I see you developing as a movement of powerful, brilliant, uncompromising women, fearlessly proud of yourselves, driving social change. As you do so, be unashamedly proud of who you are and your success. Fly anywhere and everywhere while grounded on African soil. – Graça Machel, in an address to the scholars
Introduction

Jointly managed by the Canon Collins Trust and the Graça Machel Trust, Graça Machel Scholarships are awarded to outstanding women from southern Africa to pursue postgraduate study. 65 scholarships have been awarded in a wide range of disciplines, with women from rural backgrounds being prioritized. The scholarship is made possible by the support of SASOL, Macsteel, the Sol Plaatjie Foundation and others.

Graça Machel Scholars are welcomed into a family which includes mentors from Mrs Machel’s personal network and alumni from across the Canon Collins Trust network. The Graça Machel Women’s Leadership Retreat, held every two years, provides an opportunity for scholars to gather within this wider network of women leaders for a challenging, inspirational weekend.

The second Retreat was held at the HSBC headquarters in Johannesburg from 18-20th May 2012, with generous sponsorship from HSBC and the Commonwealth Foundation.

Graça Machel Women’s Leadership Retreat 2012

The theme for the 2012 Retreat was taken from Mahatma Gandhi’s famous quote, “be the change you wish to see in the world”. Mrs Machel was keen for the scholars to explore how they could embody change in their communities and countries, but also ‘lift as they climb’, empowering others too.

More specifically, the aims were to:

- Empower scholars to embody change in their communities
- Increase awareness of development issues in Africa
- Increase awareness of women’s rights issues, enabling Graça Machel Scholars to act as advocates for equality and empowerment across a wide range of fields
- Cement the values of the Graça Machel Scholars and strengthen their identity as a group
Formalise a structure to enable the scholars to function as a network of southern African women’s rights activists and ambassadors
Identify concrete ways the members can work across borders and sectors
Build on the mentoring programme launched at the 2009 Retreat by reviewing progress and establishing key principles for moving forward

The Retreat was attended by 36 Graça Machel Scholars and Alumni from a range of fields, including three doctors, several teachers, lecturers, scientists and civil servants, a lawyer, an accountent, an ichthyologist and two economists (see Appendix 1 for full list). They were joined by an impressive array of African women leaders, including:

- **Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka**, former Deputy President of South Africa
- **Phuti Mahanyele**, CEO of Shanduka Group
- **Michelle Ndiaye-Ntab**, Managing Director of the Mandela Institute for Development Studies and former CEO of Greenpeace Africa
- **Ory Okolloh**, Google Policy Manager for Africa
- **Professor Puleng LenkaBula**, Associate Professor of Ethics at UNISA
- and of course, **Mrs Graça Machel** herself.

Also in attendance were representatives of the Canon Collins Trust alumni network and the mentors appointed at the first Retreat, including **Wendy Luhabe**, **Riah Phiyega** and **Pindie Nyandoro**. Speakers were from Mozambique, South Africa, Kenya, Ghana, Senegal and Lesotho.

Scholars travelled from South Africa, Swaziland, Lesotho, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Botswana, Mozambique, and Madagascar to attend the Retreat. A wide range of international organisations, government ministries, universities and community-based organisations were represented among them (see Appendix 1).

**Summary of Programme**

Scholars arriving early were treated to a pre-Retreat tour of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, courtesy of the Director Geoff Rothschild, and the HSBC trading floor. Geoff welcomed scholars to the JSE and made a brief presentation on its history before opening up to a lively dialogue. Scholars then visited HSBC’s trading floor, where staff welcomed them, described their work and answered questions. They were also shown the server room, which they were guided through by HSBC IT staff. These tours offered rare access to one of Africa’s key financial hubs which drives the economy across the region.
Session 1: Welcome

Graça Machel and Her Excellency Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, former Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa, set the tone for the Retreat in an informal opening session. They congratulated the scholars on their achievements but also emphasised the responsibilities that come with privileges such as education, power and leadership positions, urging scholars to “never rise alone”. Scholars also took the opportunity to introduce themselves and their work to Mrs Machel.

Participants were greeted at the HSBC headquarters by HSBC Africa’s CEO Mr Andrew Dell, and a group of HSBC staff. Mr Dell offered a personal welcome to Mrs Machel and the delegates, and warmly wished them a productive weekend.

Mrs Machel: “My dream, my vision for you is that you will be able to step on the shoulders of those who came before you, to reach even higher.”

Session 2: Dialogue with Mrs Machel

Mrs Machel delivered a far-reaching address about women’s rights in 21st century Africa. Although important achievements have been made over the past century, barriers and limitations remain for women to exercise their capacities fully as equal members of society. Mrs Machel cited gender-based violence and forced marriage as particularly urgent issues faced by women around the world and in particular African women. She maintained, however,
that the 21st century is an exciting time to be a woman, as we stand on the shoulders of heroines who have fought sexism and colonialism in the 20th century. Using the example of Rosa Parks, Mrs Machel reminded scholars that affirming one’s dignity can be a simple act. She further encouraged them to use their studies, and their capacity as generators of knowledge, to drive and embody the social changes they wish to see in Africa. Finally, she emphasized that in order to maximize its impact change must take place not only at the individual level, but as part of a network. This set the tone for the sessions to come.

**Session 3: African Development**

The Director of the Graça Machel Trust, **Rachel Toku-Appiah**, opened this thought-provoking session. She reminded delegates of the challenges facing the continent, including marginalization in world trade and the low ranking of African countries on the Human Development Index. She compared the contrasting development trajectories of case studies Ghana and Singapore. Rachel championed the mainstreaming of African heritage into development policies and practices in order to generate new perspectives and approaches which make development interventions relevant and sustainable.

Award-winning technology innovator **Ory Okolloh** gave a powerful and challenging address, quoting Thomas Sankara as she reminded delegates that change requires courage, not only in relation to other people, but also to oneself. Using examples from her experience as founder of Ushahidi, current Policy Manager at Google Africa, and wife and mother—along with a healthy dash of humour—she went on to outline key messages for embodying change. These included claiming your space, taking action, and pursuing excellence.

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**Ory Okolloh:** “At the end of the day, no one can fight with excellence. Develop a reputation for excellence and everything else will follow.”

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*You cannot carry out fundamental change without a certain amount of madness… it comes from nonconformity, the courage to turn your back on the old formulas, the courage to invent the future.* —Thomas Sankara
Phuti Mahanyele, CEO of Shanduka Group, gave an exciting talk emphasizing the unprecedented opportunities and fast pace of change in today’s Africa. She asked delegates to consider how they were positioning themselves within this climate, arguing that unless Africa manages to tackle the issues of education and unemployment, it will be ill-equipped to reap the benefits. She encouraged scholars to be ambitious, bold, and forward-thinking as they embody change—and, crucially, to remain visible to and in touch with their communities as they progress in their careers.

Phuti Mahanyele: “You need to be able to see a reflection of yourself that is not in the mirror...to look beyond, to see what you can be”.

Session 4: Values

Michelle Ndiaye Ntab, Managing Director of the Mandela Institute for Development Studies (MINDS), lead the scholars in a lively, interactive session on values. Beginning with an exploration of change on an individual level, scholars moved on to explore how they might embody change in a particular context or environment. They then revisited the key values they had adopted during the 2009 Retreat, discussed them at length and refined them to a core set of four values which they affirmed and adopted as a group. Building on Ory Okolloh’s speech, the scholars chose excellence, action, integrity and commitment as the guiding values for their network.
Session 5: Networking

Dr Gillian Attwood of Canon Collins Trust lead an intensive session on networking, in which delegates considered how to form a structure to act on the values agreed on in the previous session. They agreed to establish a Google group to stay in touch, as well as using existing Canon Collins Trust alumni networks. They also developed practical plans to act on their values as a group, including taking action in each of their countries during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence in December 2012.

“Claiming an African Identity”

During a formal dinner, the keynote address by Professor Puleng LenkaBula of the University of South Africa (UNISA) on “Claiming an African Identity” provided a thought-provoking case study. Having earlier discussed how to ‘claim their space’ and embody change, scholars listened to Professor LenkaBula’s experience embodying change in the post-apartheid context at UNISA. Professor LenkaBula noted the dominance of canons of knowledge, and called for the promotion of African knowledge systems and expertise. The role that Graça Machel Scholars play as producers and disseminators of knowledge was clear from her address.

The power of knowledge you have, or are acquiring—use it!

Mrs Machel addresses the scholars
Session 6: Mentoring

Mentoring remains an essential element of the Graça Machel Scholarship programme, and a key objective of the Retreat was to revisit the mentoring programme established at the first Retreat. A session facilitated by Juanene Frydman, Head of Inner I Consulting, discussed mentors’ and mentees’ expectations, potential stumbling blocks and the key components of a good mentor-mentee-relationship. With scholars and mentors Wendy Luhabe, Riah Phiyega and Pindie Nyandoro, she established some non-negotiable rules of engagement, including duration, clarity of purpose, accountability, and a structured and focused ‘drum beating process’ facilitating the relationship. Scholars were provided with a range of tools to use in designing and monitoring their mentoring relationships.

Session 7: Looking Forward

During this session, scholars combined the outcomes of their Values and Networking sessions and condensed these into personal pledges. These outline how they plan to affirm the shared values of excellence, commitment, integrity and action on an individual level (see Appendix 2 for selected pledges). Scholars who participated in the 2009 Retreat provided updates on the pledges they had made at that time. Individual scholars also volunteered to act as focal points in each country to ensure that the group and individual pledges are taken forward (see Appendix 3).
Outcomes

The Retreat provided an invaluable opportunity for this network of southern African women from all walks of life and sectors of work to gather, exchange ideas and share experiences. Throughout the sessions, participants had ample time to ask questions and they made use of this extensively to engage in dialogue with speakers.

During the Retreat participants discussed and agreed on a core set of values and then committed to taking action both on an individual and a group level to affirm these.

Key outcomes were as follows:

- **Scholars felt empowered to embody change in their communities.** This was clear from the overwhelmingly positive responses in person and in the evaluation. It is also documented in scholars’ personal pledges.

- **Scholars increased their awareness of development issues in Africa,** not only through the African Development Session but also through interaction with each other.

- **Scholars increased their awareness of women’s rights issues,** particularly through Mrs Machel’s powerful address on the history of African women’s rights. They also had the opportunity to learn from each others’ expertise, as many participants are working on gender issues in their home countries.

- The **group identity** of the Graça Machel Scholars was strengthened through discussion and establishment of shared values of excellence, commitment, integrity and action.

- A **structured network was established** which will enable the scholars to work together across borders and sectors. Communications methods were set up and one volunteer from each country volunteered to lead activities on a month-by-month basis.

- Scholars completed **personal pledge forms** detailing how they plan to act on the shared values in their communities and sectors (see Appendix 2).

- The **mentoring programme** was reviewed in detail. Scholars and mentors discussed the programme’s successes and challenges so far and established key principles for moving forward.
The next Retreat will be held in two years’ time. In the interim period, five main action points emerged:

1. Scholars will each undertake a Graça Machel Scholars Project in their community which will be their particular form of directed activism aimed at social change. Scholars will themselves decide on what projects they want to undertake and how they will do this. The date by which each scholar should have completed their project is the 16th of December 2012.

2. Details of the projects undertaken by scholars will be compiled into a booklet by Canon Collins Trust, which can be shared with other scholars, partners and stakeholders.

3. Scholars will use the tools and lessons developed in the Mentoring session of the Retreat to identify potential mentors and decide how they would like to structure their relationship. Canon Collins Trust will assist them in approaching mentors.

4. Scholars will work towards their individual pledges, which encompass their personal, professional and academic lives.

5. Group and individual pledges will be monitored through the Google group and the country leads. They will be formally revisited at the next Retreat.
Conclusion

The Graça Machel Women’s Leadership Retreat is a cornerstone of the Graça Machel Scholarship Programme, the long-term goal of which is to network women leaders from across the Southern African Development Community. This Retreat opened with a challenge from Mrs Machel: “Be the change you wish to see in the world”. Throughout the weekend, scholars worked together to explore this concept. They heard from inspirational women who shared their experience embodying change across sectors and countries, from Mrs Machel’s work with child victims of conflict in Mozambique, to Ory Okolloh using technology as a tool of democracy in Kenya and Professor LenkaBula mainstreaming African knowledge canons into teaching at UNISA.

In the working sessions, scholars used insights from the speakers to establish a network and choose key values to guide it. They then made pledges at individual and group level detailing specifically how they plan to embody these values in their various communities.

The opportunity to engage with Mrs Machel and the other speakers on an informal, individual level as well as through more formalized group dialogue was immensely valuable for the scholars. Throughout the Retreat an inclusive, participatory approach was adopted which enabled constant dialogue between scholars, speakers and facilitators.

On a broader level, the Retreat built on an international network of women leaders from a wide range of sectors across southern Africa. It enhanced the capacity of women’s organisations by showcasing individual and organisational learning from projects addressing gender equality, and providing practical working sessions on leadership values and strategies. Scholars have taken these skills and insights back to their communities and workplaces across southern Africa, from hospitals to community-based organisations, government ministries, research stations and international NGOs. They will continue to stay in touch to support and empower each other in embodying change, until the next opportunity for them to gather comes at the 2014 Retreat.

The importance of living to the standards we set for ourselves during this Retreat cannot be overstated. Mama Machel, we commit to continue making you proud wherever we go.

Kaya Tshabalala from South Africa, Graça Machel Scholar 2009-2012 (PhD Inclusive Education) thanks Mrs Machel on behalf of all the scholars during the closing session