



Advancing Women in Statistics: investigating and redressing the gender imbalance: the case of South Africa and of the rest of the African continent

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The profile of statisticians in South Africa (SA) has changed over the past 20 years. The traditional employment areas of academia, research organisations, business and industry, have been augmented by employment by government, in particular Statistics SA (StatsSA). This has resulted from the transition to democracy, and the demand for data relating to all people in SA. Also the need to report on the progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which rely not only on data from StatsSA, but also on data from administrative records compiled by other government departments. The increase in demand for data also led to an increase in demand for those skilled in collecting and analysing data. The Big Data issue has increased this demand. StatsSA has been highly involved in issues relating to National Statistics Offices (NSOs) in the rest of Africa, resulting from issues relating to population censuses and the ability to monitor the MDGs. A meeting of heads of NSOs in 2005 led to the establishment of the Africa Symposia on Statistical Development (ASSD) as a discussion forum on the way forward, with StatsSA taking the lead in organising the first of the now annual conferences. The identification of the need for setting up Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems resulted in the inclusion of other agencies and partners in the ASSDs. An offshoot of these conferences has been the establishment of annual Young African Statisticians conferences, aimed at developing research capabilities. The National Planning Commission, established by President Zuma in 2010, to compile a diagnostic report on the state of the country after 18 years of democracy, resulted in the National Development Plan 2030 (Our future – make it work), which has the aim of eliminating poverty and reducing inequality by 2030. It found that SA still remains a highly unequal society – too few people work (we need to transform the economy), and we need to promote gender equality. This has resulted in gender equality targets being set, particularly for government departments. The current situation of gender equality for graduates in SA (and for statisticians) will be outlined. The situation in the rest of Africa will be explored, as will further initiatives to address the imbalance.

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