

You can count on her

Time for women to grab opportunities: statistician

NOSIPHO MNGOMA

GROWING up in a rural village in KwaZulu-Natal, Nonhlanhla Yende-Zuma's future seemed destined for domestic, factory or shop assistant work after high school.

"If not that, then you waited for a man to marry you and you'd bear his children," she said.

Now a statistician, Yende-Zuma, 37, was determined to look beyond this horizon that was the norm for many girls in her village near Estcourt.

"I knew that to change my future, I needed to do well in school."

That she did, excelling in mathematics and science, so-called "boys' subjects".

"Maths came naturally to me. While everyone was struggling, I found it easy and understood and followed everything well, I loved it," said Yende-Zuma.

After school she would fetch water from the river, wash her only school shirt for the next day, cook, dish up and wash dishes before studying by candlelight.

"There was not a lot of emphasis on education from the teachers or parents. It was just not a priority in a community where there is no money to further your education anyway, it was demotivating," she said.

Finance threatened to derail her when she could not land a bursary after matric.

"Instead of just sitting on my hands that year, I decided

to upgrade my maths and science marks at a community college in Nottingham Road.

"I was, at least, getting geographically closer to Pietermaritzburg where the university (of KwaZulu-Natal) was," she laughs.

When Yende-Zuma finally made it into university in 2001, she was placed in the Science Foundation Programme. "I felt cheated because it looked more like doing matric for the third time now. But I had to remind myself that the road to success is never easy."

She completed her BSc degree in Statistics in 2004, honours the next year and Masters in 2010.

"People laughed at me, my family said I was dreaming, but I pushed on because I

knew what I wanted."

She joined the Centre for the Aids Programme of Research in South Africa (Caprisa) nine years ago as a trainee and, within a year, was fully employed in the statistics department.

"It means a lot to me that although I am still working with numbers, these numbers have a meaning, they are attached to people's lives. At Caprisa I have been integrally involved in TB and HIV treatment projects.

"As a result I have been involved in statistical analysis, data management and also participated in numerous high impact publications involved in HIV and TB treatment. Additionally, I provide assistance and statistical

guidance to numerous doctoral and post-doctoral fellows at Caprisa," said Yende-Zuma.

With all her achievements, she is forging ahead with her education and is registered for a PhD in Statistics with a focus on Biostatistics at UKZN.

She encourages young women not to shun maths and science because "they create opportunities you have never dreamed of".

"I started with my own daughter who initially did not want to study maths and science subjects because 'they are hard'. I told her nothing was difficult if she applied herself, studied and practised. She is currently in Grade 12 and hopefully in the near future will contribute to the

NATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY:
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From rural KZN to statistician for an internationally recognised organisation, Nonhlanhla Yende-Zuma, has not allowed circumstance chart her path, instead she has forged her own road to success.



A white rhino is captured by conservation officials in the Kruger National Park, this week. PICTURE: REUTERS

Bid to save rhinos continues

AS A helicopter hovers above, men emerge from the bush, using rope to haul a one-ton male white rhino they have sedated with a dart fired from the air.

The animal is one of hundreds to be moved from "hot spots" in the Kruger National Park where they are at risk from soaring demand for rhino horn.

"Our priority is to move the animals from 'hot spots' near the boundary fence," said Markus Hofmeyr, the head vet for South African National Parks.

While a public backlash rages against a Minnesota dentist who killed Zimbabwe's Cecil the lion, Hofmeyr's focus is not on wealthy big game hunters but on the poachers who killed more than 1 200 rhinos in South Africa last year.

That was a fourfold increase over 2010, as a result of increasing demand for rhino horn in newly affluent Asian countries

such as Vietnam where it is prized in traditional medicine. Most of the poachers are drawn from neighbouring Mozambique, which borders the Kruger and remains one of the world's poorest nations despite huge gas and coal finds.

South Africa is home to more than 80% of the world's rhino population, with more than 20 000.

About 5 000 of these are on private reserves, whose owners derive an income from ecotourism and legal hunts and could earn a new income stream if the ban on trade in rhino horn is ever lifted.

After Hofmeyr's team coaxes a sedated rhino to a dirt road, they gently tip it over and set about drilling a hole into the horn to install a microchip. If it is subsequently poached and the horn removed, it can be traced.

Hofmeyr also hurriedly draws blood from the animal

for research. Then the rhino is brought to its feet and led by rope about 40m to a waiting crate, to be lifted by crane on to a flatbed truck.

The basic methods of capturing rhino remain the same as in the early 1960s, when the Kruger – then seen as a "safe haven" – was restocked with white rhinos from the Umfolozi Game Reserve to the south.

Mortality rates were high during the early efforts to capture live rhinos. Now the operations use safer drugs, with darting and tracking done from helicopters.

For security reasons, the exact locations of the darting operations, precise removal numbers and the rhinos' new homes are kept secret. The government has previously said it might move 200 this year to "strongholds". "Rhinos really aren't safe anywhere," Hofmeyr said. – Reuters

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App makes studying easier for matrics

FROM the age of three, he began dabbling with computers, and now, as a 17-year-old Grade 11 pupil, has developed an app to help matrics come out tops at the end of their academic year.

Jacques Blom was commissioned by Oxford University Press South Africa (Oupsa) to develop Flippit. He was helped by his business partner, Sanjiv Ranchood, also in Grade 11 at Westerford High School.

The app was launched last Friday and Blom said pupils at his school were already saying that it was great and an easy-to-use study guide.

Flippit consists of digital flashcard for 14 subjects, which allow pupils to learn content, test themselves, and compete against other pupils, making it fun and easy to study before tests and exams.

"I think the reason they came up with this app is that there is a shortage of good digital education resources for South African students. The brilliant thing about Flippit is that it is in-line with the South African Caps curriculum, so matrics using it can be sure the content they are studying is the what they will be assessed on."

Blom started programming when he was just 5-years-old, and now runs React Technology, a web and mobile app development company, in partnership with Ranchood.

He said while he could not give exact numbers of how many times the app has been downloaded, he said it had been "great and many students have started adopting Flippit".

Once a user feels confident enough they can go into test mode where random multiple choice and true or false questions will be asked about the flashcards they saw.

It also allows pupils to challenge their friends on the content in real time.

"The app generates multiple choice and true/false questions, and displays it to both me and my friend. Once we have both completed the challenge, our scores are compared and the winner is chosen. This provides students with a really fun way to learn."

Oupsa managing director, Steve Cilliers, said they realised the need for technology to be introduced to pupils.

"Working with Jacques has been great as he has ensured that the app is relevant and suitable for the user. He thinks from the perspective of the developer and the user, so we've been able to get the best of both worlds to ensure that flippit really does help learners study." – Daily News Correspondent

Perspiration now no sweat

LONDON: A public relations executive was forced to take six months off because heavy sweating made her embarrassed to go into the office.

Esme De Silva had suffered from excessive sweating – hyperhidrosis – since she was a teenager.

But as she got older her anxiety over the condition became so severe she had to take a sabbatical from work. De Silva, 25, from Maidenhead, Berkshire, said her self-esteem was at an all-time low.

Last year, De Silva's anxiety became so unbearable she took a six-month break from work.

She began to feel depressed, and the long-term relationship she was in at the time broke down.

De Silva had tried a number of possible cures, but when medics suggested injecting her armpits with Botox she began researching alternative treatments. "I couldn't bare the idea of injections," she said.

It was Odaban, an antiperspirant spray applied before going to bed, that finally eased the sweating. It works by partially blocking sweat ducts with "plugs" formed from aluminium and skin proteins.

"I feel like a different person," said De Silva, who has resumed working.

"There's no pressure or paranoia that people are talking about me. "I don't have to worry about sweat soaking right through my clothes as it did before." – Daily Mail

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Women's fantasy workplace

Turning down the air-conditioning is just one dream for female workers – there are plenty of other improvements they would love to make to their workplaces. Here, Jan Moir imagines offices designed by women...

- WITH immediate effect, a ban on men walking through the office, newspaper under one arm, whistling with merry anticipation, as they head to the loo.
- Proper cloakrooms, please, where outdoor clothes and shoes can be deposited neatly – instead of strewn around the office, making the place look like an apocalyptic car-boot sale. To be furnished with full-length

- mirrors, hair straighteners and curling tongs. And perfume bar.
- The removal of all football tables, break-out zones, dart boards, themed conference rooms, sport pin-ups and executive boy toys. We are here to work, not to be infantilised. Also, any practical jokes to result in instant dismissal.
- The introduction of a champagne wagon at 4pm every day. Staff would be served desk-side with a single, chilled glass of excellent fizz before continuing with work. The noisy rattle of ice buckets would serve as a useful alarm clock for employees who had nodded off after lunch.
- No more huddles of smokers around building entrances, making workers negotiate a

- daily nicotine fug. Plus, death to anyone who doesn't wash out their coffee mug.
- A moratorium on men gathering to watch sports on office television sets and making ooofttt! noises every time a footballer scores a goal.
- Better lighting, please. We would like it to be softer and more flattering. Perhaps some desk lamps with rose-coloured shades and dimmer switches?
- Evening-shift staff would be encouraged to light fig-scented candles and lay out snacks.
- Comfort bra breaks. A discreet, chill-out spa area where women could divest themselves of the tyranny of bras and high-heeled shoes for an hour or so. Freshly laundered onesies supplied. – Daily Mail

Spice up for long life

LONDON: People who eat spicy food every day have a lower risk of an early death, research suggests.

Scientists found that spicy food was linked to fewer deaths from cancer, heart disease and breathing problems.

A study of about 500 000 middle-aged people found that those who ate a spicy meal every one or two days were far less likely to die than those who infrequently ate the food. Scientists suspect that capsaicin – a chemical contained in chilli peppers – has anti-obesity, antioxidant, anti-inflammation and cancer fighting properties.

The research was based on a study of 487 000 Chinese people, each between the ages of 30 and 79. Each participant was

questioned about their health and eating habits, and tracked over the next seven years, in which time 20 224 of them died.

The researchers, from Oxford University, Harvard School of Public Health in the US and the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences, found that people who ate spicy food every one or two days were 14% less likely to die than those who ate it less than once a week.

Frequent consumption of spicy foods was particularly linked to a lower risk of death from cancer, heart disease and breathing problems.

The authors stressed that because they had only looked at broad statistical trends, and not at the exact role spice had played in each case, they could

draw no concrete conclusions about cause and effect.

But they cited previous research which has linked capsaicin to resistance to obesity, cancer and other diseases.

Experts welcomed the findings – but stressed that they should be treated with caution. Professor Kevin McConway of the Open University, said: "It's important to realise that the study gives very little encouragement for the stereotypical English pastime of going out for several pints of beer and a hot curry."

"The relationship between eating spicy food and a lower death rate was apparent really only in people who didn't drink alcohol at all." – Daily Mail