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Female Academic Leaders Fellowship NPC mourns the passing of Professor Keo Motaung

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It is with profound sadness that we share the devastating news of the passing of **Prof Keolebogile (Keo) Shirley Motaung**. Prof Motaung led the FALF/FREF/NMU Research Chair in Entrepreneurship and Financial Inclusion at the Nelson Mandela University. The FirstRand Empowerment Foundation (FREF) funded research chair had a soft launch at Wits University when FALF celebrated five years.

Prof. Keo Motaung learnt entrepreneurship from entrepreneurial parents and started a business while she was still in primary school. Born in Soweto township, she studied Biomedical Science, obtaining a PhD, from the US on bone engineering and cartilage regeneration. Her values, hard work, ambition and aspirations sustained her during her career and made her adaptable. She had to pivot from bone and cartilage regeneration when South Africa wasn't ready for that innovation, to using indigenous plants and indigenous knowledge to heal wounds. The commercialisation of her patented plant-derived technology, led to the development of **La-Africa Soother** a natural anti-inflammatory ointment that reached the market as Global Health Biotech's first product.

She was a distinguished Biomedical Scientist, Full Professor, and Founder & CEO of Global Health Biotech, with over 26 years of experience in Higher Education. A passionate teacher and collaborator, she organised national and international conferences and represented South Africa as part of ministerial delegations in the signing of bilateral agreements with international partners. Prof. Motaung established herself as a trailblazing leader in teaching and learning, research, innovation, entrepreneurship, and the commercialisation of research. She was deeply passionate about capacity building, having successfully supervised and mentored numerous postgraduate students and emerging researchers. Her work with the Department of Science and Innovation often involved strengthening international collaborations and advancing the role of women in STEAMi (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics & Innovation) research.

As both a scientist and an entrepreneur, Prof. Motaung trained her postgraduate students not only to conduct rigorous research but also to think entrepreneurially, equipping them to create jobs and contribute to the economy in a context where unemployment remains high.



The FALF family deeply feels the loss of Prof Motaung where she spent her last 100 days. We take some comfort in knowing that her legacy will prevail through all who learned from her and her contribution to science, academia and society. We extend our deep condolences to her family, colleagues, students and friends during this incredibly difficult time.

Phomola ka Khotso Prof Keo, u loanne ntoa e ntle!

FALF FAMILY.
