



You are cordially invited to a webinar on

Changing mindsets about disabilities within
the Science, Technology, and Innovation
(STI) Landscape:
the South African context

**as part of the ASSAf Inclusivity Initiative: Gender
Equity And Persons With Disabilities**

BACKGROUND

Following the launch of the ASSAf's Inclusivity Initiative on Gender Equity And Persons With Disabilities, during the 2023 Science Forum South Africa, ASSAf in partnership with ProAccess and The Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World, South African National Chapter (OWSD SA NC) is hosting a webinar titled "Changing mindsets about disabilities within the Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) Landscape: the South African context".

The webinar aims to demonstrate how embracing the social model of disability can facilitate a change in mindsets about disabilities, and thus work towards a more inclusive society that benefits all by fostering diversity, innovation, and social justice.

Date: 27 June 2024

Time: 13:00 - 15:00

RSVP: [Click here](#)



Prof Leslie Swartz is Editor-in-chief of the South African Journal of Science (SAJS). He was the founder Editor-in-chief of the African Journal of Disability (AJOD) and is also Editor-in-chief of the Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research. He holds a PhD in Psychology from UCT and a PhD in English from Stellenbosch University.

Much of his work centres on disability rights and access, and mental health in southern Africa. He has a particular interest in developing scholarly writing, and has run training on academic publishing in a number of African countries and at South African universities. He holds an A rating from the NRF and is a professor of psychology at Stellenbosch University.



Mark Bannister is a Chartered Mechanical Engineer, Member of the Institute of Mechanical Engineers; Pr Eng. Engineering Council of SA, and Senior Fellow of the Water Institute of South Africa.

He has 32 years of working experience: 13 years as Chief Engineer at the Department of Water and Sanitation, 8 years in the NGO sector (Mvula Trust, South Africa as Regional Manager of Limpopo Province), 8 years in Water Utilities (Umgeni Water, South Africa, Severn Trent Water and Welsh Water in the UK), 3 years in the private sector (ECI Development Consultants). He is also an author of the book "Eyes Wide Open". He has been blessed with a condition called Spinal Muscular Atrophy and has required the use of a wheelchair for all his life.



Prof Jill Hanass-Hancock is Chief Specialist Scientist, South African Medical Research Council, Gender and Health Research Unit. During the last decade, her research focused on sexual and reproductive health and rights for vulnerable people in Southern Africa. Prof Jill is known for her contributions to the understanding of the sexual and reproductive health needs of people with disabilities using a variety of research approaches including ethnography, epidemiology, situation and policy analysis techniques and the development, piloting and evaluating of several tailored interventions in the health and education sector.

She also provided significant support to translate research into policy. Her previous work particularly contributed to the understanding of the vulnerability of women with disabilities to HIV and violence, the increased risk of disability among people living with HIV and methods to measure the cost of disability. The later was among the best of UNICEF research 2016. In her current research most noteworthy is her work on comprehensive sexuality education and young people with disabilities through developing an evidence-informed curriculum innovation to provide CSE in accessible formats.

In Prof Jill's current research most noteworthy is her work on comprehensive sexuality education and young people with disabilities through developing an evidence-informed curriculum innovation to provide CSE in accessible formats. This intervention called Breaking the Silence has been identified by UNESCO as a good practise. She was also the principal investigator of the ALIGHT Botswana project which focused on increase participation of women with disabilities in GBV programmes and the Forgotten Agenda project which focuses on the sexual and reproductive health and needs of women with disabilities under the COVID pandemic in South Africa. This project won the Discovery Award for Policy Translation in the 2023 South African AIDS Conference. Currently she leads the Disability Data Initiative Sub-Saharan Africa, which provides an innovative approach towards disability rights monitoring using publicly available datasets. She is also the developer of the Disability Awareness Checklist and accompanying toolkit, which is an action orientated tool to transform health facilities into inclusive and accessible services utilising local resources.



Dr Kamini Govender has a PhD in Pharmaceutical Chemistry. She is a post-doctoral research fellow in South Africa at the University of the Free State, in the Biochemistry department, with a current research interest in Biocatalysis. Her research expertise is multidisciplinary encompassing Biochemistry, Microbiology, Pharmaceutical Chemistry and Medical Biochemistry.

She has published cutting edge research in seven peer reviewed papers in high impact factor journals, as well as presented in ten conferences both local conferences and international (virtually). She was recently featured in an article in Nature. In 2020 she won best poster in the Royal Society of Chemistry/South African Chemical Institute Young Chemists' Symposium. In 2023, she was selected as one of nine South African Scientists to participate in the prestigious 72nd Nobel Lindau Meeting in Germany centred around Medicine and Physiology. She was an ADHOC-lecturer in UKZN (PMB) for MICR 213- Bacteriology in 2023. She also served as a reviewer in Frontiers in Endocrinology (Impact factor of 6.055). Dr Kamini Govender is part of eight scientific bodies which includes; South African Society for Microbiology, South African Society of Biochemistry and Molecular, European Federation for Medicinal Chemistry Young Scientists Network, Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World and Empowering Female Minds in STEM (EFEMS), South African Young Academy of Science (SAYAS) and she was selected in 2024 as the SynBio Africa ambassador of South Africa, Southern Africa region and Women in Synthetic Biology Africa (WiSBA). All the above achievements and accolades were accomplished despite having a visual impairment (retinitis pigmentosa). In the future she would like to inspire other young girls to pursue careers in STEM fields.



Noluthando Sicholo is Founder and CEO of ProAccess. She is a passionate advocate for accessibility and equal opportunities. Drawing from her extensive experience in the corporate South African short-term insurance industry, she recognized the persistent disadvantages faced by individuals with disabilities.

This realization ignited her journey, leading her to establish ProAccess - an organization committed to championing the rights of people with disabilities. With unwavering determination, Noluthando embarked on a mission to create a world where everyone can participate fully, regardless of ability. ProAccess collaborates with organizations, government agencies, and educational institutions to make this vision a reality. Noluthando's journey exemplifies resilience, determination, and compassion. Her impact extends beyond organizational boundaries, touching the lives of countless individuals. Through ProAccess, she continues to pave the way for a more inclusive and accessible future.



Ntokozo Msiza is a driven and passionate woman in STEM. She holds a BSc Pasture Science (University of Fort Hare), MSc Animal Science (North West University) and currently pursuing her PhD in Animal Science, specializing in Pasture Science at the North West University.

Her academic excellence has been recognized through prestigious leadership fellowships such as the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) Fort Hare Autumn School, Black Women in Science (BWIS), and African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD). Her research and professional engagements have taken her to Germany, Brazil, Angola, and Botswana, enriching her perspectives and expertise. Ntokozo is actively involved in professional organizations, serving as an executive committee member of OWSD SA National Chapter, where she heads the Public Relations, Advocacy and Outreach activities programme. She is a registered Candidate Scientist with the South African Council for Natural Scientific Professions (SACNAPS) and a member of the South African Society of Animal Science. Her contributions to academia have been recognized, notably being named the Best Oral Presenter in the PhD category at the 2023 All Africa Conference on Animal Agriculture. She is an entrepreneur, founding PhahlaLwendlu Farming, an agricultural consultation company. With more than five publications and ongoing research collaborations, Msiza continues to make significant contributions to Pasture Science, inspiring aspiring scientists and agriculturalists with her dedication and passion for sustainability.



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