

LOCAL INDEPENDENT WOMEN *in the print and online media sectors*



Contents

- 4. Reflections by former chairperson
- 6-7. Sit down with the current chair
- 9. Driving the health conversation
- 10. Disruptor in financial journalism
- 11-12. Voice of a veteran
- 13. Paving the way for female journalists
- 14. Igniting women's stories in the Free State
- 15. The view from the inner city
- 16. Promoting Bapedi
- 18. Newcomer's corner
- 19-20. The big interview with Sanef chairperson

• *Produced by Likhanyile Tutoring & Media on behalf of the Association of Independent Publishers.*



Editor's note

Dear reader,

Welcome to the inaugural AIP Women's Month edition, which we hope will be an annual edition from now onwards.

As we wrap Women's Month, there is no better way than to celebrate people whose daily task is to shine the spotlight on other people – women in media.

Our focus is on some of the independent publishers from all over the country who publish in multiple languages – in line with our mandate as the Association of Independent Publishers (AIP).

From this edition, you will know more about some of the publications, but crucially, the motivation that drives the women behind these successful brands that have kept their operations afloat with little to no support.

Independent publishers cater for marginalised communities and it is because of them that we don't have news deserts in our country. AIP publishers are in every corner, publishing in all 11 official languages.

Some of the publishers have been at it for decades such as the enterprising Shirley Govender and the equally entrepreneurial Mbali Dhlomo, while others dared to take the plunge at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic such as feisty Moipone Malefane.

Also, you will learn more about the woman who now leads the AIP as its recently-elected chairperson, Anetta Mangxaba.

However, it would have been amiss of us not to celebrate one of our own, though she serves in a different capacity, Nwabisa Makunga, the newly-elected Sanef chairperson.

Makunga's election is a huge milestone for women in media and one that all of us who hold dear the noble profession of journalism should salute.

The election of Mangxaba and Makunga happened within the same period as South Africa welcomed its first woman Judge-President, Judge Mandisa Maya and Mangosuthu University of Technology, its first woman Vice-Chancellor, Prof Nokuthula Sibiyi.

Enjoy the read.

• *Slindile Khanyile is the publishing editor of Umbele, the Zulu-medium financial Publication and Umkhanyisi, the Zulu-medium digital education publication.*

Foreword by Dr Kate Skinner



A warm thanks to our KZN board member, Slindile Khanyile, for initiating this wonderful project – a publication that profiles and celebrates our Association of Independent Publishers (AIP) women publishers. And what an important and timeous publication this is, given that it is Women’s Month and given the substantive gender equity work that needs to be done in our industry.

The AIP is tackling two key issues. First, we need to ensure that there are more women publishers in community media. Second, there is a huge battle to be won to ensure that women’s voices are highlighted, which is an industry wide challenge.

Despite our amazing female leaders (our chairperson, our executive director and three of our board members are women), there are actually very few women publishers overall – 38 female to 109 male publishers. That is 20.5% of AIP publishers are women. We need to up that percentage!

So, in terms of increasing the number of women publishers, we have significant work to do. As a starting point we hope that this publication will inspire women to enter the community media sector.

Also, we are hoping to create a more enabling environment to support women publishers through training and networking opportunities. Do watch this space as we start rolling out our projects.

In terms of women voices, it is important to note some of the work done by the NGO, Media Monitoring Africa (MMA), over the election period. The MMA launched a research project to quantify the number of times women were quoted. They discovered that only 18% of expert sources were women. That was, in fact, down a few percentage points from our previous elections. So, things are getting worse!

It is also critical to note who was quoted most over the election period.

In terms of the top five male and top five female voices, former president Jacob Zuma was top of the list at 34%, followed by President Cyril Ramaphosa at 32%, DA leader John Steenhuisen at 12%. The ANC’s Fikile Mbalula and EFF leader Julius Malema were then tied at 9%.

Women scored far below this with DA Federal Council chairperson Helen Zille scoring 3%, ANC national spokesperson Mahlengi Bhengu-Mot-siri and Minister of Tourism Patricia de Lille scoring 2% each, and MK Party Mp Duduzile Zuma-Sambudla 1%.

The AIP alongside the feminist NGO, Quote this Women (QW+), is keen to change the status quo – both in terms of the number of women publishers and in terms of women’s voices in the media. We’re thus organising a joint fundraiser for next year March to raise funds to publicise the QW database of women experts, and to build its depth and diversity to include a number of more community-based women thought leaders.

The AIP believes strongly that we need to hear the voices of women who can speak a host of our 11 official languages (not just English) - and women who can celebrate, critique and comment on life in the inner city, townships, informal settlements, small towns and rural areas. The fundraiser will also fund a number of the AIP’s sustainability pilots that we hope will benefit all publishers, with a focus, where possible, on women publishers. The pilots focus on income-generating and broader sustainability initiatives including employing sales and marketing interns, collective advertising solutions, podcasting and solutions journalism, to mention just a few.

In closing, my deepest appreciation goes to every woman who works in community publishing. You are nothing short of powerhouses. Strength to you all.

• *Dr Skinner is the Executive Director of AIP.*

Mbali Dhlomo, a former AIP chairperson reflects on 25 years of community media publishing

I began my whirlwind journey in the community print media space in 1999 when I established Genuine, a lifestyle family magazine in Kwa-Zulu-Natal. What I thought would be an walk-in-the-park kind of business turned out to be an expedition filled with ebbs and flows, but one which has made me the media entrepreneur that I am today.

Having been in this sector for over 25 years has given me the opportunity to learn all there is to know about the media, publishing and the business of news.

Leading the Association of Independent Publishers (AIP) as the chairperson of the Board for about eight years provided me with the rare chance of interacting with most of my peers in all provinces, gaining insights into their challenges and successes in their respective regions. It has also been my greatest honour and privilege to mentor a number of individuals who now run their own publications.

But what makes this sector tick?

What is evident about most of us in the print and online media sector is that we are absolutely passionate about the audiences and diverse communities that we serve. We are totally immersed in our businesses. The majority of us have hands-on experience, which has made us familiar with all aspects of our industry. Granted, we are publishers, but you will also see us in the crowds, gathering stories, attending press briefings and mingling with politicians and all manner of leaders.

Some of us are also distributors of our newspapers, while others sell advertising space and perform marketing tasks for their publications. Having attended various media training courses over the years, there is very little that we do not know about media entrepreneurship and the role that our publications play in our respective communities.

What is obvious is that we are actually a resilient, strong bunch of people. Despite numerous challenges that attempt to hinder our progress, we always manage to thrive and forge ahead, month after month, year after year. The resilience that we possess comes from deep within us and is brought about by our wish to see our businesses succeed.

Publishers will tell you that one of the greatest joys for them is when they hold a new edition of their newspapers in their hands, fresh from the printing press! All the stresses and heartaches of getting the edition to finality are forgotten momentarily and they live just for that moment.

Being in this space has also opened up quite a lot of opportunities for us to travel and meet world leaders and successful personalities. All these opportunities have actually grounded us and made us realise just how fortunate we are, because they are rare. So, being a publisher

and an entrepreneur is an honour and privilege that we do not take for granted.



It has been particularly pleasing to see the exponential growth of the number of female publishers in our sector, especially over the past 20 years. In what has always been a male-dominated sector, female publishers are also making a significant mark in the sector and their presence is felt in all provinces throughout the country. I am particularly proud of how female publishers have showcased their strength, consistency and creativity in this sector.

To me, an example of where this strength was showcased perfectly well was in the energy and fighting spirit of the late Julia Moloi, the publisher of Gauteng-based disability magazine *We Are Capable* in the early 2000s. Dealing with a disability that affected both her speech and movement, she became the first editor of a magazine for people with disabilities.

She was a fearless, proud and feisty human being who never backed down. No mission was too hard for her to accomplish. She was arrogant about her craft and pushed herself to the limit. And such was her character

that, whenever she felt frustrated by our uninspiring responses at training courses, she would stand up and boldly address us (her peers) as “so-called normal” people... That, was Julia!

Most importantly, she had a clear vision about the direction of her publication. She wanted to educate us “so-called normal” people about what disability was really all about. She wanted her publication to showcase and celebrate as many disabled people as possible.

The results of her unwavering commitment to her business and publication led to her scooping the first-prize in the Arts and Culture category at the Shoprite/Checkers Woman of the Year Awards in 2005. Most of us celebrated with her because we knew how far she had come. She did it all with inimitable style and grace until her sudden passing in 2013.

Knowing the multitude of challenges that Moloi had to overcome was no different to what the majority of us face today. That is why even when the road ahead seems long and winding, it is our focus and enduring spirit that always carries us through. As an independent publisher in this sector, sometimes that is all you need.

• *Dhlomo is the former AIP chairperson.*

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The woman driving the AIP into digital future



1. Please give us a brief background on your upbringing

I am Anetta Mangxaba, a devoted follower of Christ, a driven entrepreneur, motivational speaker and community leader. I was born and raised in rural Paarl, in the Western Cape. I am the eldest of four siblings, married and a mother of three beautiful kids (one daughter and two sons). I matriculated from Northern Paarl Senior Secondary School in 1997. I furthered my studies in business and media management at Pentech (CPUT), Rhodes University and Boland College.

I now also hold a Bachelor's Degree in Theology and am currently studying towards my Honours in Theology.

2. What was your childhood dream, and why?

Though my childhood dream was to become an accountant, financial constraints led me down a different path. I wanted to become an accountant, because they uphold integrity, solve financial problems, make sure people comply with laws and regulations.

3. What is the one childhood lesson that continues to serve you well today?

The importance of humility, hard work and helping others. My upbringing taught me to stay true to my roots, respect others and always be willing to lend a hand.

4. When and how were you drawn into publishing?

In 2007, after facing years of unemployment, my husband and I decided to leverage our respective skills; his in journalism and radio broadcasting and mine in administration and marketing to venture into publishing.

Despite initial challenges, including a lack of formal training and financial obstacles, we persevered. We founded Dizindaba Media Cc in 2007, later re-registering it as a (Pty) Ltd in 2010, and launched our first publication, *Dizindaba Iphephandaba lesiXhosa*.

Through determination and support from the MDDA (Media Development and Diversity Agency), what began as a small weekly print of 10 000 copies has grown into a significant platform that promotes isiXhosa and delivers crucial news to our communities.

5. What is the name of your publication, publishing frequency and print order? If online, average monthly impressions.

Dizindaba Media (Pty) Ltd owns one publication, namely *Dizindaba Iphephandaba lesiXhosa*. *Dizindaba* prints 10000 copies per edition, every fortnight, ranging from an 8-16 page tabloid.

It is distributed in the Cape Peninsula, as well as Cape Winelands regions for free to readers at schools, clinics, libraries, government departments, Boxer Stores, shopping centers, malls, train stations, bus stations and taxi ranks, and in some areas door to door. Our content features information that is divided into these segments: community/social news, economic news, political news, religion and sports. The language content is 95% isiXhosa and 5% English (sport only).

Also, I volunteer on Radio KC as the

isiXhosa lesson teacher.

6. What is the main objective of your publication?

Our objectives are to promote reading and the use of the isiXhosa language, foster debate and positive change, serve as a key disseminator of news and current affairs, and bridge the language gap in the Western Cape by offering content in isiXhosa.

7. You were recently elected the chairperson of the AIP. What does this role mean to you?

This role extends beyond my media company. We advocate for the interests of community media, ensuring their sustainability and representation. Apart from the newspaper, I also represent AIP publishers on the Audit Bureau of Circulation SA (ABC) board.

8. How big is your newsroom?

In our newsroom, I am responsible for operations and administration. My husband takes care of the content and distribution of the newspaper. Then we have three freelance journalists from the Eastern Cape and every time we distribute the newspaper, we create casual jobs for at least 10 to 20 people in our different areas of distribution.

9. What do you consider to be the highlights of your publishing journey thus far?

One of the key highlights of our publishing journey has been Dizindaba's role in preserving and promoting Xhosa culture, traditions and language. A significant achievement is surviving the COVID-19 pandemic, which tested our resilience and commitment. We've gained recognition from esteemed institutions like the University of Stellenbosch, CPUT

and UCT, as well as other media organisations due to our authentic use of the Xhosa language.

Another noteworthy accomplishment was having one of our front-page articles featured by Pearson in a 2013 mock exam paper for schools. Securing government support to publish advertisements, notices and press releases in isiXhosa has also been a major milestone. To date, we have printed 327 editions, with each edition consisting of 10 000 copies, totalling an estimated 3.27 million copies. Each copy is read by an average of five people per household.

Reflecting on my journey, I remember questioning my ability to contribute effectively to this endeavour, given my lack of formal publishing training and my husband's greater expertise in the field. Despite these initial concerns, I have gained substantial experience over the past 14 years. I've empowered myself through various relevant courses, including an Executive Management Course at Rhodes University and additional industry-related studies. This continuous learning has strengthened both my personal skills and our business.

10. What are some of the challenges that you have encountered and how did you circumvent them?

While print media faces challenges, niche adaptation is crucial. Adapting to the fourth industrial revolution (4IR), has placed enormous pressure on print and newsrooms had to transform overnight.

Financial sustainability, content relevance and competition remain hurdles. We must navigate language diversity and distribution barriers while respecting cultural sensitivities and enhancing digital accessibility.

11. What motivates you to keep going?

The driving force behind our continued dedication is witnessing the remarkable impact *Dizindaba* has made over the past 14 years and understanding the essential role our publication plays within the isiXhosa-speaking communities we serve. We have become an essential source of information, and our readers expect us to have information about the Department of Health, Police, Labour, SASSA, etc.

Several key achievements fuel our motivation:

- a) Educational partnerships: Our publication is subscribed to by esteemed institutions such as the University of Stellenbosch and the University of Cape Town. These universities use *Dizindaba* to enhance language learning, underscoring the educational value we provide.
- b) Incorporation in educational materials: Our front-page story was selected by Pearson for a Grade 12 revision paper in 2013, highlighting the quality and relevance of our content.
- c) Additionally, our collaboration with SA.co.za in promoting poetry, drama and cultural activities in schools further extends our influence in the education sector.
- d) Cultural preservation: By focusing on isiXhosa-speaking communities, *Dizindaba* plays a crucial role in preserving and promoting isiXhosa culture, traditions and language, ensuring they thrive for future generations.

Broad impact areas:

- Education: We contribute valuable content that supports learning and literacy.
- Political activism: *Dizindaba* provides a platform for political discourse and activism in the community.
- Community engagement: We foster a sense of community and shared identity among our readers.
- Economic development: Through advertising and community-driven initiatives, we support local businesses and economic growth. We also offer translation services to help advertisers connect with our audience in isiXhosa, emphasizing the importance of communication in a language they understand.

12. How much does being a woman influence your decision-making?

Being a woman has significantly influenced my decision-making

throughout this journey. My husband brought a strong foundation in journalism and radio broadcasting, which was crucial for our venture.

However, I often questioned my ability to contribute effectively to the newspaper's content, its operations, and its marketing, particularly because I lacked formal training in publishing. My husband's greater expertise in the field added to my concerns about my own experience potentially hindering our progress.

Despite these early challenges and obstacles, I didn't give up. Reflecting on our journey, I realise it was more than just about publishing a newspaper. It was about believing in myself despite my doubts, pushing forward in the face of adversity and understanding that success is not defined by the absence of difficulties, but by how we respond to them.

13. For the past few years, the conversation has shifted to media sustainability. What do you think will assist the media to turn things around, specifically, independent publishers?

Of the many things I've learnt from my fellowship to Ohio University, having one revenue stream is no longer working and as independent publishers our focus has always been on advertising revenue only, we now must come up with other revenue streams to sustain our media outlets.

Also having to evolve from print to digital is also contributing to our sustainability. As small independent media, we also need to learn to collaborate and work together across media houses because you can no longer survive on your own with one source of income.

14. What are some of your future plans?

To expand our print publication into other provinces, build our social media and online platforms to promote and market our print publication and generate more income. Build partnerships and collaborations across media outlets in the province.

15. How do you unwind?

Going to church, reading a book, listening to music or being outdoors, attending spiritual camps.

Also, apart from the media, I'm involved in an NGO that focuses on women, youth and children development.





Driving the health conversation

1. Please give us a brief background on your upbringing.

I was born in Cape Town, the youngest of six children. My parents had recently moved from a farm in the Northern Cape, wanting to raise their growing family closer to schools and universities.

When I was three, we moved from Cape Town to Stellenbosch. It was a wonderful down-to-earth upbringing, playing in the river and the mountains, before all the development we see there today.

I matriculated from Bloemhof Girls' High

2. What was your childhood dream, and why?

I dreamt of being a dancer, choreographer, fine artist and businesswoman. My nature is extremely energetic and driven.

3. What is the one childhood lesson that continues to serve you well today?

Be incredibly honest with yourself.

4. When and how were you drawn into publishing?

My background is in design and marketing, with a strong focus on the publishing industry.

My involvement with the Food for Mzansi team solidified my understanding of publication development. My interest and knowledge on the topic of health and nutrition with my online communication expertise naturally drew me to this role

5. What are the names of your publications, publishing frequency and average monthly impressions?

I'm part of the Food for Mzansi Group, which includes Food for Mzansi, Food for Afrika and Health for Mzansi.

My primary focus is on Health for Mzansi, a multi-channel publication delivering 2-3 engaging health stories daily and 3-4 podcasts per week, as well as a monthly streamed powertalk.

With a dedicated readership of 30 000 unique monthly visitors, we've cultivated a loyal audience that delves deep into our content. This compares to our group's overall reach of up to 500 000 readers a month.

6. What is the main objective of your publication/s?

Our mission is to simplify health, transforming complex issues into actionable steps that empower individuals to thrive, not merely survive. We aim to shatter stigmas and foster open dialogue around health concerns.

By democratising health, we seek to make it accessible and relatable to young South Africans, equipping them with the knowledge and confidence to advocate for their well-being.



We celebrate health heroes, while delving into the unique challenges and triumphs of "kasi health," working to understand and meet the specific needs of our communities.

7. How big is your newsroom?

Four permanent people serve in Health for Mzansi and we accept stories from freelancers from time to time.

8. What do you consider to be the highlights of your publishing journey thus far?

I simply love our stories and the process of growth. We have something truly unique. Our highest recognised achievements: Best Gen Z Initiative 2022 Africa Digital Media Awards and Winner: Best News Podcast in Africa 2023 Africa Digital Media Awards.

8. What are some of the challenges that you have encountered and how did you circumvent them?

Publishing health content presents unique challenges. The deeply personal nature of health topics, coupled with the competitive digital landscape, makes building trust and visibility a formidable task. Search engines often prioritise

established platforms, making it difficult for new health publications to gain traction.

9. What motivates you to keep going?

I am driven by the cause and a desire to create. I also enjoy working with our amazing team.

10. How much does being a woman influence your decision-making?

As a woman, my perspective is inherently shaped by my experiences; even more so as a mother. It's impossible for me to comprehend any other standpoint fully.

11. For the past few years, the conversation has shifted to media sustainability. What do you think will assist the media to turn things around, specifically, independent publishers?

Independent publishers need diverse revenue streams (subscriptions, memberships, grants etc), strong audience engagement, data-driven strategies and partnerships to survive. But, above all, they need to think differently consistently and try different business models.

12. What are some of your future plans?

Well, I think it's best not to share future plans, but rather to share them once they are in action. It does involve health activations and a tech development. But let's make it a surprise.

13. How do you unwind?

Sadly very little time for this at the moment, but hiking, walking my dogs, tending my chickens (I am serious), movies, experimental cooking, friends, running, reading and tasting wines.

Malefane on embracing digital and entrepreneurship



1. Please give us a brief background on your upbringing

I was born in Lesotho in a village called Sekubu, in Butha-Buthe district. I was brought up by my loving grandmother Mme Mmakhothatso Malefane. I went to St Paul Primary School, then moved to Maseru, the capital city of Lesotho, where I attended St Catherines High School. Then we moved to South Africa because of my mother's work, where I enrolled at the then Rand Afrikaanse University, now called the University of Johannesburg.

2. What was your childhood dream, and why?

I was like any other child, I wanted to be beautiful, I wanted to be a model.

3. What is the one childhood lesson that continues to serve you well today?

It is how my grandmother taught me to give and love without expecting anything. However, as a human being, I sometimes get disappointed with some people that one has loved and assisted, that is when I remember my grandmother's teachings.

4. When and how were you drawn into publishing?

I was drawn into publishing as far back as 2001 when I realised there was no black baby and mommy magazine. I knocked on different doors with a proposal, but while everyone said it was a great idea, there was no commitment in investing. One publisher who liked the idea offered me to freelance for her baby magazine, which I did. But, I moved on when I became a political journalist.

5. What are the names of your publications, publishing frequency and audience

My publication is Vutivi Business News. We publish every Thursday, monthly impressions vary, so I can safely say 5 000.

6. What is the main objective of your publication?

Vutivi Business News is an online business news platform that serves small businesses through writing stories that empower them. We deliver a commercially sustainable, world-class online financial and business news service that is a must-read.

7. How big is your newsroom?

It is very small. I work with freelancers only.

8. What do you consider to be the highlights of your publishing journey thus far?

Given that we struggle to get advertising, the fact that I launched during COVID-19 and four years later I continue to publish as promised, I am grateful.

9. What are some of the challenges that you have encountered and how did you circumvent them?

Being unable to afford full-time staff, struggling to source advertising that will bring revenue. These challenges, notwithstanding, but one continues to knock on different doors and there is a promise that one day...

10. What motivates you to keep going?

I believe in my product. I believe I am making a difference in telling the small business owner's story.

11. How much does being a woman influence your decision-making?

I have never been a man, so I don't know how to respond.

12. For the past few years, the conversation has shifted to media sustainability. What do you think will assist the media to turn things around, specifically, independent publishers?

We have to be creative, especially independent publishers on how we can make money so that our publications do not close down.

13. What are some of your future plans?

I want to grow Vutivi Business News to be the go-to publication by small and big business. I want to grow readership as well. I also want Vutivi News Foundation to assist many journalism graduates through our trainee programme so that they can secure employment.

14. How do you unwind?

I go to church, I go to gym, I watch a lot of soapies and reality shows.

Getting to know Shirley Govender, a veteran publisher who launched her first magazine 32 years ago



1. Please give us a brief background on your upbringing

I was born at the Marianhill Monastery Hospital, near Pinetown, KwaZulu-Natal, to my parents, Chandra and Brijlal Ragunanan, several decades ago.

I was the eldest of three siblings. My parents were business owners in Pinetown at the time. My dad, who has since passed away, managed his own furniture factory, and my mom ran a second-hand furniture and hardware store.

We lived in Reservoir Hills, so I attended Reservoir Hills High after completing my earlier schooling at Pinetown Primary until Standard 7. After finishing Matric, I completed my BA Arts Degree, majoring in English and History, at the then University of Durban Westville, now UKZN.

During school holidays, I helped at my parents' shop. During my later high school years, my dad was forced to sell his factory due to Apartheid laws, which imposed huge fines if he sat in his office without a White manager present.

This experience shaped my interest in politics and the injustice my dad faced despite his hard work of over 40 years. He was forced to sell his business at a fraction of its worth, and his pain from this never went away. His background of poverty and a mere Standard 6 education meant he (had) built the business from nothing into a sizeable factory of repute in Pinetown's furniture manufacturing sector.

2. What was your childhood dream, and why?

I was always an avid reader and loved to escape into that world from the busyness of my family work life. With my passion for history, ancient civilisations, travel and adventure, my vision was to be an archaeologist. I saw myself exploring ancient ruins, dusting old bones and artifacts, and looking for clues about how ancient civilisations lived, their cultures and their interactions with other beings, native or extraterrestrial.

The Pyramids of Giza, Stonehenge and the lost City of Atlantis fasci-

nated me. There is so much we don't know about the past that influences our present. This is probably why I loved Harrison Ford and all his adventures in the Indiana Jones franchise. This adventurous spirit remains and fuels my agility in running my newsroom, always learning, repositioning and finding innovative ways to tackle challenges.

What is the one childhood lesson that continues to serve you well today? My dad was a community activist, hands-on in helping others and building the Pinetown and Reservoir Hills communities. He did this service work with humility, integrity, and from the soul.

This altruistic trait was imprinted on my upbringing and that of my siblings. It serves me well, as it's an authentic way of being that means others listen, respect and trust someone who lives in that frequency.

My brand of altruism is tempered with boundaries, though. While I have a soft spot for the underdog or causes for the greater good, I have close to zero tolerance for self-serving egos.

Perhaps that's a Virgo characteristic. We hate dishonesty and have a good nose for "knowing" when something is not in alignment. That's a necessary skill and what drives most journalists - the desire to change the world for the better, creating healthier news narratives, informing, educating and empowering others. These are critical skills for hyper-local news media publishers.

This serves me well in managing the content of my township newspapers in the underserved communities I distribute to. It also shapes my Solutions Journalism workshops and training.

3. When and how were you drawn into publishing?

My journey started as an activist with the ANC in Lenasia South. I was part of the executive committee of the Civic Association of Lenasia South and managed its newsletters in the early '90s.

I saw a gap for a formal local voice and started the Southern Globe

for our hard-won democracy.

4. What are the names of your publications, publishing frequency and print order? If online, average monthly impressions?

The Globe Post prints 20,000 copies monthly and covers areas such as Lenasia South, Ennerdale, Finetown, Hospital Hills, Migson Manor, Lawley and Phumlamqashi. It has an estimated monthly readership of 80 000 for print on average reaches an online audience of 30 000.

The Orange Farm News, established in February 2012, prints 30 000 copies per fortnight (60 000 copies monthly) and covers areas such as Orange Farm, Drieziek, Tjovitjo, Stretford, Lakeside and Palm Springs. It has an estimated readership of 210 000, with an average online reach of 20 000.

The Walkerville & Savanna City Times prints 20 000 copies monthly and covers areas including De Deur, Walkerville, Savanna City, Kanana Park, Meyerton, Roshnee and Weilers Farm. It has an estimated readership of 60 000 with an average online readership of 15 000.

5. What is the main objective of your publication?

The main objective of Xenor Projects' publications - the Globe Post, Orange Farm News, and Walkerville & Savanna City Times - is to inform, educate, and build resilient communities, while acting as a reliable medium of information providing readers with content that is current, impartial, honest, trustworthy and factual, without fear or favour. We are and remain "the voice of the people".

6. How big is your newsroom?

We're a small team of less than 10 dedicated professionals, who execute their duties diligently from sales, admin to news gathering, writing and dissemination.

7. What do you consider to be the highlights of your publishing journey?

Being part of the fight for freedom and amplifying the voices of under-served communities during Apartheid.

Receiving various accolades and awards over the years for pioneering work in community media publishing. Being selected for several prestigious programmes such as Amplify South Africa, Solutions Journalism Network's Training of Trainers programme, Google News Initiative Fundamentals Lab and being a part of the AIP members who visited Ohio, USA, on a fact-finding mission for the community media's sustainability, among others.

8. What are some of the challenges that you have encountered and how did you circumvent them?

Migration to digital and rising print and distribution costs.

To address these challenges, Xenor Projects has expanded its digital presence by including websites (in addition to) its social media platforms, embracing multimedia storytelling, and exploring new revenue models such as memberships, subscriptions, events and merchandise.

Additionally, providing offline access options like downloadable content and SMS updates helps address limited data access issues in under-served communities.

9. What motivates you to keep going?

For me, it's all about impact. The community media has the power to transform lives and communities. I'm humbled to be part of a movement that amplifies the voices of the marginalised and fosters a more just and equitable world.

Local community newspapers play an incredibly important role in building communities from the bottom up. Imagine a world where every community has a voice, where stories that matter are told and heard.

Even the most resonant voices need amplification to reach their full potential. At its core, the community media focuses on informing, educating and amplifying grassroots narratives for vibrant and informed communities.

10. How much does being a woman influence your decision-making?

By embracing my unique perspective as a woman publisher and community journalist, the newsroom culture I've created values diversity, empathy and community-driven storytelling.

Also, there's the trust factor from women-led stakeholders who feel safer to talk and be heard. This leads to stronger grassroots engagement and loyalty with my audience. I have a younger team in both advertising and editorial. They see me in a maturing, overseer role in what is very much a family environment. This allows for a more creative, collaborative runway when making decisions and seeing projects through.

11. For the past few years, the conversation has shifted to media sustainability. What do you think will assist the media to turn things around, specifically independent publishers?

To achieve sustainability, independent publishers can focus on strengthening community ties and exploring diverse revenue models. Engaging deeply with their communities and maintaining trust through accurate reporting will build a loyal readership.

Revenue can be generated through subscriptions, membership programmes and crowdfunding.

Diversifying offerings through vertical and horizontal integration, such as adding multimedia content and related services, can attract a wider audience.

In the attention economy, the content strategy should focus on high-quality, niche topics to become indispensable to specific audiences.

Leveraging data and analytics will help tailor content to reader interests.

Additionally, innovative advertising models, like affordable local advertising and relevant sponsored content, can create mutually beneficial relationships with local businesses.

By adopting these strategies, hyperlocal independent community media can navigate current challenges and remain relevant and sustainable.

12. What are some of your future plans?

We aim to continue expanding our digital footprint through innovative storytelling formats such as podcasts and leveraging solutions journalism to foster stronger community connections.

Also, we plan to explore alternative revenue streams and provide value-added services to sponsors and advertisers.

13. How do you unwind?

Meditation and prayer, sipping on green tea, sitting at the fireplace with a good book, walks in nature and spending quality time with my loved ones.

Paving the way for upcoming female journalists

1. Please give us a brief background on your upbringing

I grew up in Ilunge township, (near Queenstown in the Eastern Cape. I am from a big family of seven children. As the second born at home, I grew up looking after my siblings, assisting my mom with home chores and I learnt to be responsible from a very young age.

Growing up in a Christian family taught me so many lessons and kept me out of trouble. I must admit that those Christian values instilled by my parents and my Sunday school class are the ones that keep me grounded.

I did my primary education at Thembekile Primary School, went to Welcome Valley Junior Primary School, followed by Philget Mzazi Senior Secondary School

Lastly, I attended my high school at Lingelihle High School, where I obtained my matric certificate.

I hold an advanced Diploma in Journalism, Bachelor's Degree and Honours in Communication.

Also, I have various certificates from different institutions of higher learning and organisations.

I am currently reading for a Master's at the University of Fort Hare.

2. What was your childhood dream, and why?

My dream was to become a teacher, to be honest because those days it was a big deal to be an educator. But, that changed with time and I am now educating people in a different way through my newspaper.

3. When and how were you drawn into publishing?

I was drawn into publishing during my varsity days when my supervisor Dr Beckman appointed me to co-edit a Peer Times A4 newsletter. Since then I have never looked back.

4. What are the names of your publications, publishing frequency and print order?

I run one publication that prints the traditional copy bi-monthly and has a website and Facebook page with more than 10 000 views and followers.

Also, we are planning to have a sister paper that will have an online version that will cover my hometown stories in their mother tongue.

5. What are the main objectives of your publication?

Our primary goal as (a) media company is to become one of the leading training grounds for upcoming journalists and continue to produce citizen journalists who can reach the highest levels of competency.

We have already produced a number of young journalists and public relations officers through our internship and work experiential training.

These students were studying at Fort Hare and WSU (Walter Sisulu University), including citizen journalists as mentioned above with no formal journalism background.



6. How big is your newsroom?

I am also at the helm of a small and manageable newsroom of two reporters, two freelancers and two subeditors.

In addition to that, I represent Eastern Cape publishers as the EC board member and one of the founding members of the AIP.

7. What do you consider to be the highlights of your publishing journey thus far?

As a young business-minded woman, I am also involved in a homestay project in my municipality run by the Tourism department.

Homestays are less formal than B&Bs and were introduced in 2012 to support the growth of tourism in less-developed rural areas.

8. What are some of the challenges that you have encountered and how did you circumvent them?

Just like any other developing small print media company operating in rural areas, we face sustainability challenges and a lack of continuous support to carry

on with our mandate of educating, informing and entertaining our readers.

9. What motivates you to keep going?

I am motivated by my passion for the printing (media) to share ideas to educate and to inform our readers about social ills that affect them the most in their communities.

10. How much does being a woman influence your decision-making?

Being a woman in a male-dominated field is not easy, but I am driven exactly by that to prove that a woman is capable of much more when she puts her mind to it.

I am preparing for upcoming female journalists to find the work space better than when we found it.

To crown it all, women in general have multiple roles in life and are characterised for being kind and honest. This motivates me to be more diligent when making business decisions.

11. For the past few years, the conversation has shifted to media sustainability. What do you think will assist the media to turn things around, specifically, independent publishers?

I, personally, think what will save us as independent publishers is to embrace new technology and make use of new sustainability models to support our projects.

This needs us to work hard and be creative enough or come up with innovative ways of running professional and thriving community media companies.

12. How do you unwind?

I spend time with my family going to the gym, listening to music, playing tennis and watching theatre shows.

Seekoei is living her childhood publishing dream

1. Please give us a brief background on your upbringing.

I was born in Thaba Nchu, which is 65km east of Bloemfontein in the Free State. I am the first born of two girls, but growing up in my grandmother's house until I was 13 years old, has given me more sisters and brothers. I was raised by a single mom who was adamant about giving us a good education.

I started my primary schooling at Namanya Primary School in Thaba Nchu and proceeded to Liphoko Middle School. In 1995 I was enrolled at Unicom High School in Tweespruit, where I did my Matric in 2000.

I enrolled for Media Studies at the University of the Free State and completed my postgraduate Diploma in Journalism at Rhodes University in 2005.

2. What was your childhood dream, and why?

I used to enjoy the sitcom Living Single, which featured the character of Khadija James, played by Queen Latifa. She used to run a publication. But, it was not until high school (where) my English teacher started the school newspaper that I realised how much that character had impacted (on) me. All I wanted from that point was to be a journalist.

3. What is the one childhood lesson that continues to serve you well today?

My mom always used to say to me, no one owes you anything. I live by that, I depend on me and my abilities. I ask for help knowing it's a privilege to actually have people surrounding me and assisting me.

4. When and how were you drawn into publishing?

The fact that I wanted to one day have my own publication. It was only a matter of time and space.

5. What are the names of your publications, publishing frequency and average monthly impressions?

Ignited Woman magazine is a bi-monthly digital publication reaching over 2 500 engaged readers each month.

6. What is the main objective of your publication?

Our main goal is to use our media platforms to provide thought-provoking content, insightful interviews, and resources focused on personal and professional development for women.

Our mission is to ignite the spark within every woman, helping them to reach their full potential by giving our audience the tools to improve their lives and inspire others with their achievements.

Also, we create empowerment events that serve as a platform for women to network and share knowledge.

7. How big is your newsroom?

We have a small team that includes a copywriter, social media and marketing. We use freelancers as our sales consultants.

8. What do you consider to be the highlights of your publishing journey thus far?

The immediate would be acquiring our Audit Bureau of Circulation cer-



tificate. That is a vote of confidence that we can take into the market as we strive to scale the business.

Another is the fact that we have reached issue number 34. As a small publishing house without any kind of financial support from the government or corporate (sector), that is a mean feat.

9. What are some of the challenges that you have encountered and how did you circumvent them?

Right at the beginning, the plan was to print and get the magazine into retail, but the cost of production quickly dashed that dream. I then decided to keep the dream alive by publishing digitally. Bridge capital has not been the easiest to come by, but we have made strides and developed sales models that have the potential to grow our business.

10. What motivates you to keep going?

Wanting to live the dream, understanding my vision and the desire to see it come to life.

11. How much does being a woman influence your decision-making?

Naturally, my decision-making process as a woman can differ from traditional male-dominated decision-making styles in that I am considerate, have empathy and more inclusive of my team in all decisions that have to be taken. But I am hard when needs be and decisive always.

12. For the past few years, the conversation has shifted to media sustainability. What do you think will assist the media to turn things around, specifically, independent publishers?

There is little support for independent publishers, particularly in provinces that are not your traditional media hubs. In this case, let's mention the Free State. We have seen how publishing houses are forced to fold and people lose jobs because of lack of sustainability, publishers almost become beggars of government departments as they strive for this sustainability.

I believe that as independent publishers, we need to start having long-standing collaborations with both public and private entities. Also, to (assist) independent publishers to achieve media sustainability, we need to have a multi-faceted approach that includes diversifying revenue streams through subscriptions, crowdfunding and even partnerships. Collaboration among independent publishers to share resources and best practices can also strengthen their collective voice and market presence, but perhaps it's not a conversation some are ready to have.

13. What are some of your future plans?

We need to grow our community. We have been doing well in the past few months to get the brand noticeable to women, but we want our numbers to grow. We still have the plan to get the magazine on to the shelves.

14. How do you unwind?

Spending some quality time with my family over a home-cooked meal. (And yes) to a glass of sparkling wine.

The view from the inner city



1. Please give us a brief background on your upbringing

My name is Sithembile Moyo born, raised, and educated in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. I am the firstborn of three, raised by my grandparents while my mother was working in Tel Aviv, Israel. Being raised by my grandparents was not easy, but, it paved a path for me to become the independent businesswoman I am today. She taught me to sell vegetables on the streets and braai maize meal as well as selling firewood we never slept on an empty stomach, and I learned to interact with customers when I was 10 years old.

Selling taught me to be an entrepreneur I am today, marketing for Inner-city Gazette.

2. What was your childhood dream, and why?

My childhood dream was to be a successful woman and independent because I saw how committed my grandmother was when running her own small business with the confidence to work hard no matter what.

3. What is the one childhood lesson that continues to serve you well today?

When you continue with what you started, everything falls into place as you add your consistency, commitment, and dedication business without education, she encouraged me in a sense that nothing is impossible when you start something.

4. When and how were you drawn into publishing?

I started a forum called Friends of the Inner-City Forum in 2007. It was my late husband Moses Moyo, one of the building managers in Hill-brow Jack Lesudi and I. We helped tenants in a way that they had questions or problems concerning their billing and other problems involving tenant landlords or building companies. We first gathered a newsletter then we thought of starting a newspaper so that the community would voice out through the publication. Friends of Inner-City Forum won an award in 2009 called the Halala Joburg Awards under Caring Joburg 2009 Winner (JDA)

5. What are the names of your publications, publishing frequency and print order?

Inner City Gazette newspaper is based in Johannesburg and was established in 2009 turning 15 years old this year, printing 5000 copies fortnightly. Online monthly impressions

6. What is the main objective of your publication?

Inner City Gazette focuses on positive news in our community and working together with local stakeholders and organisations covering events and participating in anything that builds up the community.

7. How big is your newsroom?

The team includes graphic designers, distributing guys, two salespeople, and journalists I am using interns.

8. What do you consider to be the highlights of your publishing journey thus far?

Inner City Gazette was part of Telkom –Highway Africa New Media Awards Runner Up Innovative Newsroom also has been nominated for the SAHA Awards that are going to be held on the 21st of September 2024. Grateful to be working and serving the Community to achieve a better future.

9. What are some of the challenges that you have encountered and how did you circumvent them?

Challenges that I am facing are finances as I am an independent publisher with no sponsors or donors involved. It's not easy as advertising is declining but I am grateful that even if it's hard I have not closed, still printing. I am also a photographer, I do piece jobs for photography that is another thing that has kept me going. This time you can't rely on being a publisher we need to be involved in other businesses so we can survive.

10. What motivates you to keep going?

What keeps me going is I am running a family legacy as my late husband was so dedicated to his work. The last thing that I want to do is to shut down his passion and my children they keep me going as I look at them every day, I live for them.

11. How much does being a woman influence your decision-making?

It's a huge impact that needs all of your focus, all things are on you being a parent and work but at the end of the day, excellent product comes up.

12. For the past few years, the conversation has shifted to media sustainability. What do you think will assist the media to turn things around, specifically, independent publishers?

We need to do online and see if the revenue turns around and also try interviews on podcasts. Publishers need to come out with new strategies to source out ads or advertorials from clients and also be active online.

13. What are some of your future plans?

I would love to be an advocate for single women /mothers who are either widows or single as I have experienced on my side.

On a quest to promote and preserve Bapedi culture



1. Please give us a brief background on your upbringing

I am Lerato Charity Mampa. I was born in Hammanskraal, north of Pretoria. I'm the eldest in my family.

I did my primary schooling at Maesela Primary School. I then went to Fetakgomo High School, where I matriculated. I proceeded to study journalism at the Tshwane University of Technology.

I had the best upbringing as both my parents were teachers and they prioritised education. I was and still is daddy's little girl.

2. What was your childhood dream, and why?

I have always liked the limelight and the media in general. I wanted to be a newsreader, but I guess God had other plans. That is why I ended up in print media. I wanted to be an example to my peers that our dreams are valid.

3. What is the one childhood lesson that continues to serve you well today?

It is what I learnt from my late grandmother that motho ke motho ka batho and motho ga hlogogwe a sa phela.

4. When and how were you drawn into publishing?

I was drawn into publishing in 2016. I saw a gap in the publishing industry, especially when it comes to publishing in the mother tongue. I wanted to promote the language and culture of Bapedi through my newspaper.

5. What is the name of your publication, publishing frequency and print order?

The name of my publication is The Reporter Newspaper and we are also available online www.thereporternews.co.za. Our publication is a fortnightly newspaper with 10 000 print order.

6. How big is your newsroom?

My newspaper is small. However, we are growing every day. At the

moment we are comprised of four staff, a layout designer and three journalists.

7. What is the main objective of your publication?

The objective of my publication is to make sure that the people receive information in a language they all understand and to give young people a glimpse into what happens in a newsroom.

8. What do you consider to be the highlights of your publishing journey thus far?

The highlights of my publication was when I was nominated as the Best Community Journalist by the South African Heroes Awards.

9. What are some of the challenges that you have encountered and how did you circumvent them?

The challenges I have experienced is when clients don't want to pay or they pay late.

I believe being (diplomatic) solves a lot of things.

10. How much does being a woman influence your decision-making?

Being a woman is hard, especially when it comes to decision making because the world is yet to believe in women.

11. For the past few years, the conversation has shifted to media sustainability. What do you think will assist the media to turn things around, specifically, independent publishers?

The only thing that will help the independent media is that the government should consider us as one of their stakeholders and the private businesses must consider advertising with us.

12. What are some of your future plans?

My future plan is to launch a talk show podcast.

13. How do you unwind?

I unwind by taking long drives or reading a motivational book.

AIP | ASSOCIATION OF
INDEPENDENT
PUBLISHERS



Empowering township communities through publishing

1. Please give us a brief background on your upbringing.

I am Zinhle Cebekhulu, the daughter of Lindamkhonto Cebekhulu and Fikelephi LaMasuku Cebekhulu. I was born in Durban in 1987, raised in KwaMashu before moving to Ntuzuma. I spent most of my youth in Ntuzuma surrounded by a loving family, including my six siblings.

Now, there are four of us left. My first primary school was Mzwabantu Primary School, then I spent one year at Bonisanani Primary School and later moved to Rydville Primary and Rydal Park Secondary School.

I hold a diploma in Media and Journalism Studies and a Media Consulting Diploma, along with numerous certificates in journalism, radio news anchoring, media management and business management.

2. What was your childhood dream, and why?

As a child, I always (dreamt) of becoming a radio presenter or travel journalist. I was fascinated by the power of stories and how they could influence and inspire people. This dream was rooted in my passion for communication and creativity.

3. What is the one childhood lesson that continues to serve you well today?

It is the value of perseverance. I had to learn to live without my father, transitioning and adapting from being well-off to average or poor and changing schools. Growing up in a challenging environment after the death of my father taught me to be resilient and persistent in pursuing my goals, no matter the obstacles.

4. When and how were you drawn into publishing?

My journey into publishing began during my time at Pretoria Technical College, where I was a Media Studies lecturer and had to develop a school magazine with my students. Also, working with various media houses and community media organisations solidified my passion for publishing, especially print media. The combination of my academic background and hands-on experience in scriptwriting, presenting and editorial management naturally led me to this field.

5. What are the names of your publications, publishing frequency and print order?

My primary publication is Inkundla Yezindaba community newspaper. It is based in the north of Durban. We publish once a month in isiZulu, with print orders ranging from 5 000 to 10 000 copies.

Also, we publish every Friday on our website. Inkundla Yezindaba is a print publication with a significant readership in our community.

6. What is the main objective of your publication?

The main objective of Inkundla Yezindaba is to provide reliable, relevant and engaging news to our community. We aim to be the voice of the people, highlighting local stories, issues and achievements.



7. How big is your newsroom?

Our newsroom is modest, but dedicated. We have a team of five, including journalists and editors who work tirelessly to ensure the quality and integrity of our content.

8. What do you consider to be the highlights of your publishing journey thus far?

One of the highlights of my publishing journey so far is working with different publishers and organising the Mzansi Community Media and Creative Awards. This initiative has allowed us to recognise and celebrate the talents in our media community, fostering a sense of pride and unity.

9. What are some of the challenges that you have encountered and how did you circumvent them?

One of the significant challenges we have encountered is maintaining financial sustainability in a competitive media landscape, along with the high rates of

printing costs and distribution.

We have circumvented this by diversifying our revenue streams, such as organising events like Creative Minds for the Youth and awards events.

These initiatives not only generate revenue, but also strengthen our community ties.

10. What motivates you to keep going?

My passion for storytelling and my commitment to serving my community and knowing that our publication makes a difference in people's lives keeps me driven and focused.

11. How much does being a woman influence your decision-making?

Being a woman influences my decision-making by fostering a sense of empathy, inclusivity and resilience. I strive to create opportunities for other women in the media industry and to ensure that our content reflects diverse perspectives.

12. For the past few years, the conversation has shifted to media sustainability. What do you think will assist the media to turn things around, specifically, independent publishers?

To turn things around, independent publishers need to embrace innovation, such as leveraging digital platforms and social media. Building strong community relationships and exploring alternative revenue models are also crucial.

13. What are some of your future plans?

My future plans include expanding the reach of Inkundla Yezindaba, enhancing our digital presence and continuing to organise impactful community events. Also, I am interested in exploring partnerships and collaborations to further our mission.

14. How do you unwind?

I enjoy spending time with my partner, family and friends, exploring nature and indulging in my love for reading and writing. These activities help me recharge and stay inspired.

Makunga outlines her Sanef vision



1. Please give us a brief background on your upbringing.

I was born in a small Eastern Cape town called Uitenhage (now called Kariega) to a then young mother and father.

I was raised by my grandparents, a very strict school principal grandmother and a grandfather who worked in a car manufacturing factory.

My parents later got married to other people and I was then blessed with four siblings, two younger brothers on my Dad's side and a brother and sister on my Mom's side.

I had a somewhat strange but pleasant childhood. At around 12 years old, my grandparents retired and relocated to our rural home in Alice. I remained in Uitenhage for sometime and lived with nannies who came and went frequently, and for lengthy periods of time. This meant I lived alone for most of the time, a period which shaped so much of who I am. I had to grow up quickly and take responsibility for myself, my schooling and the household.

At the time I attended a Catholic high school, Marymount, which instilled values of discipline. I later joined my grandparents in Alice, where I finished Matric before returning to Port Elizabeth to study Journalism at PE Tech. It was then that I reunited with my mom as a young adult.

2. What was your childhood dream, and why?

I don't know if I had any childhood dreams to be honest. At the age of 11 years old I knew I wanted to tell stories for a living. This desire was first born out of my love for writing, a practice from which I found companionship as a teenager, as well as exposure to political storytelling at the time. Although I was yet to understand the world of journalism, I was very aware of the power of storytelling in shaping society and empowering people with information. And that's what I knew I wanted to do.

3. What is the one childhood lesson that continues to serve you well today?

To listen. Dialogue was a big part of my family culture. We are people who discuss anything and everything, all the time. The most important part of that discourse is to listen. This has become so valuable in my line of work, whether in private or public spaces. Hearing what people are saying is important. Hearing what they aren't saying is what defines relationships.

Congratulations on your recent election as the Sanef chairperson. What does this mean to you, personally and professionally?

Thank you very much. Leading Sanef, at this time in our democracy, is a huge responsibility. The organisation has grown to become the most influential entity in the South African media industry. With that, comes the responsibility to be aware of our immediate and future reality as an industry. The responsibility to lead constructive conversations and to make interventions needed to better our industry is something I do not take lightly.

We have a responsibility to be intentional about inclusivity, the sustainability and impact of our work.

Personally, leading Sanef is an opportunity to learn about myself, people and our world.

It is an opportunity for me to grow mentally, emotionally and to contribute, hopefully, to an industry that has given me so much.

4. Why does Sanef matter and what are you hoping to achieve during your tenure?

There is no doubt that our industry across the world is experiencing one of its most challenging chapters. Not only is our sustainability under threat because of lagging business models, trust in institutions has diminished.

Media companies and practitioners have a responsibility to innovate, upskill, engage in conversation that entrench accountability and promote democratic principles.

But, to do that, they need major support from industry bodies who can lobby collectively for a better and safer environment for journalists to work. Sanef's role is to advocate for such an environment through support, training of journalists, policy interventions and finding new ways for journalism as a craft to be impactful.

There are three things we would like to achieve in this tenure:

- a) to establish a Journalism Sustainability Fund, to support public interest journalism and strengthen capacity and accountability in the information eco-system;
- b) to make meaningful interventions in upskilling journalists through academic fellowships that target complex reporting areas such as climate change;
- c) to promote a culture of wellness among media practitioners with the support of current and new partners.

5. What do you consider to be the highlights of your journalism career thus far and why?

My appointment as the editor of the Sowetan at 38 (is) certainly one. Being trusted to lead a publication with such a rich history and pedigree is not something I take lightly. Being the youngest and the first woman to do so became an affirmation to many colleagues walking a similar journey to mine.

Of course, being elected to lead Sanef is an absolute honour.

6. If you contrast the newsroom you joined as an intern/junior journalist and the ones you have led, what is the one common thread and how does it influence how you lead?

There are so many changes, from the team size to the different workflows as dictated by news consumption patterns. Digitalisation is probably the biggest change variable in the modern newsroom.

At the time, I went on a story, returned to the office and wrote it for a publication the next day. Today, teams go live as they do the stories. They produce journalism for multiple platforms (that) may have different audiences, needs and nuance.

One common thread, however, is the environment of creativity, probably the one thing I love the most about a newsroom. It is a space of debate, disagreements, pruning of ideas and, importantly, reflection.

7. How have you been received as a woman leader? How has it shaped how you lead?

From time to time I have had colleagues whose posture against me has been overtly resistant because I am a woman who is much younger than them.

But, this has not been an overwhelming part of my story. I have had the privilege of working with exceptional colleagues who have embraced me as a person, and embraced my leadership and passion for what we do. These are the people from whose energy and aspirations I draw mine.

Importantly, I have witnessed how my position as a leader has affirmed women colleagues for whom representation matters. This is what I find most encouraging.

8. The one thing that the Sowetan gets right, is its front pages. Who is the brains behind those front pages?

Everyone in the newsroom. People often don't believe me when I say this :) But the Sowetan front pages are a product of collaboration in the newsroom.

I believe in creating a space where everyone engages, challenges their thinking and level of creativity. Whether you are a writer, pictures editor, a subeditor or a news editor, we all pitch in with ideas of how to converse with South Africa through presentation of our news. Yes, I must ultimately make the final call on accuracy, ethics, tone etc.

Of course, we have the best page designer in the game. He has the eye to turn my scruffy drawing on paper to a masterpiece.

9. What are some of the mistakes that you have made as a newsroom leader, that if given a chance, you would go back and rectify?

I am deeply impatient. It's a flaw I try to manage every day. I want things done now. Sometimes I successfully manage my expectations and allow for things to be done in their own time. But, many times I fail.

I have worked in a daily deadline-driven world for 20 years. I do think this has warped my sense of time to some degree. It's an ongoing journey of self-management.

10. For the past few years, the conversation has shifted to media sustainability. Is there a silver bullet that can help the industry turn things around?

None at all. There is no silver bullet. As an industry, we have to do a number of things.

One of the most important things we need to do is to get South Africans to understand the value of investing in public interest journalism.

It is not about enriching media owners or rewarding journalists whose work we may disagree with, as some suggest.

It is about the simple principle that no democracy can survive without independent, ethical journalism (that) holds power to account and promotes a transparent society.

That investment can come in different forms: subscriptions, ad revenue or tailored information services, depending on each media entity's business model.

Whatever it is, we all must support it if we are committed to what journalism can be in service of the nation.

We must invest in newsrooms, journalists and regulatory bodies across the board to be able to respond to the information and accountability needs of our audiences.

11. In 2024, how do you motivate an aspiring journalist?

Work (on) your craft. Commit to excellence. Learn to forgive yourself quickly. Never lose sight of the fact that this work is a service to the nation.

12. How do you unwind?

I wish I could say I go on hikes and cool things like that, but I don't shame. I sleep. Literally, I sleep to relax.



FAST FACTS *about the AIP*

- Established in 2005; 
- Represents independent publishers nationally, print and online; 
- It is distinct from community media outlets owned by large media groups; 
 - Publishes in 11 official languages; 
 - Represents 178 publications; 
 - Represents 148 publishers; 
- Boasts a 7.4 million total monthly readership; 
 - Has a 2.4 million monthly print run. 

Source: Become a member:

<https://aip.org.za/membership/#codeofconduct>