

ICT & DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

In her research of one of the world's deadliest insects, Dr Shūné Oliver has seen how the tiny mosquito can have a big impact on women. Oliver is a biochemist and medical entomologist at the National Institute for Communicable Diseases.

She is also part of the Wits Research Institute for Malaria.

"Women are on the frontline of laboratory science research," she says.

"In addition, malaria elimination would benefit women because young children and pregnant women are most at risk. Women often bear the burden of care in these cases."

Oliver's research has helped bring relief to many, thanks to mosquito control products that she worked on bringing to market.

"These products include sprays and long-lasting nets. The use of these insecticides will contribute to fewer mosquito bites and aid in the fight against malaria," she says.

With summer fast approaching and with it mosquitoes back to bother us, she offers a tip to help alleviate the problem.

"Get rid of your standing water or things that can collect water around your home."

"Unfortunately, there is not all that much you can do that is guaranteed to keep them away."

"If you smell delicious to them, there is not much you can do to discourage them!" Oliver says.

Dr Shūné Oliver,
Science
Gauteng



Nomcebo Dlamini
Innovation
Gauteng

Nomcebo Dlamini wants to bring uncomfortable conversations about the true cost of alcohol abuse into the mainstream. Then she wants the conversations to shift behaviour and policy so that future generations are protected.

As the campaign director of the Southern African Alcohol Policy Alliance South Africa, she leads the national "True Cost of Alcohol" campaign, which advocates for evidence-based measures to reduce alcohol-related harm, including gender-based violence, road deaths, non-communicable diseases, youth harm and community safety concerns.

"Alcohol-related harm places a significant burden on our healthcare system, our economy and our communities. It contributes to violence, injuries and chronic health conditions," Dlamini says.

"It also affects children, workplaces and households. Advocacy is about ensuring these realities remain part of the national conversation and that policies are developed with the wellbeing of South Africans at their centre."

She says women have long played a central role in advocating for healthier communities, often working behind the scenes to influence legislation, engage communities and amplify the voices of those most affected.

"As women in advocacy, we recognise that meaningful change does not happen overnight. It happens through consistent engagement with communities, government, healthcare professionals and civil society. Our work is ultimately about protecting future generations and helping create environments where healthier choices are easier to make."



Kele Masemola
Digital Technology
Gauteng

As cybersecurity threats become more commonplace, Kele Masemola has the skills to protect our digital systems.

She is a cybersecurity and digital forensics specialist at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research.

Masemola is skilled in all facets of security technology and her work spans cellphone, computer, network and email forensics. She explores the intersection between forensic practice, cloud environments, artificial intelligence and emerging technologies.

Masemola says that although she is painfully shy, she is intent on sharing her journey in digital technology because it could inspire other young black females.

"As a young black woman building a career in a traditionally male-dominated field, I want other women to see that they can enter technology, be taken seriously, lead meaningful projects and progress both professionally and personally."

This type of woman, she says, would have inspired the young Masemola, who, as an intern, was "thrown in the deep end".

"And I've been learning to swim ever since!" Masemola says.

Her ambition is surprisingly simple.

"Learn as much as possible. I play, break, fix and play again."

"Hands-on experience is where knowledge becomes meaningful. Progress is not about knowing everything. It is about discipline, discernment, confidence, curiosity and the willingness to keep learning," Masemola says.



The reality is that our work exists because there is a need for it. Every day we see the impact that problem gambling can have on individuals and the people around them

Sibongile Simelane-Quntana
Innovation
Gauteng

The destructive cycle of gambling addiction is also linked to other issues like domestic violence and drug addiction.

In fact, the social ills are much more interlinked than one first imagines.

As the executive director of the South African Responsible Gambling Foundation, Sibongile Simelane-Quntana spearheads intensive research into advancing responsible gambling practices and gambling-related harm reduction efforts.

She is determined to build safer homes for vulnerable adults and children through her work which is grounded in a strong commitment to evidence-based public health policy and cross-sector collaboration, with a focus on impactful and sustainable interventions.

"The reality is that our work exists because there is a need for it," Simelane-Quntana says. "Every day we see the impact that problem gambling can have on individuals and the people around them. Financial hardship, strained relationships, mental health challenges and lost opportunities rarely affect only one person. They affect entire families and communities."

"Our responsibility is not only to support those experiencing harm but also to educate, advocate and help create environments where prevention becomes part of everyday life."

Simelane-Quntana is a PhD candidate at the University of the Witwatersrand, School of Business Administration. She holds an MBA, postgraduate diplomas in public management and administration and arts. She also has a bachelor's degree in education.



Progress is not about knowing everything. It is about discipline, discernment, confidence, curiosity and the willingness to keep learning.