

# ADVANCEMENT FOR THE STATUS OF WOMEN (ASW)

A NELSON MANDELA CHILDREN'S FUND INITIATIVE

## ASW

The ASW is a multi-sectoral think-tank and an intergenerational platform of accomplished and emerging women leaders. The ASW fundamentally accepts that its participants are leaders in their own right and who can best excel in their respective areas of endeavor on the basis of a common belief that societies never advance to higher levels of development unless its members take the initial step to effect the changes that affirm humanity, dignity, equality, liberation, justice and peace.

Through ASW we aim to build a community of women leaders that society can count on as role models for its youth

- **Africa's reality** is afflicted by factors of underdevelopment resulting in hunger, poverty, conflict, disease and powerlessness. The women's movement's redress initiatives should not lose sight of these exigencies.
- **Africa's setting** is strained by the weakening and collapse of families and communities, which are fundamental to societal well-being;
- **Africa's experience** is further burdened by an unending colonial hangover where solutions are mainly inspired from without rather than within the African Experience.

## ASW POINTS OF DEPARTURE

- For women to successfully fulfil their task as changing agents they need to assume strategic leadership roles to play in society
- Women are pillars for stronger families and custodians for children well being.
- For the disintegration of families and communities to be arrested demands rekindling the spirit and the soul of the nation "to love again" and "to hug again" to affirm African communal way of life
- We seek to leverage existing global and national awareness platforms:
  - **National Women's Day (NWD)** which provides an opportunity for dialogue for every generation to learn from one before and to draw continuous inspiration from the historic march of **August 9, 1956** led by women who loved their husbands, defended their families, cared for their children and fought for freedom
  - **International women's Day (IWD), March 8**, provides a global solidarity platform for women to sustain their historic role in the remaking of the world that is in accord with true humanity
- The answers being sought recognize that men and women are co-actors in society and would thus need to demonstrate their share of contribution in ridding society of the ills that afflict it.

## OUTLINE

About ASW	1
ASW points of departure	1
ASW Mission	2
ASW Symbolism	2
The ASW Objectives & Goals	3
The ASW Declaration	4
About the participants	4
Contact details	4

## MISSION STATEMENT

To place women at the centre of present day societal concerns in advancing a humane society.

## MISSION CRITICAL FACTORS

Since children represent the future, their survival and prospects for societal well being depends upon women re-asserting themselves as the pillars for strong families, communities and responsive government.

## ASW SYMBOLISM

*The baobab tree is not like other trees. It doesn't give wood; instead it offers food and water. It is symbolically known to be soft of heart, listens and sympathizes with others. It is considered to be equally resolute and of sound discipline.*

*The baobab is known to be compassionate and embracing. The baobab offers shade and refuge.*

***"WHEN WOMEN ARE HEALTHY, EDUCATED AND FREE TO TAKE THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT LIFE AFFORDS THEM, CHILDREN THRIVE AND COMMUNITIES FLOURISH, REAPING THE DOUBLE DIVIDEND FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN."***

***FORMER UN SG, KOFI ANNAN, ON WOMEN  
2007 STATE OF THE WORLD'S CHILDREN***

***In the words of our Founder  
Nelson Mandela***

***"Our bodies may give in to the force of age, but the dreams that lie in our hearts may not retire."***

***NMCF 2006 AGM.***

## ASW OBJECTIVES

- Advance national and international development goals
- Enable women to stake their claim in the re-envisioning of society's direction
- Impress upon business "to conduct itself as if people matter"
- Commit BEE to live up to intended objectives of redress, empowerment and economic participation, uphold the dignity of labour and commit to delivery of quality products and services
- Maintain keen interest on the role of the media in society
- Strengthen families, communities and energise government response in the efficient delivery of public services
- Examine the use of language and rid society of forms that promote negativity
- Encourage politics to be people-centred, issue driven, impress government accountability and allow for public participation in policy process
- Promote political and ethical legacy that shows a good sense of measuring up to positions of public trust and doing good for others even when out of political office
- Examine various possible scenarios to sharpen perceptive ability to anticipate future challenges and to

## ASW GOALS

- Documenting African women through history
- Articulating a discourse for African (global) womanism
- Re-crafting representations of women in the media
- Integrating gender sensitivity in education and policy making
- Relanguaging in order to articulate a proactive/positive state of being, a forward and upward looking essence. Relanguaging will also enable us to articulate values that define a desired state beyond that which is
  - apparent/ obvious."
- Engaging men in gender dialogue in challenging the dominant patriarchal paradigm

## ASW DECLARATION

The ASW is an African-centred, non-partisan cross-generational forum of women re-claiming their space in the world. The ASW recognizes that strong families and societies built on the foundations of equality require that all members of society be provided with spaces that are affirming and promote human dignity, and social and environmental protection. We entrench ourselves in our social world as change agents who can craft a desired world through collective action and participation. The ASW re-languages the social vocabulary in ways that attach value and meaning to the contributions made by women, men and children in domestic and public spaces.

The group is proudly constituted of accomplished and emerging women leaders initiating constructive social dialogue and action. The forum creates opportunities for dialogue between women of all ages and social positions.

The ASW recognizes the need for nuanced analysis of flows of power in ways that are enabling. We seek to engage with the world with a feminine ethic that encourages all members of society to be fully authentic; a space that empowers all members of society enabling more humane social interactions in the domestic and public spaces.

## ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

The ASW Planning exercise arises out of a Brainstorming Session called by ASW Conveners held on Friday November 30, 2007. The brainstorming session participants not only endorsed the ASW initiative but also accepted to serve as the *Extended Thinking Base* of the ASW (See *attached list – addendum 1*)

## CONTACT DETAILS

Name: Oupa Ngwenya  
Tel: +2711 274 5600  
Cell: +2782 221 5586  
E-mail: [OupaN@nmcf.co.za](mailto:OupaN@nmcf.co.za)

Tshegofatso Leeuw  
+2711 274 5600  
+2783 369 2436  
[tshegofatsol@nmcf.co.za](mailto:tshegofatsol@nmcf.co.za)