an effect on the laws that were passed and that would govern them.

Sibongile Shabalala, a young woman from KwaZulu-Natal who nominated the movement for an award, said she had "never seen anything like this. Indigenous women who did not have the opportunity to get formal education were tackling issues about policymaking and going to Parliament to present their submissions on these policies.

"It was the first time for me to see indigenous women having a deep understanding of the policymaking processes and legislation," she said.

Other projects address women's property and inheritance rights, challenging forced marriages in rural communities and caring for at least 2 000 Aids orphans in KwaZulu-Natal.

The judges commended the movement as "a driver of change that innovatively uses experiences of poor rural women and girls to contribute to policymaking processes.

"It secures a better life for women through training on human rights and gender and creating spaces for the marginalised to be heard on the basic issues that affect their daily lives."



Xstrata Coal South Africa, Investing in the Future

At Xstrata Coal South Africa, the development and upliftment of communities in which we operate is at the core of our social investment initiatives. Over the years we have committed ourselves to seeing the lives of ordinary South Africans, including our employees, improve because we are here. We have invested R65million in the past three years, in areas such as Enterprise Development and Job Creation, Education, Health Care, HIV Aids Treatment, Arts and Culture, Social and Community Development programmes. Our goal is to ensure that even the most vulnerable communities have access to basic services and are given an opportunity to succeed in life, through our partnership with communities, government and other stakeholders.



Drivers of Change



Botswana President Ian Khama, whose goal is to eliminate poverty

The people's president

Finalist — Government category:
President Ian Khama

Jiang Alipo

A descendant of the royal family of Botswana's largest tribe, the Bangwato, President Ian Khama is making changes in his country by emphasising delivery and the phasing out of poverty.

After taking office from his retired predecessor, Festus Mogae, in April 2008, Khama announced the tenets of his government as "the four Ds — democracy, development, dignity and discipline".

He has introduced many development initiatives in his two years of leadership, including programmes aimed at eradicating poverty in Botswana by 2018, when what are expected to be his two terms in office come to an end.

By stating his aim from the outset to eradicate poverty in the world's largest diamond-producing country, Khama set the government machinery in motion to achieve this objective. He also emphasised that service delivery and the fulfilment of promises would be a hallmark of his presidency and that non-delivery at any level would not be tolerated.

He is one of the new presidents in the Southern African Development Community who has been vocal on regional political, economic and social development issues, including the defence of human rights and human security.

He is also a soft-spoken wildlife enthusiast who seeks to protect his country's natural beauty.

Khama was nominated for mobilising the entire government machinery to eradicate poverty in Botswana.

Under his presidency, new agricultural development projects have been launched, giving free seedlings and fertiliser to poor subsistence farmers. His government has also supported farmers who use new farming methods.

This has led to a good increase in the country's GDP, with agriculture's contribution rising to only 2% less than mining, which has been the main driver of the country's economy for a long time — a first in the history of Botswana.

Khama is a strong proponent of results-based management in the Botswana government. He has made more than 200 visits to rural areas to get guidance on people's expectations of government, with the intention of crafting people-centred policies.

The judges praised Khama's forthright stance on national and regional development issues, even when it has meant differing with his fellow presidents in the region.

"This makes him a driver of change in the way that governments relate to one another on key governance challenges facing the whole region," the judges said.

Kagame recognised for Rwandan miracle

Finalist — Government category:
President Paul Kagame

Jiang Alipo

No one gave post-genocide Rwanda a chance at peace, let alone development.

President Paul Kagame was faced with multiple challenges, chief among them how to end the hatred of the two warring tribes in the tiny east-central African country.

Against the odds, he has managed to transform the shattered country into Africa's biggest success story in less than 10 years.

Kagame's background may have helped make him what he has become. As with many Rwandans, he is a first-hand victim of ethnically charged violence. He grew up in the Nshungerezi refugee camp in Uganda, where his Tutsi family fled in 1959 when Kagame was only two to avoid Hutu extremists.

In Uganda he met President Yoweri Museveni, with whom he was involved through Museveni's National Resistance Movement. Kagame's Rwandan Patriotic Army base was established in Uganda; from which he led the battle to end the genocide.

When the war ended in July 1994, a government of national unity was formed with a Hutu, Pasteur Bizimungu, as president. Kagame was vice-president and defence minister.

In 2000 the Transitional National Assembly elected Kagame president.



Paul Kagame, a first-hand victim of ethnically charged violence, has managed to transform Rwanda into one of Africa's biggest success stories

He established unity and reconciliation commissions, based on traditional cultural models and aimed at rebuilding trust among the victims and the perpetrators of the genocide.

"People can be changed," he has been quoted as saying. "Some people can even benefit from being forgiven, from being given another chance."

He is widely recognised for bolstering investor confidence through his anti-poverty strategies and strong political leadership.

His economic policies have encouraged the staple of agriculture, at the same time ushering in diversification by means of the industries of the future.

With a gross domestic product growth rate of 6% a year, Rwanda was recently named the World Bank's top economic reformer.

It is also one of the few countries in the world where women constitute more than 50% of the parliament.

Kagame recently won a land-

slide victory in an election to serve another seven-year term in office, which should be his last in terms of the constitution.

The judges praised Kagame as a driver of change for his role in leading Rwanda towards being one of the fastest-growing and fastest-transforming economies in the world.

"Despite the challenges in his country, his leadership shows results for people on the ground," the judges said.

Driver for change is an inspiration

Finalist — Individual Award:
Dorothy Ngoma

Vuvu Vena

In 2002 Dorothy Ngoma, a lecturer at Kamuzu College of Nursing in Blantyre, set out to rescue the Malawi nurses' union. It meant leaving her family behind and moving to Lilongwe, the capital, but it was necessary.

The organisation was losing numbers rapidly — by then there were fewer than 50 nurses and midwives as members — and it was failing to make an impact in the labour sector. The National Organisation of Nurses and Midwives of Malawi had a crucial role to play.

Founded in 1979, its aims included safeguarding nurses' and midwives' professional, organisational and socioeconomic interests and influencing nursing education and practice. It was the first of its kind in the country.

In the eight years since — Ngoma was elected its director in 2006 — she has transformed what was an

association into a union that is registered under the Labour Relations Act of Malawi. Today it boasts more than 6500 members.

It was just one of the projects this global anti-poverty campaigner and women's rights activist has taken on in her career. But nursing has always come first.

Growing up in a village drew her to the profession.

"As a young girl the women who motivated me were the nurses, the way they dressed and the care they gave. I looked up to them and I've never looked back," she says.

Ngoma studied at the Blantyre School of Nursing. Concerned about sexual and reproductive health issues and while she was still a university lecturer, she took up the challenge in 1995 to revive Banja La Mtsogolo, a reproductive health NGO whose name means "Family of the Future".

"I managed to revamp it from three clinics to 26 health centres across the country, including the rural areas, providing both oral contraceptives and surgeries. It took me



Nursing has always come first for Dorothy Ngoma, who reversed the fortunes of the Malawi nurses' union

five years and it was the first of its kind," she says.

She faced a number of challenges, because raising issues about reproductive health were still taboo in rural Malawi at the time.

"We had to be very creative. Our first campaign was Children by Choice, not by Chance. This was going against the culture as the people believed that children are God-given."

Ngoma regards reviving Banja La Mtsogolo as her biggest achievement.

"I'm very proud of it. It is still the largest organisation on reproductive health in the country."

She is also the ambassador for the Malawi chapter of the Global Call to Action against Poverty, acting as a torchbearer and champion for an acceleration to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

"When I speak, people listen," she says matter-of-factly. This keeps her going and motivates her to speak for the voiceless.

"The fact that I am able to carry these burdens for a weaker part of

society, I am able to speak on their behalf and get a reaction. That gives me the impetus to keep pushing."

The vision of Malawi that she holds dear is to see an adequate number of midwives and nurses to help reduce the maternal mortality rate.

"Currently we have 9000 field nurses and midwives. I'm hoping in my lifetime that that number will triple. Then I can say we've fought a good battle," she says.

Through her work Ngoma aims to show that women can achieve outstanding performance and inspire the world. "I feel very strongly that where women lead, you see the fruit. Their actions always produce positive outcomes.

"They are more grounded and concerned with social issues and things that are crucial for survival," she says. "And it's those things that we are grappling with as a developing country."

The judges recognised Ngoma as a driver of change for inspiring other women to achieve outstanding results by influencing the decisions of leaders to take the poor and marginalised into account.