# Listening – Transcript

<https://theconversation.com/pasha-47-how-to-increase-the-role-women-play-in-developing-the-continent-128320>

In today’s episode of Pasha, Roula Inglesi-Lotz, co-leader of the Women in Science Working Group and an associate professor of economics at the University of Pretoria in South Africa, takes us through the role women can play in science, technology and development on the continent.

First she takes us through the concept of missing women in academia.

R I-L: The concept of missing women is widely discussed in the literature. Another way of looking to the concept is by looking at how many women were born, how many were educated, and eventually how many make it to the labour force – which shows exactly that we are missing the opportunity to engage all of these women in the working environment.

An academic at the University of Antananarivo in Madagascar, explains why education is so important for women. ‘Women are the first in charge of educating the children, and so if the women are not well educated it will be hard for them to really train their children for the future – you know, we have failed them, to lead to development. The youth and the children need a lot of care from their mother, so the mother really needs to be well educated’.

*What are the major challenges facing women?*

R I-L: In my work as a mentor and supervisor of young African ladies, and as a co-leader of the working group of Women in Science and the Global Young Academy, the common reason I see why changes are slow is they are mainly cultural. I don’t mean traditions. I don’t mean anything to do with historical backgrounds. But I have to… what I’m discussing is the mentality of the minds of the sections of society. I’m wondering if the potential of women is not behind historical norms and perceptions. Examples that come from my everyday life, as an academic – more than one PhD candidate inform me through the years that their families worry that they won’t get married because they will be too educated when they finish. We have undergraduate female students that worry that they will have to pick between a family or having a career. Female scientists and academics feel that they are always a step behind their male counterparts because there’s a stereotype that women are better in multitasking, admin and teaching, so the responsibility all falls on them. With the World Development report 2012 – that report found a pattern. At all levels of income women do the majority of housework and caring and correspondingly less time in market work. The difference ranges from 20% more time spent on housework by women than men in Cambodia, to 6 times more in Guinea; and from 70% more time for child care in Sweden to 10 times more in Iraq. This difference has an impact on women’s ability to participate in work, and fully engage in their career, as well as providing role models to the next generation.

*How can we increase the role women play in developing the continent?*

So programmes that promote women’s inclusion are needed. They are urgently needed. But they also need to be accompanied with change in mindsets, in the way of thinking – otherwise they will just be another tick in a checklist. The role African women can and must play in the continent in Science and Technology should not be restricted to an accumulation of knowledge and skills. These skills need to be impactful – the research, the teaching, everything needs to be impactful to the society and the economy as a whole. We need to start considering that women should not just participate in the workforce, but also be able to be the leaders, and make changes for future generations of both men and women in Science and Technology. So women in the continent can become decision-makers and leaders in business, in technology and academia if we want to move towards a peaceful and sustainable future for all.

*It’s clear that women have a massive role to play in developing the continent. The challenge lies in helping them reach their potential to do so.*