LEADING WOMEN
IN AFRICA

AWIEF CELEBRATES
5 YEARS

WOMEN CEOs
SHARE INSIGHTS
WE ARE MORE THAN A BRAND!

IN A HIGHLY GLOBALISED WORLD WE FACE MANY CHALLENGES AND WITH THESE CHALLENGES COMES RESPONSIBILITIES.

Social responsibility that aims to build our nation is not only an aspiration but an ambition we ardently continue to pursue, with the sole purpose to be a brand and enterprise that looks to constantly develop communities across the country.

We are a corporation that believes in linking social initiatives to an intrinsic holistic enterprise development strategy, with an attainable mandate.

RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS OF OUR STAKEHOLDERS:

CUSTOMERS
Meet our customers’ needs, partnerships that create societal performance and impact.

COMMUNITIES
Address poverty and unemployment, through the creation of jobs, skills development and socio-economic development (including access to energy).

The successful integration & implementation of these components will realise Shell’s transformation agenda that will be driven by nation building, with a competitive social value that differentiates itself through results.

INVESTORS
Deliver cash and contribute towards a world-class investment case, through maintaining our current markets and accessing new markets.

REGULATORS
Remain committed to compliance, through ensuring regulatory and legislative compliance requirements are met.

OUR ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IS ANCHORED BY THE PILLARS BELOW:

CREATE
- Partnerships in servicing customers, and securing new customers.
- Grow Black owned and Black women owned suppliers.

SUPPORT
- Transfer needed business skills.
- Provide access to funding – grants, loans, equity.
- Provide access to markets – supply chain, partnerships in servicing customers.

GROW
- Profitable
- Job Creation
- Sustainable

FLOURISH
- Diversity – reduced concentration risk.
- More sustainable – ability to be competitive.
- Create additional jobs.
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The AWIEF Insights publication is a celebration of AWIEF’s five-year anniversary. Five years of travelling the African continent to find out what women entrepreneurs needed, and creating platforms to enable them to be supported on their entrepreneurial journeys.

With AWIEF Insights, we wanted to celebrate and acknowledge great women leaders on the continent, across the political, civil society and business sphere, by asking them to share their leadership journeys and their wisdom to inspire women entrepreneurs across the continent, as well as provide encouragement to younger women entrepreneurs.

We are incredibly thankful to these leading women in Africa for taking the time out of their extremely busy schedules to contribute. Their writing benchmarks the struggles women leaders go through to earn their place at the boardroom table or in leading Government, and is deeply moving at times. Above all it is inspirational. South Africa’s former first lady, Zanlele Mbeki’s heartfelt story about her incredible journey in exile across Africa during Apartheid, tells us that “every generation learns more from the past and from the institutions they are able to access”. Publishing her story and those of the other women on these pages is a great privilege.

Economic activist Wendy Luhabe, in turn writes that, “We are influenced by pathfinders who show us what is possible, who leave their footprints behind them and who lead by example, who lift as they rise.”

Entrepreneurship as a force for development in Africa is acknowledged widely. AWIEF focuses on building capacity in women entrepreneurs in Africa, providing necessary skills and training. Across Africa, women are driving change and disruption, contributing to job creation and socio-economic growth in their countries and communities.

According to the United Nations, Africa boasts the world’s highest rate of women entrepreneurs (27%) and the MasterCard Index of Women Entrepreneurs 2017 listed two African countries, Uganda (34.8%) and Botswana (34.6%), as having the highest percentage of women entrepreneurs globally. Other countries in Africa with high numbers of women entrepreneurs include, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya and Zambia (source: Africa Renewal, November 2018).

The problem is that this is disproportionately, when compared with other countries in Africa and the fact that ownership rests in small and micro businesses with limited growth opportunities. In Africa, only 9% of start-ups have women leaders, according to a 2016 study by Venture Capital for Africa.

Apart from access to funding, networks and mentorship, financial literacy and business acumen; women entrepreneurs also need role models. The more women in leadership positions in Government, business and civil society, the more cultural barriers will fall. That is what drove the idea for AWIEF Insights to fruition.

As Dr Vera Songwe writes for us, “no one can climb this mountain alone”. She advocates the pursuit of excellence to achieve greatness as a collective effort. There is no greater collective effort underway right now, as the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement (AfCFTA), which Dr Songwe describes as a “watershed moment for the continent” and “the beginning of the implementation of Africa’s Pan African economic empowerment movement”.

There is also another valid reason for supporting and investing in women-led and women-owned businesses: women typically invest 90% of their earnings back into their families and communities; compared to 30-40% by men, as reported by the London-based Africa Technology Business Network (ATBN).

African women have come a long way, but there is still a lot left to be done to achieve gender balance: sub-Saharan Africa is the only region globally where women make up the majority of self-employed individuals. This is not merely an indication of the redefinition of women’s economic roles; it also reflects how African women are reshaping the modern global economy.

Yet, women own just one percent of the world’s wealth and only a fraction of that is attributable to African women.

Given the opportunity, African women invest the majority of their income into their families and communities, but unfortunately most of these women experience unnecessary barriers that limit their ability to fully and equitably participate in the economy.

With the annual AWIEF event, we want to provide a platform to celebrate, reflect on progress made and dialogue on how to accelerate Agenda 2030 and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, especially goal number five: “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”.

Many of the women writing on these pages talk about passion and trusting ourselves as women. Sylvia CEO, Magda Wierzycka, says, “you need to be passionate about what you are doing to succeed”; and Ogilvy Managing Partner, Lebo Madiba, says female intuition is our “superpower”. Publicis Africa MD, Odette van der Haar writes that, “everyone has to be an entrepreneur” as that is where Africa’s job creation and economic stimulation will come from.

I wish to profoundly acknowledge the invaluable and robust support of our partners and sponsors without which we would not have been celebrating this five-year anniversary. I thank the entire AWIEF team, without whose indefatigable efforts, contributions and resilience even when the odds appeared rather unsurmountable, this first edition of AWIEF Insights would not have been a reality.

We will go from strength to strength as an organisation as our continent rapidly transforms on the economic front, bolstered by positive Government and business actions, the impact of AfCFTA, as well as action to achieve the SDGs by 2030; and the African Union Agenda 2063. As the former President of Mauritius, Her Excellency Dr Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, says on the pages of this publication, “A better tomorrow is possible for our continent”, and AWIEF will work hard together with like-minded partners to make that happen!
Editor’s Note

Editing this publication has been deeply inspirational. As someone who has been in the publishing and media industry for 30 years, I found myself wishing that I had received some of this excellent advice and wisdom at the start of my career, when at age 19 years, I started my first job at a daily newspaper. I had never heard of mentorship as a concept and didn’t know the first thing about seeking out mentors or building networks.

While it still takes a lot of hard work and sacrifice to start a business today and climb the career ladder, young entrepreneurs are supported and encouraged by organisations such as AWIEF and we know more about the importance of mentoring in organisational learning and passing on skills, and there are far more platforms available to entrepreneurs, including young women entrepreneurs, to receive training and inspiration.

Social media also provides excellent opportunities to connect with like-minded people on the same journey as you - across the globe; as well as to build your brand.

What makes AWIEF Insights special is the stories from these great women in Africa, whether in Government, leadership, business and brands. It is their inspirational journeys and generosity in imparting the wisdom they do from their success. Their forthrightness is heart-warming and this publication has become not only a celebration of women entrepreneurship on the Pan-African continent, but also as a keepsake for any woman entrepreneur starting out or needing motivation and encouragement to continue.

Our deepest thanks to all our contributors who took the time to write their stories; the brands that have supported us; and especially to Irene Ochem, whose vision in founding AWIEF in support of women entrepreneurs across the continent of Africa, has made possible significant projects such as AWIEF Insights. We hope this publication will take this vision further and provide hope and encouragement long after all the events have concluded.

Enjoy!

LOUISE MARSLAND
Editor: AWIEF Insights

Image courtesy of L’Oréal

‘WOMEN SOWING THE SEEDS OF SUCCESS’

Our philosophy as a bank has set us on journey with phenomenal women who have become leaders, says Nirmala Reddy, Nedbank Business Banking, Senior Manager Enterprise Development.

These business women have broken the mould. These are business women we are proud to be associated with. Each one a force to be reckoned with beyond her skill, strategic abilities and can-do attitude. That intrinsic streak which makes her persevere because her family, her employees depend on her, is the reason she will not let dismal economic conditions stop her. It is the reason she will not take no for an answer and will camp outside an office from 2am to ensure she gives customer satisfaction. It is the reason she doesn’t wait for it, she goes out and gets it.

The dialogue has changed. We no longer aspire to become the next Richard Branson (with due respect to Sir Branson), we now aspire to become the next Bongiwe Monakedi (Monako Cleaning), Puleng Tubane (NRP Properties), Charlotte Khaza (Mila Group), Annamare Mosert (Mila Group), Zaytoon Bene’feli (L & M Interiors), Zaynaib Chotia (I Sambo), Zoleka Molapisi (ByDesignAfrica), Zaheeda Essa (Popsack) and Benzi Shabalala (Benzi for Flowers).

I leave you to ponder on these amazing South African business women we are proud to be associated with. Each one a force to be reckoned with beyond her skill, strategic abilities and can-do attitude. That intrinsic streak which makes her persevere because her family, her employees depend on her, is the reason she will not let dismal economic conditions stop her. It is the reason she will not take no for an answer and will camp outside an office from 2am to ensure she gives customer satisfaction. It is the reason she doesn’t wait for it, she goes out and gets it.

For more information please email Nirmala Reddy at nirmalareddy@nedbank.co.za

Nirmala Reddy
Nedbank, Senior Manager Enterprise Development

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Prior to becoming President, she served as Managing Director of the Centre International de Développement Pharmaceutique (CIDP) Research and Innovation, as well as Professor of Organic Chemistry with an endowed chair at the University of Mauritius. She is working actively to raise awareness of global warming and to promote new investments in science and technology in Mauritius and the broader African continent. As founder of the Centre for Pytotherapy Research, she was central to compiling a database of Mauritian plant species.

Since 2001, she served successively as Dean of the Faculty of Science and Pro Vice Chancellor (2004-2010). She has also worked at the Mauritius Research Council as Manager for Research (1995-1997). H.E. Gurib-Fakim earned a BSc in Chemistry from the University of Surrey, UK (1983), and a PhD from the University of Exeter (1987), at which time she began working at the University of Mauritius.

Between 1987 and 1992, she served as Project Leader for the first Regional Research Project on the Inventory and Study of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants of the Indian Ocean, funded by the European Development Fund under the aegis of the Indian Ocean Commission. During 2000-2002, she served as the National Coordinator for the Indian Ocean University funded by the European Union. Between 2011 and 2013, she was elected and served as Chairperson of the International Council for Scientific Union – Regional Office for Africa. She has authored and/or co-edited 28 books and several book chapters and scientific articles in the field of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. She has lectured extensively across the world and is a Member of the Editorial Boards of major journals, has served on Technical Committees in various capacities, including the Chair of several National Committees in Mauritius.

Her Excellancy Dr Ameenah Gurib-Fakim is a Mauritian politician and biodiversity scientist who served as the sixth President of Mauritius – and the island’s first female President – from 2015 to 2018.

To what do you attribute your success as a woman leader in Africa?

Success is the tip of the iceberg and down below there’s hard work, determination, frustrations, amongst so many other features which people do not see. Success is a long journey and made possible through sheer hard work, for which there is no substitute; learning to take risks; as well as being pragmatic.

What would you say are the most important attributes needed to be a successful leader on the continent?

Over and above hard work, leaders must be able to listen, communicate, be empathetic and deliver on promises. There is nothing more corrosive than empty promises and growing cynicism.

Please describe how you have made and continue to make an impact in Africa?

When I was in office, I had said that I wanted to drive capacity building through sciences, technology and innovation. The continent badly needs it to deliver on the SDGs (United Nations Sustainable Development Goals). I have set up my foundation to do just that. Among the projects I have started are book publications on our biodiversity; raising funds for promoting girls in STEM; advocating for climate change; and entrepreneurship. These remain very close to my heart.

How can young women drive change and contribute to the success of an Africa which leads on the world stage?

It is no longer a question of whether women can lead the change, because they are at the heart of it. They are going to be the drivers of these changes and we as a large community of Africans, have to ensure that she is empowered and properly equipped to do that. A sound quality educationÆ build her self-confidenceÆ and allow her to thrive in an appropriate environment.

What inspires you on a daily basis in your life and keeps you on your true path?

Recently, I have been participating in many forums across the continent where I see young people enthusiastic and galvanised to do things for the continent. It gives me hope that a better tomorrow is possible for our dear continent which deserves that… Africa’s future is in the minds and not the mines!
To what do you attribute your success as a woman leader in Africa?

First, I do not think of this as success. It is an intangible concept. However, if I were to be asked how did you make it here? I would say a lot of hard work, commitment, clarity of conviction and purpose, results orientation and most of all a continuous quest to improve the lives of people around me. The discipline of having a clear goal and result is sobering but also helps you to focus. For every action I take, I have an expected result I hope to achieve. Having daily, monthly, yearly targets and working against these targets has been a very good discipline, but also a humbling tool for me. Humbling because you will be surprised at how many times I fail to achieve the results I expect. Those moments force me to stop and assess why and hold myself to account.

I am always and constantly asking myself why I do what I do? What are the results I am looking to achieve? But the purpose of my actions has evolved over the years, from merely considering my personal objectives, to focus on the whole of society’s aspirations and looking at my actions as a positive influence or change for others that has been brought about by my ideas or actions.

What would you say are the most important attributes needed to be a successful leader on the continent?

The pursuit of excellence, a collective excellence. I always say strive for excellence and you will achieve greatness. This however must be collective. The importance of creating communities of followers, of likeminded individuals cannot be under-estimated.

The challenges we face are daunting and even with the best of ideas, resources and energy, no one can climb this mountain alone. Working in Africa for Africa and being part of the journey of creating prosperity and giving hope and providing a platform for Africans to dream is a privilege. Staying focused on this goal encapsulated in the SDGs is therefore critical.

This is currently my overall goal as United Nations Undersecretary General and Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). This has meant having your finger on the pulse of Africa’s development trajectory and addressing the challenges through my vision and programming for ECA’s support to the continent.
Please describe how you have made and continue to make an impact in Africa?

A This is a difficult question to answer. As ECA, we as a team are all very proud of the adoption of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA). Over the last two decades a lot of work has gone into this and we were happy to see it over the finish line. This is a watershed moment for the continent and as I like to say, it formally marks the beginning of the implementation of Africa’s Pan African economic empowerment movement. We are now focused on implementation of this agenda. If successfully implemented, it should be a source of job creation, innovation, diversification and stronger regional integration.

It is an investment bill that should attract the world to Africa, and hopefully can underpin the accelerated development of Africa’s infrastructure and in particular, energy. Through AfCFTA, we are also working on the whole digital transformation agenda and we hope to contribute to the design of a harmonised, interoperable continental digital framework. In 2015, African countries spent about $63 billion on food imports, largely from outside the continent. ECA’s modelling projects that by 2040, AfCFTA should hopefully can underpin the accelerated development of Africa’s economic empowerment.

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Sources:
3. https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/fellowships

How can young women drive change and contribute to the success of an Africa which leads on the world stage?

A African women make up 50% of Africa’s population. They are an important socio-economic and stabilising force for the continent. We disempower them at the peril of all of our societies and our continent at large. For young women to drive change we must improve the conditions. We need educated women who form the backbone of the scientific community and help transform Africa. We have a five-point strategy agenda which we hope can help us fulfill this task. An important aspect of the new focus of ECA is bringing the private sector and the youth closer to what we do, by designing policies with them for.

What inspires you on a daily basis in your life and keeps you on your true path?

A The many people, men, and women, leaders and ordinary citizens who against all odds continue to work to build a peaceful and prosperous world. The conviction that despite the enormous challenges, we can collectively increase prosperity for a majority of people across the globe and in Africa in particular in our lifetime. We are a decade away from the Sustainable Development Goals and I aim to do at least one thing everyday to contribute to the goals.

“Always strive for excellence and you will achieve greatness. This however must be collective.”

-Mariana Agnes, Founder, The House of Agnes, Mozambique

Our mission is to foster the economic inclusion, advancement and empowerment of women in Africa through entrepreneurship support and development.

Sources:
3. https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/fellowships
Her Excellency Zanele Dlamini Mbeki, former first lady of South Africa, is founder of the Women’s Development Bank and a social worker and activist for women empowerment and poverty alleviation. She is a founder of the South African Women in Dialogue (SAWID), which brings women together on issues of national, regional, continental and international importance. Through the dialogues, SAWID seeks to establish a common agenda for the development of women. In November 2018, Mbeki convened 1000 women from all over Africa to launch African Women in Dialogue, which aims to improve the status of women on the continent. It reconvenes in Johannesburg, South Africa, in November 2019.

I consider leadership as people who are front runners with followers; and I have never aspired to be in that position. I have tended to avoid being included among the “group of leaders” because I am consciously a follower and a supporter. A follower because I look at people who do certain things and ask myself: Can I also do it? People talk about innovators, and I think I have innovated very little, if at all. I can call myself a copycat. Sometimes I copy from three things that I see as innovative and helpful and I make them into a single one, trying to imitate their positive aspects and to adjust them to our own needs.

I say I am a supporter because, especially in the political sphere, I realised early that my role is to serve and support other women. I made that particular decision at a conference where some of the women who have led our organisation and who were simple housewives, teachers, nurses, were challenged and criticised by other women who were educated. Then I thought, I was receiving education while these women from their spaces, have kept the organisation’s alive, how can I challenge them? I am here to support them.

There was a time when I used to sit and draft with them. I remember the Women’s conference in Mexico in 1997. To prepare for that, the leaders and I sat down and worked out together what this conference was about. I helped the speakers and supported their own participation, we worked together to empower them and by doing so we were all enriched.

I have followed good ideas, supported great women to the extent of my capacity and worked with others to serve the women of Africa.

**LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES**

I don’t have a list of particular attributes. I just emulate good qualities of whoever I see has them. I would like rural women on the continent to say what attributes they would like to see in their leaders.

It is getting confirmed a lot in feminist literature that I am one of those women that can work because they do so with others. I have never done any programme on my own, the programmes benefit from the different skills and capacity of other people to see blind spots and to fix them.

Because of the collaboration of other women, the projects I have embarked on have grown. We started with 20,000, and with the help of bright women we grew. Many women have assisted me to materialise my vision. I used my skill of finding people to get us started, people who wanted to be self-sufficient, and people who were skilled in each of the aspects needed to run and grow an entity. I relied also on social workers who added their methodologies and their social tissue creation. Diversity in teams and having people on equal terms working together towards a common goal is the best way to achieve the desired results.

So, I think it is adequate to say that the one attribute of a true African leader should be collective creation and collective work.

**IMPACTING AFRICA**

Impact is what a third party says, for me it is overall cohesion, healing. Sometimes impact is hard to tabulate and report in a form. The biggest impact for which people are yearning is inner peace. Our programmes and platform create valuable intangibles, which have tangible results in the medium term, and even in the long term, the seeds are planted in people, and people with those seeds connecting to other like-minded people can solve problems.

I have been enabled to work in the space of women’s development by my social work training, but the social work training that I received resonated very much with what I had lived at home. I come from a church home. My father was a leader in a church and my mother supported all female church activities. I was a church girl, and I participated at schools in girl clubs and stumbled upon social work accidentally, but I found it to be ex-
actively about learning methods to help people in the communities where I also found great role models of people who I wanted to emulate.

Generally, I would say that success has come by working through or with other people, nothing was achieved alone. I am finding that it happens all the time. Achievement always occurs through learning and working with others.

There is a concept in social work that you become “an agent of change” and when they refer to agency it is related to individual actions for collective change. It is important for me to acknowledge my own responsibility in solving the problems we face, and to team up with other people to conceive and give birth to possible solutions. We can’t solve people’s problems, but we can assist them to solve them, themselves.

Our programmes and platforms have been given birth by that collective process and by many people who headed the call to assist the ones who are in the most vulnerable positions, and whom we have identified to be women and children in poverty.

ADVOCATING EQUALITY

The journey towards the advocacy for women’s equality, peace and development comes from my youth and the evolution of my political consciousness. I joined the political space at university when I left the country and joined with the same young fellowship among others®.

- political consciousness. I joined the political space at university / the journey towards the advocacy for women’s equality, peace and development. I have been visible on the continent for different reasons, which allowed me to get exposed to people who had greater reach than I had. I then married another refugee. I am an African because I was formed and built in the continent.

In our work platforms, we adopted the themes proposed at the mid-decade UN Women’s lead conference in Denmark 1980, which was a preparation for the Nairobi conference in 1985. The themes were peace, equality and development. It made sense for me because if you want development for women, you have to make peace. In a place in war and conflict, there is no space for development. All the programmes that I have been pursuing with women are around the main themes of peace, equality and development. My message has been generally around women’s empowerment, because they bear the brunt of inequality.

POVERTY ERADICATION

I am also focused on poverty eradication because the raw aspects of poverty were presented early in my professional life as a nurse and then as a social worker. I worked for Coronation Hospital, Johannesburg, in a children’s ward, when almost every night I had to talk to a baby and a mortuary. It chased me away from nursing. When you are a nurse, they teach you to inform the parents of the death of a baby. I was afraid of that and of the sight of mortuaries at night; placing babies in fridges that were communal was extremely disturbing. In addition, most of the night cleaners were Zulu men from the hinterland and they used to say, “a woman who is carrying a body carries bad luck unless she is cleansed”, so they did not accompany us, they sent us alone to deal with these little bodies. I decided against nursing as a career since this experience marked my professional endeavours.

I then moved to practice as a social worker. I was assigned children’s welfare at Baragwanath Hospital in the children’s ward.

Children had leishmaniasis and marasmus, which are technical words for malnutrition. All the doctors did was to put the children on a drip, which was just water and salt and food, and the children died in six weeks. However, when I made the follow ups to the families, they were back to the same malnourishing conditions that caused them to be admitted to hospital. Because of my first-hand experience of seeing children dying of hunger and malnutrition, even in exile, I had the topic of poverty on my mind. The question kept coming back to me about what I could do to improve and change this situation?

With that burning question in my mind I came across the Women’s World Banking and the Grameen Bank. I visited Professor Muhammad Yunus in Bangladesh and I met in Nepal with Bunker Roi, the one who does barefoot college. They were essential influences in my action plan upon return to South Africa. I found the matters of the loudest get the most attention, which means that the neediest do not receive any assistance from the state, nor from the private sector. I saw that rural women are self-sufficient, and I thought that empowering women through access to capital would be a good option and with those elements the Women’s Development Bank Programmes started almost 30 years ago, and has been evolving, linking the platforms fly on their own, and generating a number of spaces for women to find a door that will lead them into equality, development and peace.

As Professor Yunus says, “Poverty is not created by the poor, it is created by the inaccessible concepts, institutions and legal frameworks that we impose on them.” We have so many resources which are not being used and yet they are inaccessible to people in dire need of them. Our impact is to create platforms to make infrastructure for the poor.

For me success will be when we can see a tangible change in the lives of people because we provide the right institutions and laws that actually support them. We make an impact in Africa by working incessantly with the available platforms and creating new ones for the coming generations.
Leading Women in Africa

DRIVING CHANGE

Every generation learns more from the past and from the institutions they are able to access. We have the case of a mother who was the poorest in Moundu - she has a daughter educated by our academy and a granddaughter studying at the university - every generation is doing more than their mothers.

Young women are more impatient when they see the repeat of our problems in the last generation and many of them have had the same education as the top-class schools and can analyse the world like anybody else and they are more impatient about getting solutions. I wish more of them would be innovative, not only for themselves, but to improve the conditions of the disadvantaged so no one is left behind.

Bringing young women to African dialogues can deepen their understanding of the evolution of African women, and can be a good opportunity for them to soak in continental issues that they can then put into their own action plans. My exposure on the continent tells me that to solve the problems of the continent, we must be in communion and fluid communication with one another.

The example that influenced me in this aspect was the World Economic Forum. There I saw the impact that people have on conversations - they don’t read papers, and they just talk about what they know. I am not sure why – but with a better world. And I say I am committed to a fairer reality for Africa. Every time I came from WEF I had learned something new, and from that experience, I did something at home. However, every time I went to WEF, it was convened by Switzerland with their agenda and their idea of what should be a priority. Young women can drive African dialogues in Africa, getting together in Africa with older women, experiencing conversations where we have convened ourselves. Young women can create an Africa that leads on the world stage when we have provided the opportunities for Africa to lead at home. Our platforms are meant to enable intergenerational dialogues, facilitate networking and the generation of ideas, rescuing and honouring our history and also healing individually and as a group.

DAILY INSPIRATION

I got asked in a workshop: What keeps you awake? It was a very deep question for me. In 1994, we had a change in this country, and it keeps me awake to know that we have not made a dent in the poverty indexes. In 1992 we had 44% of poverty and in 2002 we had 55.45% - we have grown in poverty instead of reducing it. I know that our work is a drop in the ocean but we have to start somewhere.

I am inspired by people who make a difference, but I am pushed by the realities around me. I have a programme to follow through and an action plan, I wake up and I know what I should do, it is almost like a negative inspiration, but it is a preoccupation that keeps me working.

I have actually lots of gratitude and joy because of the young people I meet all the time who are willing to work. When I went to KZN, in the Training Academy programme, we sat there seeing the patience of our facilitators with the old people who have never ever read. And we sat there, for over an hour because they were respectful and patient with the mothers who are slow to learn. I think there are many more out there.

I get inspired working with people who are finding solutions on their own, on a platform that was created for something else.

ACHIEVEMENT ALWAYS OCCURS THROUGH LEARNING AND WORKING WITH OTHERS.
I attribute my success to my mother, who showed me how to exercise courage where circumstances demanded it. Each generation of women needs role models to inspire them to reach further and carry the agenda for the advancement of women forward. If role models do not exist, we must become pathfinders.

From a young age I was determined to find out what I am capable of contributing, notwithstanding growing up in a system that treated African women as servants and second-class citizens. I succeeded because I gave myself permission to fail trying new things over the years. I also gave myself permission to take “the road less travelled” by women so I could make an impact, hopefully that encouraged more women to discover their potential. My first career was in a male-dominated industry: motor manufacturing and trained me to learn to hold my own in any environment. Finally, even though I graduated with a Commerce Degree, I had to train myself to be an entrepreneur. In life, we have to be prepared to learn and to equip ourselves with the necessary knowledge and tools to explore new avenues.

RAISING CAPITAL

When I started my first business, I did not know how to approach clients or charge for my services. I approached a few women who were in business to get their advice. I was also advised to take a Communications course to help me build my confidence to stand in front of clients and market my services. After that I secured my first client, SASOL, and the rest is history.

In my subsequent businesses my main challenges related to raising capital and convincing funders that women were equally capable and competent, that we deserve a chance. To get around that we identified successful white men in the sectors we were entering to assist us in the areas where we did not have the competence or the networks. For example, when we started a Women’s Fund, I was assisted by a white man to raise R120 million for the Fund.

Finally, when I was invited to my first Board in the early 90s, I used to spend time with the Financial Director to go through the Financial reports to help me follow the discussion at the Board meeting. I guess the secret is to be well prepared in order to contribute meaningfully, and if there is something we do not know, ask someone who knows. It is better to acknowledge what we do not understand than pretend we do and risk not following. We can only contribute if we understand what needs to be achieved. Asking questions is the best way to learn and create opportunities for things to be explained.

ROLE MODELS

We are influenced by what we see as we grow up at home because we learn the most from our own observations. In that respect, role models play a critical role in shaping future generations of women. I grew up when women role models in business were few and far between, but there are two that stood out in the 70s.

One was Marina Maponya, who was an accomplished and elegant business woman, whose family owned supermarkets and car dealerships. The other was Veronica Devine, also accomplished and elegant, who started a cosmetics business creating employment opportunities for many women. They both taught me the value of being feminine, elegant and formidable. These were women upon whose shoulders my generation stood.

I also found male sponsors along my career path, men like Johann Rupert who gave me my first job after looking for suitable employment for almost a year; Nick Dennis who invited me to my first publicly-listed Board at the age of 36; Leonard Fine who introduced me to Private Equity when he invited me to join his Board, planting seeds which later encouraged me to start a Women’s Fund; (former South African) President Thabo Mbeki who supported my appointments to leadership positions, including as founding Chairman of the international Marketing Council of South Africa.

Like many people who have grown up in an environment where they were marginalised, we are influenced by pathfinders who show us what is possible, who leave their footprints behind them and who lead by example, who lift as they rise.

EDUCATION LIBERATION

We must never underestimate the importance of education, but it has to be the kind of education that liberates our minds and equips us to solve challenges, to be critical thinkers, to take responsibility to show up in the world, to bring our voices and
Leading Women in Africa

our presence to shape conversations on matters that affect our lives and to give ourselves permission to live according to our terms, not what society imposes upon women. From time immemorial, women have inherited systematic deceptions of what women are capable of.

We do not just deserve a seat at the table, we must re-design the table if necessary. Women have a different role to play in the world, we need to defend it and fulfill it in a way that enriches us and the world.

Finally, we must challenge the rules that society and culture imposes upon women; we always have a choice and we must make choices that do not give our power away. We are responsible for our life, let us not compromise to the extent that our value is destroyed by others. As Marianne Williamson wrote in her book, A Return to Love, “we are powerful beyond measure”. Let us live according to ‘Desiderata’, one of my favorite poems, which reminds us that we have a right to be in the world, we are “no less than the trees or the stars”. In fact, we are “fearfully and wonderfully made”, let us not deprive the world of our magnificence.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

I am inspired by an insatiable appetite for curiosity and a sense of adventure to discover what I am capable of, a passion to make a difference and to let my light burn as brightly as it can for future generations. I want young women to read about me 50 years from now and be inspired to realise their own magnificence, to see through the cultural deceptions.

I have been a pioneer for the economic empowerment of women for more than 25 years and have been blessed to start three revolutionary initiatives: WIPOLD, WPFE and WINDIE. I invested in two community empowerment projects, Mama Mimi’s, to create community bakeries; and one to enable a community in the Eastern Cape to use its land to grow vegetables for commercial purposes. I have over the years mentored many women to realise their dreams, to take risks, to find their courage and to take the road less travelled. A few years ago, I established a Wendy Luhabe Scholarship at the University of Johannesburg to formalise the financial support I have provided over the years to young girls from disadvantaged circumstances who wish to study commerce.

Finally, I am inspired by the practice of giving back and paying it forward. I am a firm believer in the scripture that “to whom much is given, much is expected”.

“WE DO NOT JUST DESERVE A SEAT AT THE TABLE, WE MUST REDESIGN THE TABLE IF NECESSARY.”

AWIEF IS THANKFUL TO BOTH OUR PIONEERING AND CURRENT SPONSORS AND PARTNERS WHO HAVE SUPPORTED US OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS.
To what do you attribute your success as a leading businesswoman in Africa?

I think there are a lot of top businesswomen in Africa. I am privileged to be included in that circle. Working women face a lot of challenges that men will never face in life, such as balancing managing a career with managing a home. They have a lot more to prove in a workplace. Consequently, women tend to care more, work harder, collaborate with each other and, most importantly, multi-task. It is all of those qualities that, given the right circumstances and a healthy dose of luck, make women successful.

From a personal perspective I would add tenacity, ability to tune out the critics, and carefully calibrated risk-taking to the qualities needed to succeed.

What or who has influenced you the most in your journey in business and career success?

I have always been driven by a sense of “moral outrage”. I think it probably stems from the duality of my upbringing – growing up in a strictly Roman Catholic Poland, while being half-Jewish with grandparents who survived concentration camps. This has had unexpected consequences. In the workplace, when faced with inequality, I worked harder, I voiced my opinions and I succeeded beyond my own expectations. When I realised that ultimately, I am unlikely to change the balance of power between men and women in the corporate world, I started my own company.

When faced with corrupt business practices, I resisted and fought back. I have never been scared to disrupt the status quo, tuning out the critics and forging my own path. Eventually it led me to where I am today, heading up a business, while being an “active citizen”. I value the latter part the most. There is only so much money that you can make and spend on handbags and shoes. What matters more is whether you can look at yourself in the mirror and ask “am I making a difference?”. I would like to be able to say to myself that, in my own small way, I hope I am.

TO BE AN ENTREPRENEUR YOU NEED TO TAKE RISKS

Magda Wierzycka is the Chief Executive Officer of the Sygnia Group, which she co-founded. Sygnia is an innovative FinTech company based in South Africa and listed on the main board of the JSE. She is well-known for her vocal stance against corruption and holds the title of “richest woman in South Africa” – this after coming to South Africa at the age of 13 years as a penniless refugee from Poland, who spent a year in a refugee camp. When she was still at school, she worked in a supermarket to make ends meet. In 2006 she co-founded the Sygnia Group and became its CEO, steering Sygnia to become a leader in asset management in South Africa, providing low-cost, passively managed investments.
Leading Women in Africa

Q What advice would you give young women entrepreneurs trying to make it in Africa?

A A desire to be an entrepreneur is something that you are born with. It is not something that can be taught. If you do have the drive and desire, then my life lessons are multi-fold.

• You need to work harder than men to prove your worth. As unfair as it is, it is a fact. Embrace and accept it. Do not be afraid to voice your opinions in every forum. Learn not to hesitate and let the moment to contribute pass.

• Grow a thick skin. Women are a lot more emotional than men. Hence, they are easier to “manage” through personal criticism. You need to learn to tune the critics out and take nothing personally. Women tend to cry when faced with criticism. Learn that this is part of the journey to success – once you master your emotions, you play in the men’s world. They don’t care what others say about them. Why should you?

• If you come up with a revolutionary idea which threatens the status quo, do not be afraid to follow your dream despite criticism and mockery. In fact, if the idea is really disruptive, it is likely to attract just that.

• Choose what you do carefully. You need to be passionate about what you are doing to succeed. It must be both your work and your hobby. Don’t do it if it is just a financial opportunity.

• To be an entrepreneur you need to take risks. That means making financial sacrifices. In starting Sygnia I mortgaged my house and everything I had. Africa does not have a venture capital market. Often the capital you will start your business with comes from family and friends. And hence you have a financial plan to get you through the first few years of your venture.

• And finally, never be scared of saying “I made a strategic mistake” and reversing course. You will go down a lot of blind alleys. You only need one of them to turn out to be a path to success.

Q What inspires you on a daily basis in your life and keeps you on your true path?

A What inspires me is the fact that we are living through unprecedented times when technology is disrupting everything familiar about our daily lives, from the way we shop, to the way we interact with each other, to the way we approach healthcare provision. Technology is the key to the future. Consequently, harnessing it, learning something new every day and understanding the potential of change is essential.

There is so much positivity happening in so many fields, positivity which is often drowned by the loud voices of politicians and geo-political instability. As humans we tend to like negativity as it gives us something to gossip about. I thrive on positive energy.

I prefer to look to the future than dwell on the mistakes of the past. There is so much to fix in South Africa. I hope to make a contribution to fixing the problems, rather than becoming part of the baying, cynical mob.

Photo by Christina Morillo from Pexels

ALL AFRICAN WOMEN NEED TO STAND IN SUPPORT OF EACH OTHER

DR NEVINE ABDELKHALEK
Vice President, ECG Engineering Consultants Group, Egypt
Dr Nevine Abdelkhalek is currently Vice President of ECG Engineering Consultants Group in Egypt. She holds charter manager status with the Charter Management Institute in the UK. As well as a PhD in Human Resources, she has vast experience in the field of education for development and continuing education, design and development of sustainable programs, as well as quality management.

She worked for over 22 years with the development programs provided by the Canadian Fund, USAID and the EU, which gave her first-hand experience with the actual needs of the deprived communities in Egypt. Dr Abdelkhalek has worked closely with the Egyptian Ministry of Education and Ministry of Urban Renewal and Informal Settlements. She was elected as the Chair of the American University School of Continuing Education Advisory Board (2015 – 2017). She has received numerous awards for her work, including the Avenues of Service Citation and Shield of the Red Sea.

Dr Abdelkhalek is currently the organising committee chair of EBA International conference on Sustainable Investments in Middle and Upper Egypt governorates; and is part of the Egyptian team of the initiative ‘50 Million African Women Speak’ organised by COMESA.

To what do you attribute your success as a top woman leader in Africa?

The main factors lately in shaping my current success go back to the support and the uncovering of my resilient character and personality through two exceptional characters who introduced me to the Egyptian Businessmen Association (EBA): Eng. Ashraf Allouba and Eng. Amr Allouba, who appointed me as the Vice president at Engineering Consultants Group (ECG) with all its branches in Africa and GCC; and also Chair of the Sustainable Development committee at EBA. The sky was the limit and in the last 11 years I achieved a lot, including the founding of Excellence in Engineering Forum, and UTW, that does not only serve Egyptians but trainees across the continent of Africa as well, like Tanzania. I should never forget my close team members whose support in the last 10 years led to all this success: Mr Syaed Abdel Aal, Mr AbdelRazek AbdelBaky, Eng Kamal Shawky, Eng Ahmed Essawy and Mr Waleed Aly and Mr Hany Othman.

Lately, the four invisible musketeers that are supporting me at different levels and are the inspiration and I owe them my current status, are Eng Adel Abdel Shaafy, Ms Pakinam Abdel Fattah, Ms Hoda Ghaly and Ms Nancy El Mahdy and Dalia Sami. Last but never least, the one person who has been a solid support throughout the years is my mother Chahdana Nafeh who has been a role model for me, as well as my brother Mohamed Talaat.

What would you say are the most important attributes needed to be a successful leader on the continent?

Being resilient is a key factor for being successful on the continent. Resilience helps you survive and excel in a continent that is full with instability and is in the mode of change all the time. Another major aspect is high level of acceptance of communication skills, as our continent is a melting pot of different cultures and languages. Beside this, you need to enjoy a voluntary spirit, the ability to lead teams and also be a team player.

Please describe how you have made and continue to make an impact in Africa?

In my capacity as ECG Vice President and EBA Sustainable Development Committee Chairperson, I conducted several round table discussions at EBA to encourage Egyptian investment in Africa, particularly in Rwanda, Zambia and Tanzania where there are many investment opportunities in the field of building and construction.

In addition:

- In 2010 I founded the University To Work (UTW) Initiative that is now a program with more than 6000 graduates in the field of engineering. It targets engineering students in their last two years and bridges the gap between the university education and the workplace. It offers the latest technical skills as well character building.
- I also founded School To Work (STW) for technical schools students.
- In 2012 I founded the Excellence in Engineering Forum that has an impact on discussing the latest in the field of engineering, formerly the Building Future Egypt Summit, with countries like Algeria, Tunis, Côte d’Ivoire, Angola, Ghana and others.
- I supported training of Engineers from the Tanzania at ECG in the different engineering systems.
- As Rotarian, I supported the End Polio Initiative in Egypt and Africa and supported vaccination campaigns in, Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria and some other countries.
- Working with the Syndicate of Egyptian engineers to offer on the job training, as well as practical training through the UTW program to engineers from all African countries that contacted our syndicate.
- Working on identifying universities in African countries where we can implement the professional development program UTW, as we believe that investing in the human capital is the only means to development.
- I also run one-to-one consultation sessions for young entrepreneurs starting their own business or in the middle of crises and in need of support.

How can young women drive change and contribute to the success of an Africa which leads on the world stage?

Nobody can drive change unless they are the change themselves, and this requires a good will and high belief in the inevitability of the positive change. Great efforts need to be done to manage those who resist the change. Also, young African women leaders need to learn how to think global and act locally. They are also encouraged to participate in conferences that highlight their achievements at both levels: personal and professional.

All African women need to also stand in support of each other through the posts they assume and ensure that success is seen by everyone through participation in international conferences and forums. Establish a fund that would support the travel and education of young entrepreneurs and professionals, especially internships and short-term courses. Gain - investing in human capital.

My motto is, ‘be the change, and that the future belongs to those who draft their own dreams and follow them’. We all must overcome the gender bias practices that exclude women and keep her role artificial, in order to say there is women participation.

What inspires you on a daily basis in your life and keeps you on your true path?

What inspires me is my ability to see success through the services of others. I always believe that being the change and focusing on the skills that are needed for the target we want to achieve as a team is key.

So, I identify the target and focus of the skills and attitudes needed to achieve this target. I am also a member of Rotary and hold three posts at the local club and district level in Egypt, as well as internationally, which gives me the chance to give meaningfully to the society locally and internationally.

A key factor is having time for my self-rejuvenation with my close set of friends and family members. It is important to have a break so you do not get burnt out. Inspiration is always hindered by rumours and that is what I never lend an ear to. Rumours against anyone is an invisible weapon. I focus on my path and on the given and my close circle of success. I always believe that success leads to success.
Leading Women in Africa

Gina Din-Kariuki is founder and Executive Chair of the Gina Din Group, an East African management consultancy based in Kenya, with a focus on brand communications: “Shaping African Conversations”. As a leading authority in the communications field in Africa, she is a mentor, respected businesswoman and philanthropist, who has been named one of Africa’s 100 Most Influential People by New African magazine.

I am tenacious. When I started my business over two decades ago, there were few women in business. I knew quite early I wasn’t going to be invited to the table. So, I took my own seat and sat. Literally.

I was very clear I had value to add and I was going to tell anyone that would listen. I also do what I love which is really important and I have always trusted by instinct. I am blessed to have an incredible family that believes in me and my dreams. And lastly, I am a professional in what I do.

CHALLENGES

My main challenges have largely been my own fear of failure. I left a high-powered well-paying job to venture into what was, at that time, largely an unknown industry. I was terrified of failing. Over time though, I have learnt to embrace both success and failure in equal measure.

Of course, I have experienced a business environment that was largely unbalanced when it comes to women-owned businesses and struggled to be taken seriously. Over time I have come to own my accomplishments and the value I bring to my clients.

MENTORS

I have been extremely lucky to have a tight circle of people around me that have mentored me in my journey. A couple of them have built successful businesses themselves and I am able to turn to them for support and advice. Others are friends who empower me to take the next step and who pick me up when I have failed.

One of my key mentors is someone who is very accomplished and challenges me regularly to get out of my comfort zone and try and do things differently. Having a couple of people around me that I can bounce ideas off has been invaluable. I always say, I have a large network but a very tight circle. My tight circle have been my great influence.

ADVICE

I would advise young women to take the first step. What’s the worst thing that could happen?

Women are at risk of not feeling worthy enough to go out and make things happen. I managed to build my own brand when there was absolutely no social media. Entrepreneurs who have great ideas now have great platforms to position their brands.

We need to believe in ourselves and in our ideas if we are to get others to believe in us. We need to be decisive, because as entrepreneurs being on the fence is a dangerous place to be. We must not be afraid of pursuing an unexpected path. Accept failure enthusiastically. Failure is an inevitable part of success. Become an authority. Be the thought leader in your area of expertise.

And finally, network. Network. Network. This is a journey you can’t take on your own.

INSPIRATION

I am grateful every day for my journey. I appreciate the people that have been part of it. My team, my friends and most importantly, my two children whose own paths have made me grow as a person. I am continuously growing and find when I am in my comfort zone, I become stagnant. I am most inspired by the people around me who push the realms of possibility.

By Gina Din-Kariuki
#VALUE4HER connect
AFRICA’S FIRST DIGITAL PLATFORM FOR WOMEN-LED AGRI-BUSINESS

OVERVIEW

#VALUE4HERConnect is Africa’s first agribusiness intelligence platform aimed at facilitating growth and development of women owned agribusiness enterprises. A core initiative of CTA’s VALUE4HER continental programme, the platform seeks to expand women’s presence in markets where they trade, access new markets nationally, regionally and internationally, and to acquire the capital, business and technical partners and resources required to support their growing businesses. Additionally, the platform acts as a valuable database for a diverse group of sustainable agriculture-oriented partners seeking female business partners to fund, trade with, procure and source from.

#VALUE4HERConnect provides customised market information and intelligence services related to national, regional and international business expansion. The platform serves as a first point of call for women who wanting to do business and trade in African and global agricultural markets.

#VALUE4HERConnect provides important business and capacity development resources for members of its multifaceted community. The platform creates an avenue through which women agripreneurs and those who support them and seek to do business with them can easily reach out to one another, share knowledge and experiences and access strategic resources and services.

#VALUE4HERConnect also provides information about agribusiness events, exhibitions and conferences on the continent and internationally it offers selected publications and blogs that are intended to provide women agripreneurs with useful information about developments in the African agribusiness ecosystem.

KEY PILLARS:

The key pillars of the platform include the following:

1. A WOMEN2WOMEN COMMUNITY PILLAR
   a feature that allows women to chat, interact, trade and share information with one another;

2. A MARKET INFORMATION PILLAR:
   This component of the portal includes, but is not limited to: country profiles (including trade policies and regulations), buyer and supplier information, commodity prices, market-entry requirements (including standards/certification), branding, labelling, etc.;

3. A FINANCIAL RESOURCES PILLAR:
   This component of the portal provides information on agribusiness focused financiers, including banks, investment funds, development finance institutions, impact investors, crowdfunding, etc.

4. A CAPACITY BUILDING RESOURCE PILLAR:
   This component of the portal showcases human capital development resources, including online and offline training and educational programs; webinars; skills development consultations and incubators/accelerators.

#VALUE4HER is CTA’s continental programme aimed at increasing value for women from agricultural businesses through market access and business linkages; improved knowledge, skills and capacities; and enhanced socio and business capitals through digital networking and market intelligence. The program seeks to strengthen women’s agribusiness enterprises and promotes global advocacy to address some of the pressing barriers to women’s empowerment in agriculture.

BUSINESS SUB-SECTORS REPRESENTED:

The members of the #VALUE4HERConnect platform are involved in the following sub sectors/commodities/services:

Commodity Categories

- 8% Aquaculture
- 33% Horticulture
- 16% Cereals and legumes
- 7% Mechanisation
- 23% Dairy and livestock

Service Category

- 13% Business development consultation; extension services; inputs; marketing; processing; retail; training; transportation and logistics

CONTACTS:

For more information, contact: Ms. Sabdiyo Dido Bashuna, Program Director, CTA - dido@cta.int

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

#VALUE4HERConnect was launched in 2018 by the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU (CTA), in close collaboration with African Women Agribusiness Network (AWAN) and African Women Innovation and Entrepreneurship Forum (AWIEF).

CTA

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AWAN

AWIEF

CTA

413 women led agribusinesses registered

3 Years in business

27 countries represented in Africa

USD 20,000 – 500,000 annual turnover range
Entrepreneurship Trends

THE NEXT DECADE: AFRICA’S ECONOMIC ACCELERATION

By Louise Marsland

The African continent is home to 1.2 billion people and its population will double before we reach 2050. This represents a fourth of humanity according to research house, Kantar, which this year conducted its Kantar Africa Life 2019 study.

McKinsey’s benchmarking research on Africa’s economic future, released a year ago, predicts “explosive growth” for the continent as the next big growth market; and a potential economic revival akin to the Asian boom a decade ago: “There is a trillion-dollar opportunity to industrialize Africa to meet rising domestic demand and create a bridge-head in global export markets.”


This is their main conclusion: “Africa has a fast-growing, rapidly urbanizing population with big unmet needs. In addition, there has been a big push by governments and the private sector to close infrastructure gaps. There is a continued resource abundance in agriculture, mining, and oil and gas, with innovation and investment in these sectors unlocking new production on the continent. The rapid adoption of mobile and digital technologies could leapfrog Africa past many obstacles to growth.”

Another significant factor is that as urbanisation levels rise worldwide, 60% of the African population will reside in our cities within the next 30 years. Kantar predicts that, “The current dynamics and impressive economic and social progress made by most African countries predict a materialisation of the demographic dividend over the next 10 years. This is a massive opportunity for the continent, its population and the economic players that operate in Africa.”

Profound transformation is expected in the next decade on the African continent, from 2020 to 2030:

- The Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) is a gamechanger for the continent, which, when implemented across all African countries, will make the continent the largest trading block in the world. With Africa’s GDP of $2.5 trillion, AfCFTA could make Africa the largest free trade area in the world. It will profoundly change the economic future of Africa as trade barriers come down.

  - The size of the African aspirant middle-class population will grow significantly, as will their average disposable income. Dubbed the “African Lions” by the University of Cape Town Institute of Strategic Marketing, which in 2017, with partner Unilever and ISPOS, conducted the most comprehensive study into Africa’s rising middle class consumers which number over 100 million with a total spending power of over $400 million per day.

  - Quartz Africa reports that Sub-Saharan Africa is expected to add more than 10 million unique mobile subscribers to surpass the half a billion mark by 2020, according to figures from the GGM Association’s Mobile Economy report. Much of this growth is being driven by young adults and Africa is still the continent where mobile subscriptions are growing faster than anywhere else in the world.

  - Female entrepreneurship rates in Sub-Saharan Africa are the highest in the world, as research from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) 2016/17 Women’s Report found. Women’s entrepreneurial activity is up globally by 10% with Africa leading the way with 25.9% of the female adult population engaged in early-stage entrepreneurial activity in the region (source: Disrupt Africa).

  - The UN’s Africa Renewal publication reports that entrepreneurship is the “great untapped potential to drive the African continent into its next phase of development” and that entrepreneurship is “one of the most sustainable job generation tools in Africa”. African youth (15-24 years) make up 37% of the working age population currently, but 60% are jobless. Entrepreneurship represents the hope of prosperity and carries with it the promise of jobs on the African continent.

To write about entrepreneurship trends in Africa, we have to look at the continent’s economic future and the numbers over the coming decades. The most significant numbers are that in the next 30 years, 25% of the world’s consumers will live in Africa and that 40% of them will be under 18 years old. It is only entrepreneurship that will provide jobs for this, the world’s largest documented youth population.
Female entrepreneurship rates in Sub-Saharan Africa are the highest in the world.

London, UK, leading to the rapid advancement towards integration into the global economy. The authors found in their research that many countries in Africa had undertaken, “significant economic reforms; improving macroeconomic management, instigating conducive private investment climate, liberalising markets and widening the space for entrepreneurship to drive strong and inclusive growth. Concurrent with institutional reforms are policies to improve the conditions for enterprise to thrive and provide a dynamic source of growth.”

A CONTINENT OF CONNECTED CONSUMERS

So, how do these stats translate for entrepreneurs and big brands alike? While taking note of the rise in entrepreneurship and how the impact of AfCFTA could open up markets for trade, anyone starting a business also needs to understand what the African consumer’s aspirations are, what they need, where the gaps in service delivery exist, and how to use technology, mobile in particular, to reach those customers who are increasingly connected and becoming more powerful in their choice and voice.

Kantar explains that, “Connected consumers have more choices and are more demanding. Consumers in Africa will expect products and messages that are more tailored to who they are, what they care for and the environment they live in. They will be ready to pay more for products which they can culturally identify with – in the broader sense of the term. They will value customised experience more than ever. The opportunity is massive for brands that understand the consumer’s culture codes; and which can inject such understanding into their products, brand messaging and overall experience offered. Culture will be an essential marketing currency in Africa more than anywhere else. Influential marketing will need to be at the centre of brand activations.”

To market your products and services successfully, business and brands need to have strong local resonance and activation in order to “create meaning which emotionally connects with consumers in Africa and fuels growth in a fast-changing region”, according to Kantar.

The significance of the economic changes taking place in Africa to promote entrepreneurship as a force for development cannot be underestimated, said Ahmed and Nwanwo in their entrepreneurship report: “There is much at stake in continuing this process of scaling up entrepreneurship as a dynamic process, profoundly changing in ways that require new modes of thought, analysis, and explanation.”

Globally, in the past year, 163 million women were starting businesses across 74 economies worldwide, while 111 million were running established businesses (source: GEM). But Africa also had the highest rate of business failure among these entrepreneurs (8.4%).

The stumbling blocks cited by women entrepreneurs in various studies, research reports and personal testimonies, remain access to finance and markets as to the reason that they are not successful. This is where action needs to be directed, as the GEM research demonstrated that women entrepreneurs have a significant impact across the globe and that their impact goes far wider: “Women entrepreneurs provide incomes for their families, employment for those in their communities, and products and services that bring new value to the world around them.”

However, there is still low growth among women-led enterprises and a lack of women in business leadership across the continent. But African Renewal reports that with the right incentives, African women can unleash their potential on the continent, particularly in the tech sector. To overcome cultural barriers, African women entrepreneurs need basic knowledge about health, education, financial security and safety, said Eunice Baguma Ball, founder of the London-based Africa Technology Business Network (ATBN), speaking to Africa Renewal.

What struck the authors of McKinsey’s research, is that “purpose” is at the heart of driving many business people in Africa. As Acha Leke explained: “What has struck us time and again is how many of them are driven by a deeper purpose. They look closely at Africa’s high levels of poverty; its gaps in infrastructure, education and healthcare, and its governance problems. But they don’t just see barriers to business – they see human issues they feel responsible for solving.

They show us that contributing to the social and economic development of the countries within which their thriving businesses operate creates value for both shareholders and stakeholders.”

This is the crux of why Africa will succeed: by rising above the purely-for-profit model of business; by putting the needs of the broader community ahead and empowering all, as a collective. That is how this ubuntu will grow an Africa for Africans and dominate as an economic superpower of the future.

ABOUT LOUISE MARSLAND

Louise Marsland, Editor of AWIEF Insights, is an award-winning journalist, editor and content strategist. She is a veteran of the Southern Africa media industry, specialising in business-to-business print and digital publishing for media giants Media24, Primedia and Bizcommunity.com. She is a B2B and consumer trends specialist and has worked on Africa economic and business content for the past four years for Bizcommunity Africa, and for AWIEF, launching its custom portal focused on women entrepreneurship, Ongea.Africa in 2018. She has an M Com: Strategy & Organisational Dynamics from UKZN, South Africa, in conjunction with the UK Open University & Copenhagen Business School, Denmark.
I started my career at the age of 21, armed with a BA Languages degree (English, Afrikaans, Dutch, French and isiXhosa), which I soon learnt counted for nothing when it came to securing a job. My first job was processing motor vehicle financing applications for a big bank, in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, my hometown.

Just eight months in, I learnt the first lesson that has been with me ever since: networking and nurturing lasting relationships is everything! Someone who I had got to know through a friend, and who was in a more senior position in Johannesburg, thought of me for a vacant position in his area of the bank, in Port Elizabeth, and referred me. Obviously, I had to impress in the interview process, but having the referral was a great start. I got the job, and so began my career.

In my new position, my local boss was a 30-something successful woman and so was her boss a woman, and they were both an inspiration to me. There, right in front of me, were two women who allowed me to see that if I applied myself as they had done, anything was possible for me. I stayed in the bank for a total of four years and left Port Elizabeth as the Regional Manager for the Eastern Cape, two promotions later, having been mentored by both of these generous women. I left because I had been offered an opportunity to use not only what I had learnt so far in business, but also the language skills which I had studied and which I was starting to realise were a good combination, and which I knew would be critical in the role.

In Johannesburg I joined a start-up bank as the 15th staff member, working as the Executive Assistant to the CEO, and here I learnt many lessons – probably the most important one being that, if early in your career, you are given access to high level discussions with senior people – yes, even if you are the note-taker – you have the opportunity to learn so much about what is being discussed at high levels, about how people operate in business, about what works and what doesn’t. My learnings were enormous in the years I held this position and so was the growth in my personal network.

CREATE A SUPPORT NETWORK

I have always needed to have some money to start a business, or at least some form of support “for the bad months”. And believe me, as hard as you try and as well as you do, there will always be bad months. Sometimes it is just because growing a business is difficult, which I expect entrepreneurs all over the world know or learn pretty quickly. Sometimes it is because clients don’t always pay when they say they will, so whilst business could be exceptional, cashflow can be the opposite.

Sometimes, and hopefully not too often, it can be because clients commit without authority and then rengege, so be sure to check on who you are contracting with. And sometimes, it can be because things go wrong, either in your own operation or with suppliers, and as a result you incur unexpected expenses. This all points to one lesson though – you need to have some form of financial support to live through the bad times and you need to stay on top of the money flows.

I have learned that building long-term relationships and growing your network can lead to opportunities for you and for your business that you don’t even imagine when you meet a person for the first time. So always be interested in other people and what they do; look for the areas of similarity and cross-over when you meet people; make suggestions of where you could add value to them; help them to grow their networks and your generosity will come back to you many times over.

I have learnt that having a partnership approach, where you focus more on what you can give to others than on what you can get from them, has stood me in good stead for 30 years and counting. It is what has motivated me to nurture young talent through the internship programme we have run for 27 years. It is what has helped me to pioneer what is recognised as the premier public relations network across Africa with offices in 53 countries and to give entrepreneurial opportunities to other women in Africa.

It is what has led me to see in me.

BUILD A SUPPORT NETWORK

I have learnt that to be successful you need to follow a path of continual learning and self-development. This includes staying interested every day in what you do and where your industry is going, in what your clients do and where you can help them to achieve their objectives, and in what is happening in the world around you that might impact your business and the businesses of your clients. You need to read and listen insistently. You need to find opportunities for self-development and take them.

Importantly, I have learnt that to be sustainable, as a person in business, you need to find the areas of your business that are your passion and make sure you spend time on them. For me, this is the area of skills transfer and people development which we deliver through our training academy, the role I play in people development in the broader PR industry across Africa and the roles I have taken on with NGOs partners who work so hard to make a contribution to the greater good. Every hour spent on these endeavours is food for my soul.

And finally, I have learnt that to continue to be successful I also need to nurture me. I do this through spending time with the people who are important to me, my family and a circle of good friends, and on the activities that I love, like reading. I also make sure I invest in me. In the past three years, I have proved to myself that in fact, you can ‘teach an old dog new tricks’. Since the passing of my husband, almost four years ago, I have completed a Masters in Executive Coaching and a Certificate in Leading Cross-Cultural Global teams, as well as becoming a certified Commercial and Workplace Mediator both in South Africa and in the United Kingdom. I chose these courses because they cover areas of interest to me and of increasing need for our clients, and for the work in which we operate. Interestingly, the basis of all of them is effective communications, taking me right back to my original studies and natural talent. The way I see it, they extend the value I have to offer to others, and the value I see in me.

About Robyn de Villiers

In September 2019, the business which I started in 1989 celebrated its 30th birthday. It has been exhilarating, but in a rollercoaster kind of way!

In 1989, after having my son, I decided not to return to my corporate position and started my own business. By then I had four years’ experience in internal and external communications and public relations under my belt, in what had become one of the top five banks in the country and I knew that what I had learnt could be packaged and offered to other clients. So began my 30-year career as an entrepreneur. And I have never stopped learning.

CREATE A SUPPORT NETWORK

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It is what has led me to have wonderful relationships with employees, past and present, suppliers who have been with the company for all 30 years and partners globally and across Africa who are like family to me.

BUILD A SUPPORT NETWORK

I have learnt that to be a successful female entrepreneur, you need to build a strong and effective support network around you. I count as an integral part of this support system, the ladies who have run my home and looked after my children and the many au pairs who managed my children’s schooling needs while I was at work. In my 30 years I have been blessed with a husband and children who are my number one supporters. They have been behind me through thick and thin and their pride in what I have achieved is an enormous motivator to me. They have given me the space to spend an inordinate amount of time on my work. And not only that, they have given me the space to dream my dreams and to achieve them.

SELF-DEVELOPMENT

I have learnt that to be successful you need to follow a path of continual learning and self-development. This includes staying interested every day in what you do and where your industry is going, in what your clients do and where you can help them to achieve their objectives, and in what is happening in the world around you that might impact your business and the businesses of your clients. You need to read and listen insistently. You need to find opportunities for self-development and take them.

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Over the years I have nurtured many people, including many young women, in our African network and beyond, in gaining technical communications skills, and, today, with my focus on executive coaching, I am coaching a number of women locally and abroad, working with them on the so-called “soft skills” which I have renamed the “really difficult skills” and on realising their own best selves, so that they can bring them to work every day. I have also invested in an executive coach for myself and he is helping me to realise the best me. It is a case of ‘never stop networking and never stop learning’ for me.

I heard the first lesson that has been with me ever since: networking and nurturing lasting relationships is everything.
As we continue on our journey towards a diverse, gender-transformed workplace, let us succeed as women, not by rejecting or downplaying our gender. And let’s support each other as we do so. The executive workforce remains so male-dominated; that too often successful women are celebrated as unicorns, individual success stories, who have bucked the trend of female mediocrity and become truly exceptional leaders.

This view does women an extreme disservice. There are thousands of women capable of achieving what these successful women have done. The reason that not enough of them do so, is because of the structural and cultural barriers that hold us back.

It is also a red herring for women to make personal ambition an assumed I was male – since almost everybody they dealt with was a man. At our first meeting, when I walked into the room – a tiny pint of a person who was a woman – eyebrows shot up!

Winning that client’s trust was a challenge. There were preconceptions to overcome. I had to ensure that the work was superior to speak for you. Only then can your personality come into play. It’s about creating a balance in the way you speak and how you present yourself, the way you look. It can’t be overly feminine, because that can create doubt in the mind of a client with certain preconceptions. At the same time, you can’t try to be too tough, just because you’re in a male-dominated environment. Toughness will be interpreted as being pushy, combative or abrasive. The system has ways of pushing women out for these reasons too.

It’s about finding the right balance. Only then can you start introducing your personal side. It’s a case of doing the work, showing that you can deliver, and winning trust. Only then can your personality come into play.

In trying to find that balance, we can employ the subtle intuition that women are often endowed with. It’s also about getting the work done, to speak for you. Only then can your personality come into play. It’s a case of doing the work, showing that you can deliver, and winning trust. Only then can you start introducing your personal side.

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS BAKED INTO ORGANISATIONS

At another stage of my career, my business was acquired by an IT business. I became the first woman on that company’s executive committee. This was when I started learning about the unconscious biases that are baked into the very systems of some organisations.

Our exco meetings would begin at 7.30am. That’s school-run time, and until then it had never been deemed possible that someone might serve on exco, and have kids to take to school. I went directly to the CEO and raised the issue. He had never given the issue a moment’s thought until then, but he was very accommodating. The meetings were moved to 8.30am.

I soon realised these were battles that could not be fought alone. We hosted a women’s forum, to raise the awareness and remind the organisation that they had women in their environment and they needed to structure it accordingly. I lobbied in some places for the introduction of paid maternity leave!

This taught me that women have to support each other. Only a woman will understand what another woman is going through. This is where mentoring is fundamental, both in corporate and entrepreneurial environments.

In the entrepreneurial space I have had a few mentors. This has normally been in the form of giving me access to new networking environments or introducing me to key people. This has been of great value, and it has helped me realise how fundamental it is that we open doors for each other.

Sometimes, despite having a wealth of skill and experience, we feel inadequate, perhaps internalising some of the prejudice that we’ve faced as we’ve fought our way into our industries.

One way of avoiding every new female leader being scrutinised and placed under the pressure of representing her entire gender, is to transform en masse. If a woman is always in the minority, she will constantly be fighting these battles. But if you hire four women, you have a whole tribe – that’s critical mass. They can support each other.

Seeing women in management always inspires others to aim higher. They see this level of success is attainable. As I’ve moved into more senior spaces, I’ve had more women asking me how it’s possible for you.

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When the shoe has been on the other foot, and I have mentored other women, it has mainly been about growing people and giving them the confidence to believe in themselves. I’ve offered people advice about being assertive and positioning themselves as someone able to lead.

When I started my communications consulting business, I worked with a client in the shipping industry. At that time, there were few women in the entire organisation. Because it was a global client, my initial engagements with them were via email. I think the client assumed I was male – since almost everybody they dealt with was a man. At our first meeting, when I walked into the room – a tiny pint of a person who was a woman – eyebrows shot up!

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done. “How do you make your voice heard?” I’ve been asked. “How do you make them listen to you?” The answers to these questions speaks to value. We must know, and believe in the value we bring to organisations – whether we’re in a corporate environment or running our own businesses.

We need to project that as individuals, because if we don’t believe in ourselves, no one else is going to go.

Self-awareness is another useful trait to cultivate. Women are by nature emotional, and it helps to be aware of this and to learn how to manage that emotion. In a male-dominated environment, there can be a lot that may upset you.

People may have conversations without you. It may feel as if men are purposely excluding you, undermining you by not bringing you into discussions...

We need to have the self-awareness to evaluate these situations fairly. Was this a tactic to exclude you, or just an honest conversation? If it’s the latter, you should still be able to say to your male colleagues, “You mentioned a conversation I wasn’t part of. Would you mind just updating me on that?”

Half the time they will just update you. Without that ability to manage your emotions and effective techniques to get clarity, it can drive you insane!

CLAIM YOUR SPACE!

This is not a peculiarly African situation. The problem is universal. Cheryl Sandberg highlights this in her book *Lean In*. A woman might be allocated a parking bay hundreds of metres from the entrance to the office, and this might not even change despite her being eight months pregnant. Is your organisation set up to be sensitive to these issues?

Accommodating women and their lives is no compromise. It enhances productivity. For instance, a pregnant woman with bad morning sickness might be allowed to start work at 10am instead of 8.30am, so she can ease into the day and work better. Women with family responsibilities might arrange to leave work earlier and perhaps connect again in the evening to complete their work.

Maternity leave is always a delicate issue. At an agency I worked at, I discovered I was pregnant just as I was due for a promotion. I was shattered, because I thought, “These people have so much faith in me. They see me as a leader who is going to run their Joburg office, and here I am, pregnant.”

There was also fear around what would happen during the four months while I was away on maternity leave. Would my replacement do my job better than I could? Would they drop the ball? During my hiatus, would the world shift? Would I be able to catch up? How would I navigate that?

These are structural and personal issues. It’s important that systems be put in place to support women in this position. They should be told, unequivocally, “Go and have your baby! Your job will be here when you come back. We will put measures in place to make sure that what you do for us is covered.” It’s about giving these women a level of comfort, and also making sure that we really mitigate against those issues.

If I had to offer advice to women climbing the ladder, it would be to claim your space. Know that you belong. Your opinions matter. Be comfortable to lead with female intuition, because it is our superpower. It’s not about creating a de-gendered work-space. When we come to work, we bring our personality, and who we are. Our womanhood is part of that. It is an asset to us, and to our organisations. Being a woman is not something to be tempered, or downplayed. We are here, we are skilled, talented assets to our organisations, and that needs to be recognised.

ABOUT LEBO MADIBA

Lebo Madiba was recently appointed Managing Partner: Public Relations and Influence at Ogilvy Johannesburg. She was previously Group Chief Marketing Officer of Etion Limited (formerly Ansys), a JSE Altx listed, digital technology provider. In this role, she led the brand transformation that amalgamated and rebranded Ansys and its four subsidiaries under one brand to Etion. Prior to Etion, she was Managing Director of PR Powerhouse, a communications and brand agency she founded in 2011 and ran until 2017 when it was acquired by Etion.

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I heard the baby before I saw its mother. That very particular cry, unmistakable to any parent, that a child makes when it is hungry. Out of the corner of my eye I saw the woman. She was a farm labourer, toiling among a group of men and women harvesting crops. Her baby was on her back, unprotected from the blazing sun.

It was 2018, and I was with a CNN crew in Rwanda, at the height of summer. We were a couple of hours north of Kigali, on a shoot for our Marketplace Africa programme. Perhaps because I was a relatively new mother myself, I just couldn’t ignore the woman; we met the owners of the farm, and I politely asked them whether she was given enough breaks to feed her baby. They assured me she did, but I was sceptical. As we spoke, I heard the baby’s cry once more. I asked them to give the mother a break.

My driver spoke to her further in Kinyarwanda. She explained that she didn’t want to take breaks, because her co-workers would complain, saying that she shouldn’t earn the same amount of money as them if she is taking time out to nurse. Depending on her breaks, she said, she often did not earn the same as the other workers. Her husband had left her with two children, so she was forced to work on the farm to make ends, even barely, meet.

It was too much for me. I returned to our car, fetched all the food and water we had, and gave it to her. Not for the first time in my career or my life, I wished I could do more.

This mother’s story is, of course, far from unique. It is not specific to Rwanda, either, but a familiar one to women all over the world. While this woman had far fewer resources than many to break the poverty cycle – she faces a problem that is universal to many African countries, the gap between rich and poor remains stark and profound. Seeing the plight of those in poverty is a part of traveling around the continent as I so often do, and it gives a deep understanding of its impact on social mobility. When simply finding enough money to buy food is a battle, there is little room for much else. Opportunities to acquire the tools to change are missed and lost when a child is unable to go to school.

The problem is most acute in remote areas. There you will see a child helping its parents at work, a woman balancing a heavy load on her head and a baby on her back, while clapping the hand of another child. This is the hard, physical reality for many in rural areas across the continent. What opportunities do these women – and men – have to make their lives, and those of their children easier and more prosperous?

But reporting on business in Africa has also exposed me to the opposite end of the spectrum, and women who have reached the pinnacle of the career ladder. These trailblazers are leading the way for women in Africa and beyond.

**ECONOMICS DEFINE OPPORTUNITY**

Economics define opportunity for so many. Inequality restricts opportunity when it reaches so deeply into people’s lives. Economics define opportunity for so many. Inequality restricts opportunity when it reaches so deeply into people’s lives. Inequality restricts opportunity when it reaches so deeply into people’s lives.

There is inspiration to be found from such success, but also in the incredible determination at the other end of the spectrum. The strength of character shown by those struggling every day to raise their children and put food in their mouths.

For me, there is a single ingredient that could influence the stories of every single one of these women, from the fields to the boardrooms. A society is arguably defined by its attitude to its children. How their care is provided, their education guaranteed, and their horizons broadened is something often neglected. Caregiving is often the greatest obstacle to work. Opportunities to train, gain experience, progress in careers, or even take jobs at all, are often influenced by access to childcare.

From maternity leave to flexible working practices, creative solutions and thinking are vital if we are to achieve equality and build opportunities for the next generation, and we need to forge that path from the top to the bottom. When footage emerged this month of Kenyan lawmaker Zulekha Hassan being asked to leave parliament after turning up to work with her child, the contrast with New Zealand prime minister Jacinda Ardern bringing her baby to the UN general assembly was stark. One was inspiring, the other less so.

Africa has so many opportunities, and its greatest resource is its people, my travels have taught me that. If we can unburden the working women who compromise and struggle every day, free them to provide for their families, and give their children access to the kind of education that can lift them from poverty and change their worlds, and that of their families, then the future for the continent’s women, and men, will be far brighter.
7 LESSONS in leadership

By Odette van der Haar

My advice to young women starting out is to believe in yourself and your skills and then go for it with passion.

We are capable of far more than we think. I started my working career as a ‘Girl Friday’ – I was a student dropout. A year into the job, I said, “Lord, I am going to die of sheer boredom.” I knew I was capable of doing much more than photocopying and faxing, at the time. I didn’t know what it was that I would do, but I knew I was capable of doing more than the mundane work I was doing. I set out to do two things: to find a job that paid me more; and to learn from the people around me, skills that I didn’t have, in order to get a job that would pay me more.

So, I started hanging out with PAs, secretaries and people in the sales department. I became a sponge, I read everything I was filing and in doing that, I learnt everything there was to know about the business; so, I was able to hold a conversation from a place of authenticity and knowledge.

LESSON 1: BE A BETTER VERSION OF YOURSELF

That is the first thing: to surround yourself with people who you aspire to be like, or who inspire you to be a better version of yourself.

My life’s motto is to end each day, reviewing and reflecting on what the day held, so that tomorrow I can be a better version of myself in every aspect of my life, than I was today. I chase the better me every single day.

I can’t tell you where I will be in five years’ time, because I’m chasing tomorrow – the better me, tomorrow. Every step forward is progress. The only way to do that is to truly learn, learn and learn, from your surroundings. The people below you, the people above you, the people on the same level as you, the people you encounter in every aspect of your life. I’ve learnt on this TV show from the young people that I’ve been surrounded with. When I was studying last year, I was at varsity every night, six days a week, with people half my age. I was in awe at how these millennials’ brains work. I learnt more in those two years from those millennials, about life, about how they think, about how to inspire millennials, by being around millennials six days a week – they taught me more about management and leadership than I’ve learnt in any textbook.

LESSON 2: FIND YOUR PASSION

Believe in yourself. Everybody has a God-given talent. It is deeply rooted in your passion and that which you are passionate about, you can make a career off. If you don’t work, you have fun every day and success follows.

LESSON 3: SERVE EVERYONE

The most important thing to remember is when you get to a position of leadership, is that servant leadership is the most valued form of leadership. You serve the people below you in the trenches, not your bosses above you.

I’ve always known there was more to me. I chased the better version of myself; I learnt informally and formally and so evolved slowly every day. When you evolve like that, you realise growth is at your core, and you are always chasing growth. If you are an entrepreneur and you are doing that, growth will follow, with growth will come success, with success comes everything else you desire.

LESSON 4: LEARN FROM EVERYONE

Here’s the thing, there are people in the world who know better than you. You will be surprised who will teach you the most profound lessons.

My biggest challenge professionally is, as a woman, that I have to work harder than my male counterparts just to earn my place. Then, once I have it, I have to work harder to earn my voice. That for me, is the most challenging part of my career.

And then, when I make a point, sometimes, that I feel very passionate about, it’s discounted as emotion attached to being a woman and I am so offended. Men have bad days. I’ve raised boys and they can be far more emotional and traumatising and dramatic than young girls, yet we are the ones labelled as emotional and irrational. It’s offensive.

You are the cavalry sister; you will do the heavy lifting and the guys will think it’s all them. If you are lucky, they will give you the recognition you deserve.

“ We have to embrace entrepreneurship in Africa. “
LESSON 5: FAIRY TALES ARE NOT REAL

Fairy tales are not real. In the real world, Cinderella got up, made sure her house was taken care of, that the kids were taken care of, put in her eight hours at least in her job, came home to make sure her family were taken care of, her Prince Charming, and when she got to bed she realised life is good – not because she is living in a fairy castle but because she is fulfilled. I’m fulfilling my destiny, I’m living my passion, I’m doing stuff that fulfils me and I have the blessing of children, the blessing of family - the things money can’t buy.

Society has become too attached to this notion of your Prince Charming or your Knight in Shining Armour coming to save you, as a woman. Whoever said we were in distress?

LESSON 6: EVERYONE HAS TO BE AN ENTREPRENEUR

Entrepreneurship is from where job creation and economic stimulation is going to come. In South Africa 40% of young people 15-34 years are unemployed. Uneducated and unemployed. That is a very concerning statistic, considering in Africa we have the largest segment of young people, a small population of aged and the very young. The future, I believe, is in this age group of not just millennials, but Born-Frees, up to age 35. These people, being the largest group on the continent, will never be absorbed by corporate employment, given the state of the global economy. We have to embrace entrepreneurship in Africa to create jobs.

We have the best of everything on the continent and young people need to start identifying what is uniquely African and create uniquely African goods and services. International brands are coming here for our goods. So why not own those goods and sell it to the developing world, building entrepreneurship opportunities on the back of those goods, and so doing stimulate the African economy, create jobs in Africa and uplifted African society and countries? We struggle with poverty because people don’t embrace entrepreneurship.

LESSON 7: BELIEVE IN YOURSELF

What makes me resilient is my faith and the hardships I have encountered in my life. I’ve had a real difficult life. My upbringing wasn’t easy. I’ve had to overcome more than any one person should in one lifetime. Where I draw inspiration from is that I don’t have any regrets. I truly believe everything I have been through has been a lesson, or a foundation, or a stepping stone to what I have become. It’s not easy hustling three jobs, being a mom; being a wife; running an advertising agency profitably in a recessed economy where brands are cutting back. It’s not easy attracting sponsors and advertisers to a TV show where content and production cost so much money... You have to keep on keeping on, believing that success is yours. I have on my arm a tattoo with the word ‘Faith’ on it. That reminds me that it is my faith that has carried me this far and it is only by grace that I will carry on into the future.

As a mother you are on the stage all the time. More importantly now, it’s my community who look up to me, it’s all the bursary recipients I mentored, and now on TV, the whole of South Africa’s young people look up to me. I have to walk the walk and talk the talk.

ABOUT ODETTE VAN DER HAAR

Odette van der Haar is the new Managing Director of global advertising agency behemoth, Publicis Africa. Van der Haar most recently held the position of CEO at agency, JWT Johannesburg. Prior to joining JWT, she was the CEO of the Association for Communication and Advertising (ACA) in South Africa. She has an admired reputation for championing transformation, professionalism and gender equality within the industry. She is currently a judge on the national broadcaster, SABC’s reality television show, The Next Brand Ambassador; and was honoured by her peers with a Legends of APEX award in 2019, for her work in the advertising communications industry.
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You make major mistakes and you also have some remarkable wins. It’s all part of the process.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST LESSON LEARNED AS A WOMEN ENTREPRENEUR AND INFLUENCER IN AFRICA? You can do it. Very often, due to fear, we tend to focus on the reasons why we won’t succeed. The very fact that you have chosen entrepreneurship as a path means that you have the stuff it takes to make it happen.

The second lesson is that it helps to narrow down your expertise and make a definite choice about what you and your company stand for, what you can and cannot do, where you will compromise and where you won’t.

I find that, especially as women, we miss out on a lot of opportunities because we are sometimes not as decisive as we should be. We’re good at many things, we love to do so much, we are over-committed and over-extended. It’s okay to have single-minded focus - you cannot be everything to everyone. Look at your business-life with a narrower lens and figure out the one thing you’re better at than everyone else you know. Focus on that thing.

I think it was Malcolm Gladwell who said, in his book, Outliers, that it takes 10,000 hours of doing something to become an expert at it. Pay your dues, and put in those 10,000 hours. It is going to require focus.

WHAT IS THE BEST PIECE OF ADVICE YOU WERE EVER GIVEN? That life is like a football game. In the first half, you’re getting to know your environment, your opponents, your allies, your own capabilities, your values. You go out onto the pitch of life and you learn to walk, you go to school, you fall in love for the first time, you get your first job, you may even get married and have children. We’re way too hard on ourselves during this first half because, somehow, we’ve been conditioned to think we should have it all figured out, but this is the time in your life when you are learning. Everything is new, done for the first time, and you’re learning as you go. You make major mistakes and you also have some remarkable wins. It’s all part of the process.

There comes a time when you need to take a “half time” break. Just like in football, this break should be used to evaluate what you’ve learned and make a commitment to yourself about how you’re going to play the second half to win, whatever winning means for you.

When you go back onto the field to play your second half (typically around the age of 40), it’s now time to apply your lessons learned and to be truer to yourself. In this half of your life, you should play as if you have nothing to lose. What’s the worst that can happen? Give it your best shot and do everything you would do if you were not afraid (because the fear never completely goes away). This second half is beautiful, because you know without a doubt that even if you fail, you will get up again. You’ve done it so many times before.

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR YOUNG WOMEN LEADERS AND ENTREPRENEURS IN AFRICA? There’s never been a better time to be a woman and to be African than right now. We’ve never had more ripe opportunities to decide how we’re going to shape the world than we have today. The key is to realise this, claim our stake and make it happen. Many have gone before us to pave the way and we have to pave the way even further for those who come after us. I don’t have advice to give as much as a question, one that I ask myself daily: “If not you, then who will do it?”

DO YOU HAVE A NETWORK AND MENTORS THAT SUPPORTED YOU IN YOUR CAREER, AND IF SO, HOW DID YOU FIND THEM? I have been very fortunate to have incredible mentors along the way. It’s usually been women I have worked with, especially women who have been my bosses. As the saying goes, surround yourself with people who know more than you do. I have had amazing female bosses who took an interest in my development and who pushed me harder than I was willing to push myself. I didn’t always like their approach, but I am forever grateful for what they taught me. More than practical lessons, seeing them climb the career ladder so gracefully despite the challenges they faced showed me that I was capable of doing the same. One of my mentors, Deanna Petersen, was an utter perfectionist. The other, Dr Dorothy Nyambi, is still the hardest working person I know and a staunch feminist. Both continue to inspire me.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES THAT WOMEN IN PARTICULAR FACE WHILE CLIMBING THE LADDER TO SUCCESS? There are many challenges we face externally, especially as entrepreneurs. We are constantly trying to prove that our expertise, products, services, etc., are as good as or better than our competitors, even when it’s obvious. We are still fighting for the logical right to earn the same amount of money as men do for the same jobs. Women entrepreneurs also still have a harder time than their male counterparts when it comes to attracting funding.

But frankly, I think our biggest obstacle is ourselves - self-doubt and a lack of self-acceptance. These are the most common challenges faced by women and, indeed, human beings in general. Self-doubt shows up as us questioning whether we should even be on the ladder in the first place. Our lack of self-acceptance manifests itself when we don’t recognise that we have what it takes to climb the ladder to the top, and even to build a brand-new ladder of success for which we define the parameters ourselves.

WHERE DO YOU DRAW YOUR INSPIRATION FROM? I draw my inspiration from books. I’m an avid reader and a big fan of autobiographies, in particular. I believe that there is nothing I will ever go through that someone else hasn’t experienced. There is nothing new under the sun, just different versions of the same thing. Books are, for me, essential life-support tools, where I go to find out how other people, probably much wiser, stronger and determined, found solutions to and overcame what I may be dealing with at any given time. I also enjoy African fiction - how could one not draw inspiration from our colorful stories?

HOW DO YOU INSPIRE OTHERS? I really enjoy teaching. I have had the privilege of conducting a few workshops for entrepreneurs, including for organisations such as Women (with female engineers) and the Obama Foundation (for the Obama Leaders: Africa program), and it’s where I am the happiest. My workshops are about storytelling and leadership, and how these two interact whether you are an entrepreneur or policy maker. The principles of storytelling, being able to articulate a compelling reason for your existence and moving people to action as a result, are applicable in every sphere of life. I hope to be able to do a lot more teaching in the coming years.

WHAT’S THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EVERY PERSON IN BUSINESS IN AFRICA? Just like every person in business anywhere in the world, our responsibilities are to:

• Solve a problem: that’s why we’re in business in the first place. We must have identified a problem or a gap which our solution (business) is helping to close.
• Be excellent: Do your best even better, every time. Live up to your clients’ expectations and set your own expectations above theirs.
• Pensaore: The world, and Africa in particular, desperately need entrepreneurs, the innovators of our future and job creators in our economies. We have a duty beyond our own comfort to contribute to the world’s development goals through our businesses.

ABOUT MIMI KALINDA Mimi Kalinda, originally from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, and raised in South Africa, is the Group CEO and Co-founder of Africommunications Group, a public relations and communications agency based in Johannesburg, South Africa.
PREPARING AFRICA FOR 2050

By Professor André Roux

One in four consumers on the planet will be living in Africa by 2050 and 40% will be under the age of 18. The implications are huge. How will this impact the continent’s economic development?

How do we prepare for the Africa of 2050? A quarter of the world will be African. If we’re 25% of the world’s population, we’re 25% of its consumers: one in four consumers on the planet will be in Africa and we’ll be home to 40% of the Earth’s under 18s. The implications are huge. How will this impact the continent’s economic development? What does it mean for the way we live? And how do we capitalise on our demographic dividend?

No one can know exactly what this Africa will look like, but we can make forecasts by foreseeing a few potential outcomes. I believe there will be two major game-changers for countries: the ability to diversify and add value. The ability to establish and maintain good governance, accountability and a rule of law. Leadership development will be essential.

It’s important to remember Africa is far from one homogeneous landmass. This is a continent made up of 55 extremely distinct countries. So, we shouldn’t forecast the fate of Africa. Rather we need to look at each country individually. However, some generalised forecasts are possible.

URBANISATION

We’ll see mass movement of people. Millions of people will move to urban areas, which means our cities and towns will get larger. Currently there are 400-million urban dwellers (June 2019). 800-million more people will move to the cities in the next three decades. That means 1.2-billion Africans could be living in urban regions.

With this, we’re likely to see the rise of squatter camps that quickly develop into their own self-sustaining economies. Take South Africa’s huge, informal, thriving township economy, for example. When people get together, they create economies that are ultimately meaningful and productive. An urbanised consumer market is very easy to cater to as it’s a concentrated mass of people. But, massive urbanisation inevitably places huge pressure on resources like water and electricity. That’s going to be the biggest challenge. The conversion into meaningful economies depends on governments’ ability to put in adequate infrastructure. The implications for employment, social welfare, housing and food security are immense.

FREE MOVEMENT

We’ll also see more people moving between countries. An African Union would mean more freedom of movement. This comes with opportunities and challenges. Often, the non-economic, social and political complications are underestimated. And the implications of one currency across countries of different levels of growth are big – a one-size-fits-all solution doesn’t always work.

DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND

As well as an urban population, we’ll have a demographic dividend – namely, the share of the working-age population will outnumber the share of the non-working-age population, giving us dramatic economic growth potential. This could be our greatest asset. However, all the potential benefits of a young population can only materialise if our population is appropriately schooled, and skilled for the challenges of the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR).

EDUCATION

We need a continental education makeover. A focus on STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and maths) skills; as well as 4IR capabilities like creativity, team management, complex problem-solving and emotional intelligence.

We need to look ahead and ask what kind of economic activity will each country be pursuing? And what kind of skills will catalyse this? Remember, robots are coming. It’s about competing with workers all over the world. And robots worldwide as well.
The fastest-growing kind of employment on this planet is self-employment. Education that instills entrepreneurial skills is vital. Millions of people have something special they can do. But they don’t have the business skills to translate this into a meaningful venture. Our young people are full of ideas, robust and agile. But they need more opportunity. We need to empower more of the small, salt-of-the-earth, modest businesses that keep economies going. That means creating enabling environments.

If we can get education right, we’ll see more and more people (but unfortunately by no means the majority) escape poverty. This will create more middle-income consumers to drive economic growth, activity and development.

Access to education may be bolstered by our increasing connectivity. By 2030, Africa will have 16% of the world’s internet users (source: Euromonitor International). By 2050? A lot more we can assume. Information technologies and the internet are already changing the lives of millions of Africans in terms of accessing education and mobile money.

A focus on education will also help us shift and diversify our economies. By 2050, African countries will need to have transformed their economies to become far less dependent on mining and agriculture. Currently, most countries specialise in one or two natural resources – these form the backbone of their economies. But they extract the raw forms and sell these on to someone else. In this way, in a sense, we export our wealth.

ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

A focus on education will also help us shift and diversify our economies. By 2050, African countries will need to have transformed their economies to become far less dependent on mining and agriculture. Currently, most countries specialise in one or two natural resources – these form the backbone of their economies. But they extract the raw forms and sell these on to someone else. In this way, in a sense, we export our wealth. Importantly, this change needs to be driven by the private sector and aided and abetted by regulation.

We’re overdependent on resources and prices are determined by a global force. We need to add value ourselves. That means using what we’ve got, not reinventing the wheel. For example, many countries are now turning phosphate into fertilisers. Or cutting and polishing diamonds, as well as exporting raw stones.

ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

Making these shifts will take insightful and scrupulously ethical leadership. If governance (in businesses and government) isn’t good and autonomous democratic institutions aren’t tolerated, then it’s difficult to sustain growth. But, there’s hope.

The enormous leadership potential of Africa’s young people will, hopefully, have been unlocked by 2050. We will have invested in grooming leadership qualities in young people so they become the leaders Africa needs. Currently, more younger leaders are coming into power in Africa, with no real first-hand knowledge of the post-independence eras of these countries. These leaders are possibly better versed in democracy; better versed in what it means to be more economically competitive. This is driven partly by the demands of a middle-income youth who want middle-income aspirations.

At the end of the day, there’s no one-size-fits all forecast for the future of Africa’s economy, but I think the message is one of guarded optimism. Given our youthfulness, the demographic dividend will still be around by 2050 and beyond. This means we still have a couple of decades to prepare ourselves. The risk is if we don’t ensure young people are properly skilled and educated then they will be stuck in unemployment and poverty; they’d have nothing to lose by taking to the streets and rebelling. That’s the worst case if we don’t get it right.

All in all, I think the Africa of 2050 will be in a better place than the Africa of 2019, which is in a better place than the Africa of 1990. But we need a change in mindset. We can’t keep thinking we’re useless and always lagging behind. We must take control, take the bit between the teeth and believe we can make the change.

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For the past five years AWIEF has been unlocking opportunities for women-owned business ventures whilst driving the agenda for women entrepreneurship. AWIEF hosts events throughout the year and runs programmes to train, mentor, and support emerging young women entrepreneurs on the continent. AWIEF’s mandate is supported by some of Africa’s biggest banks, international development organisations, foreign missions, big corporates and some eminent persons.
KEY AWIEF EVENTS 2019

**JANUARY**
- FemBioBiz Partners Kick-off Meeting, Lusaka, Zambia

  As the South Africa Country Coordinator and in-country Incubator for FemBioBiz, AWIEF attended the kick-off workshop for the 2019 FemBioBiz Accelerator, from 30 January to 1 February, together with other implementing partners in the SADC region: Botswana Innovation Hub (BIH); mHub Malawi; DeMoZimbabwe; National Commission on Research, Science and Technology (NCRTS), Namibia; The Guy Morale Institute, University of Seychelles; WECREATE, Zambia; and National Biotechnology Authority Zimbabwe.

**FEBRUARY**
- #VALUEHER Financial Management Workshop, Gaborone, Botswana

  AWIEF hosted on 25 and 26 February, a capacity building and entrepreneurship skills training workshop for leadership and financial management for women in agribusiness, in partnership with the Botswana Innovation Hub (BIH). 30 women agribusiness owners selected from 10 Southern African countries were trained over two days in financial management, and gained skills in measuring and growing business performance.

**MARCH**
- International Women’s Day celebration, Lagos, Nigeria

  AWIEF celebrated International Woman’s Day in Nigeria, on 13 March, hosting an event at the Lagos Continental Hotel, Victoria Island, Lagos, with the theme, ‘Building a Better Tomorrow’. The special business networking event acknowledged the economic and social achievements of women, connecting with local and international business leaders, entrepreneurs, government officials, and community advocates.

  The Lagos event was organised in partnership with the Bank of Industry of Nigeria, GE, Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), Embassy of Sweden in Nigeria, and Lagos State Employment Trust Fund (LSETF).

  Speakers included Vanessa Adams, Vice President, Country Support and Delivery: AGRA; Margaret Hirsch, Founder and CEO: Hirsch’s Homestore, South Africa; Patricia Obousoo, Director: Communications and Public Affairs, GE Africa; Teju Abisoye, Executive Secretary, LSETF; and Ida Hockerfelt, Deputy Head of Mission: Embassy of Sweden, Nigeria.

**MAY**
- FemBioBiz Accelerator Phase I Training, Cape Town, South Africa

  15 South African women bio-entrepreneurs were selected as beneficiaries for the 2019 FemBioBiz accelerator. Phase I training was held on 27 - 29 May.

- B2B Agri-fair and launch of #VALUEHERConnect, Nairobi, Kenya

  AWIEF in partnership with CTA and AWAN-Africa, organised a B2B Agri-fair in Nairobi, Kenya on 11 - 14 June. Participants were women agri-entrepreneurs at different nodes of the agricultural value chain seeking new markets, new customers, capital or strategic partners. 33 eligible women agribusiness owners selected from across African countries were supported with preparation of their business profiles and needs analysis and participated in the #VALUEHER B2B Agri-fair.

- CTA, AWIEF and AWAN-Africa launched #VALUEHERConnect, the first continental digital market place for women in agrribusiness, a customised market information and intelligence platform where women agripreneurs can reach out to one another, share and access structured resources and services, and create opportunities for women-to-women and intra-African agribusiness trade.

**JUNE**
- FemBioBiz Accelerator Phase II Bootcamp 1, Cape Town, South Africa

  Phase II, Bootcamp I took place on 24 - 26 June.

- FemBioBiz Accelerator Phase II Bootcamp 2, Cape Town, South Africa

  Phase II, Bootcamp 2 took place on 29 - 30 July.

**JULY**
- AWIEF Growth Accelerator Session 1, Johannesburg, South Africa

  25 young women entrepreneurs were selected for the 2019 AWIEF Growth Accelerator, sponsored by Nedbank, from sectors including: technology, manufacturing, education, engineering and construction, agribusiness and the creative industry. Training took place on 5 - 6 August.

- AWIEF Growth Accelerator Session 2, Johannesburg, South Africa

  Face-to-face training Session 2 continued on 2 September.

**AUGUST**
- AGRF2019, Accra, Ghana

  AWIEF CEO, Irene Ochum was invited to the African Green Revolution Forum (AGRF) in Accra, Ghana, 3-6 September, as part of a panel discussion on ‘Solutions for Women Unlocking the Potential of Agriculture in Africa’. AGRF is the leading platform in the world for global and African leaders to develop actionable plans that will move African agriculture forward.

  The theme this year was, ‘Grow Digital: Leveraging digital transformation to drive sustainable food systems in Africa’.

**SEPTEMBER**
- Growth Accelerator Session 3, Johannesburg, South Africa

  Training Session 3 on 14 - 15 October 2019.

- AWIEF Annual Conference, Expo & Awards, Cape Town, South Africa

  AWIEF this year celebrates its five-year anniversary by launching a Pan-African publication to honour and acknowledge leading women in Africa and showcase AWIEF’s work on the continent. Attendees from all over Africa and beyond will gather at the annual AWIEF Conference, Expo and Awards at the prestigious Cape Town International Convention Centre, 29-30 October 2019. The theme this year is: ‘Enhancing Impact: Digitalisation, Investment and Intra-African Trade’.

**OCTOBER**
- Pitch n Grow, Cape Town, South Africa

  A pitching event organised at the AWIEF conference 2019 for participants in the AWIEF Growth Accelerator.

- FemBioBiz Regional Pitching Competition, Cape Town, South Africa

  A regional pitching event organised for national finalists from all participating SADC countries.

- African Women in Dialogue (AfWID), Johannesburg, South Africa

  African Women in Dialogue convened by the Zanele Mbeki Development Trust (ZMDT), is an inclusive platform of dialogue that unites 1000 African women from all works of life under one roof to deliberate on issues of the continent, creating space for disruptive and innovative ideas. AWIEF will be hosting an entrepreneurship side event at AWID2019 taking place on 4 - 8 November.
REPUTATION MANAGEMENT BUILDS TRUSTED BRANDS

By Regine le Roux

Proper reputation management starts with making sure that you have your internal building blocks in place. This includes having a clear vision, values that are integrated into decisions and actions, and processes that ensure consistency, ethical leadership, and having the right employees.

What is reputation management?

Reputation management is all about proactively looking after your business and creating an entity that people want to do business with. If you have a good reputation, people will want to be associated with your brand and invest in your products or services, which will ultimately have a positive impact on your bottom line.

Proper reputation management starts with making sure that you have your internal building blocks in place. This includes having a clear vision, values that are integrated into decisions and actions, and processes that ensure consistency, ethical leadership, and having the right employees, to mention a few. Without these important internal structures, it will be incredibly difficult to build a credible brand that provides your target audience with the value they are looking for. Stakeholder relationships are the essence of reputation management; reputation is essentially the perceptions that people have of your brand, which is influenced by an array of factors. Therefore, a stakeholder management plan is crucial for any business as it is the roadmap of how you are engaging and providing value to your stakeholders. It’s about communicating the right message, through the most appropriate channel of communication, to the right audience - while at the same time building the brand of the business. I heard a fantastic quote the other day: “Branding is what you experience from a company; reputation is what you remember.” It’s that feeling you get when you think about a specific company or brand.

Why is it so important for personal branding and company branding?

People want to be associated with people and brands with a good reputation. By association it will impact their own brand and reputation. On a personal level, it’s important to have a vision for yourself: what is your most audacious goal? Vision boarding is a wonderful exercise to help you with this. Understanding what it is that you would like to achieve and what your ideal future looks like, will help you on your way to greatness.

Other important questions to reflect on are:

- What set of values do you ascribe to?
- What type of friendships and associations do you want to aspire to have?
- What are your aspirations?

This will motivate and inspire you to plan and plot how to get there. Start changing your mindset. A good reputation will help you to secure that big project or client that you’ve always dreamed of doing work with.

What are the challenges in Africa for reputation management?

We all know that leaders and governments play a critical role when it comes to setting an ethical example and doing things consistently right, in the right way. Unfortunately, our ethics and reputation survey that we conducted for the African Public Relations Association (APRA) in 2019, showed that this is definitely where the gap lies. Ethical conduct is currently falling short and negatively impacting the reputation of the continent.

There is still quite a bit of work that we need to do to rebuild the reputation of the continent, but it starts with each one of us. We need to keep our leaders accountable, but we also need to take responsibility for our own actions. If we can all share one positive story about our beautiful country and continent each day, imagine how perceptions will be changed?

How does one foster a culture within an organisation that grows a company’s reputation?

There are five key things that come to mind:

1. Having a clear vision: Everyone in the organisation needs to know and understand where the business is heading, and this includes the rest of the team in order to articulate and live by this vision.
2. Having clear values: This is not just pretty posters on the wall, or words on the website, but something that is ingrained in the team’s decision making and actions that they take. It needs to form part of conversations.
3. Having the right team: ‘I’ve just finished reading Jim Collins’ Good to Great book, and he says it isn’t people that are your greatest assets, it’s having the right people that are your greatest asset.
4. Having an ethical leader that leads by example.
5. Being fluent in the unique selling proposition (USP) and understanding the value you bring to your audience: can you fluently articulate what makes your company unique in eight words? What does your receptionist or intern’s eight words sound like? Everyone’s eight words will impact how the business is seen and perceived, which will impact its reputation.

What are the building blocks that need to be in place to manage, grow and maintain a personal or corporate reputation?

There are five key building blocks for a quick reputation health check:

CORPORATE MANAGEMENT: Do we have a clear vision of where is the organisation heading? Do we as the leadership team set the example of the behaviour we expect from the rest of the organisation? What are the values that drive decision making? How aligned are we to the King IV report? As a director, have I actually read the King IV report?

CORPORATE CAPITAL: Do we have the right team on our side to achieve our strategic intent? Are we attracting the right calibre of individuals to help us achieve our business’ vision? Are we providing sufficient training, coaching and mentorship to our team members?

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE: What is the perceived value of our business? Do customers understand the value offering, in other words, why would they use their hard-earned cash for our product or service instead of the competitors? How transparent and ethical are our financial matters?

CORPORATE POSITIONING: Who are we conducting business with? Do our suppliers and partners share your values? Are we sustainability giving back to the community?

CORPORATE DIALOGUE: Can our team succinctly describe the vision and values of our business, explain the unique selling proposition and elaborate on the corporate social investment initiatives we are involved in?

Are we using the most appropriate channels of communication to get our message across? Do our actions have the best interest of the business and everyone associated with it at heart?

ABOUT REGINE LE ROUX

Regine le Roux is Managing Director at Reputation Matters. She trains in Reputation Management across the African continent and is the author of the book ‘Reputation Matters: Turn Your Business Into a Trusted Brand’.

Reputation Management builds trusted brands

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**JANE MAIGUA**

Kenyan, Jane Maigua is a Managing Director of Exotic EPZ Limited, a reputable and integral player in the African agro-processing industry delivering high-quality products to key global markets. The company works closely with the many smallholder farmers to maximise yields, provide market and input information, collectivise smallholder farmers and provide markets that are sustainable and guaranteed.

“As a women-owned and led start-up company operating within the agribusiness - which is considered high risk owing to its dependence on climatic conditions for good produce - we had a challenge with access to finance due to lack of possession of adequate collateral to match the capital we needed; as well as undocumented prejudices that contribute to limited or no access to credit for women.

Attending the 2018 AWIEF conference, exhibition and awards with my two business partners, we received phenomenal input from the various speakers and presenters. Some of the advice I remember is, ‘money follows passion and persistence’. Our interpretation of this was that if we continued to work on our business, improving our reach and business relationships with customers; enhance our transformation strategies and activities to smallholding farmers; improve our business processes and systems; and knock on the right doors without giving up, finances would look for us instead. A manifestation of this is what we are currently experiencing! As an agri-processing enterprise, the recognition of our efforts in creating over 100 decent jobs - a big percentage of which are women; providing a market for thousands of rural smallholdings; demonstrating own resilience in the face of a challenging business environment; and making significant turnover from export sales within one year of being in business, was truly reaffirming and reassuring.

Sometimes as women we beat ourselves up too much about not performing, hence winning the AWIEF Agri Entrepreneur Award not only lifted my spirits, but also that of my business partners to do more. Young entrepreneurs need more support: top on the list is technical assistance on how to structure their business for success. Critical to this is to develop a clear business strategy that articulates business mission; mid-to long term goals; ways to strengthen operating systems for efficiency; product/service branding; and effective ways to engage with potential investors.”

**SIHLE HLOPE**

South African, Sihle Hlope is an award-winning writer/director and executive producer of Passion Seed Communications, which is an award-winning film and television production company that closes the widening knowledge gap between ‘information-rich’ and ‘information poor’ audience members, by embedding socially relevant messages in its highly engaging fiction and non-fiction programmes, specifically documentaries and narrative-driven content.

“My biggest business challenge touched on the technicalities of how to transform a traditional film and television production company into a social enterprise business model specifically within the film and television industry, since there were no existing local examples that I could draw from.

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“Taking part in the AWIEF Growth Accelerator Program has been a very affirming process as it amplified the ability to head our company in the right direction. The training provided useful insights on how to take advantage of our competitive edge as an audio-visual production company that produces socially relevant fiction and non-fiction content. It also reassured our business confidence in the market. What is more rewarding in being part of the AWIEF family is the ability to leverage networking opportunities that the AWIEF platform provides.

Through AWIEF’s networks, I have been able to pursue a Social Entrepreneurship Program at the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS) as well as do an online Digital Marketing course at the University of Cape Town. As a participant in the AWIEF’s Pitch n Grow competition where I emerged as a winner, the prize money allowed the company to purchase production equipment and to cover some of its running costs. Financial support is very vital to emerging entrepreneurs. I would encourage more players to provide more pre-approved seed capital. Passion Seed Communications applied for the Investec Global Exposure Program and was selected out of 300 businesses to go to India and learn about the country’s film and television production, digital marketing and public relations landscape.”
Spotlight

RENISHIA MANUEL

Renisha Manuel is Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for GrowBox, South Africa. As a social entrepreneur, she works hard to bring food gardening and nutrition to households that need it the most by providing easy and convenient vegetable garden boxes to consumers who do not have sufficient space to grow their own vegetables.

“Much as I had a background in Polymer Technology and Cosmetic Formulation Science and a passion to help people, I really had a huge drawback in kick-starting my business due to lack of effective business knowledge and skills. The workshops during the 2018 FembiBiz Accelerator Programme really helped me to come up with a clear business plan as well as an operational strategy to help move my business to greater heights. The interactive training sessions provided me with more insights on how best I could position my business, which involves the use of fish scale waste and converts it into collagen to make biopolymer film that is impregnated with essential oils and vitamins to heal wounds, prevent infection and help with pain relief on the market. The workshop challenged me to read contracts carefully and not be naive and simply agree with just anything without exercising due diligence. This I must say is among the best business-related advice. I will always be grateful for the opportunities I got through AWIEF.

As part of offering greater support to emerging young entrepreneurs, there is a need for incubators to extend their operating working hours to include after hours during weekdays, as well as open operating working hours to include after business hours during weekdays, as well as open operating working hours to include after business hours during weekends, because entrepreneurs do not only operate during regular working hours. It would also be ideal to ensure that small microloans for entrepreneurs are widely available and easily accessible; and cut red tape that entrepreneurs face when they want to work with government institutions.”

AWIEF course gave me a better insight on alternatives to get resources. Besides the course being very useful, the best takeaway has been the amazing networking with other women entrepreneurs from other countries in Africa. We have kept in touch since, and we are constantly helping each other sharing resources, information, and giving advice on challenges. Besides this, AWIEF has also allowed us to become part of the VALUE4HER platform, allowing us again to connect with other women entrepreneurs across the continent, and sharing valuable information and tools. Being a woman entrepreneur, one of the main challenges, besides the access to finance, is the access to information and opportunities to grow the business.

AWIEF has become an invaluable organisation in providing us with this information and tools, and I feel extremely lucky to be part of this network.”

CLAUDIA CASTELLANOS

Claudia Castellanos, is the Managing Director of Black Mamba Chillie in Eswatini (Swaziland). They practice sustainable farming and thanks to seed funding from World Vision, they have partnered with Guba which trains small local growers (mainly women) in organic farming and permaculture, buying their fresh produce and empowering every grower with a fair trade income.

“I had the privilege to attend an AWIEF business accelerator course in Botswana a few months ago. The course was very practical and offered great insight on many aspects of managing a business, such as marketing and production, with a great focus on finance.

As a small business from Eswatini, one of our biggest challenges at the moment is access to funds to scale our business from niche to volume. Participation at the AWIEF course gave me a better insight on alternatives to get resources. Besides the course being very useful, the best takeaway has been the amazing networking with other women entrepreneurs from other countries in Africa. We have kept in touch since, and we are constantly helping each other sharing resources, information, and giving advice on challenges. Besides this, AWIEF has also allowed us to become part of the VALUE4HER platform, allowing us again to connect with other women entrepreneurs across the continent, and sharing valuable information and tools. Being a woman entrepreneur, one of the main challenges, besides the access to finance, is the access to information and opportunities to grow the business.

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NOMAHLUBI NAZO

Nomahlubi Nazo is a Founder of Foi Science in South Africa which manufactures Natural and Organic personal care cosmetics, massage oils and aromatherapy candles. Foi Science also has two development programs designed to decrease unemployment by imparting skills to unemployed youth in urban and rural communities, as well as juvenile prison inmates by teaching basic chemistry, introduction to essential oils, basic personal care cosmetics manufacturing and aromatherapy candle-making courses for free. Program participants are encouraged to sell the products made on the program to their own communities.

“Prior to my interaction with AWIEF I had many challenges with the organisation that I used to run. I then decided to move into business and I only did so because of the business related insights I got from AWIEF which is a great platform for mentorship, growth and innovation programmes, as well as networking.

The AWIEF platform really allows women entrepreneurs like myself to certainly think outside the box, but also allows women entrepreneurs to connect with fellow entrepreneurs from different backgrounds, culture, career, and countries, whilst sharing their individual business journeys. I never really dreamt big for my business, but now the story is different upon having started my distribution service leveraging on collaborations that AWIEF spearheaded with women entrepreneurs from Tanzania.

What I like about AWIEF is the resources within the network that the AWIEF platform provides where you have leaders who are ready to grow and work with you. I remember wanting to speak to a top woman entrepreneur for two months without any success, however, when I asked AWIEF for help, a meeting was arranged in no time. Having a mentor who believes in your vision and is ready to walk with you during your business early-stage growth period enables you to trust your business journey more. In order to effectively support young and emerging entrepreneurs, there is a need to have an open discussion with financial institutions whose mandate is to support entrepreneurs, to incorporate such support throughout the entire business journey spectrum.

This will enable entrepreneurs with great business plans and vision to kickstart their business journey without so many hurdles. However, women entrepreneurs need to take the lead in spearheading these discussions and not simply leave it to other players.”

CHANTELLE GOLIATH

Chantelle Goliath is a Founder and Managing Director of Milli Distributions and New Heritage Foundation which is a registered non-profit company that aims to create new opportunities for children living in marginalised communities.

“As part of the World Vision’s bid, we were invited to Seoul, South Korea to represent South Africa, while showcasing our products. By the end of the competition, I could confidently approach any opportunity and introduce GrowBox as a brand to be remembered. For example, the AWIEF’s Pitch n Grow event is a platform for young and upcoming women entrepreneurs to keep them focussed, grounded and offer them the necessary support they might need while navigating tough business times associated with the early growth stage.

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2019 AWIEF AWARDS FINALISTS

Twenty-two women founders and entrepreneurs have been selected as finalists, from different African countries, across eight different categories. The AWIEF Awards’ panel of judges is made up of high-calibre industry experts and thought leaders spread across the continent.

“The judging panel had some very busy weeks where we reviewed over 200 shortlists for consideration and we are delighted to see the high standard and quality of entries coming through to AWIEF. This is one of the most robust and independent jury-based Awards programmes that currently is offered in Africa, and we are thrilled to support female entrepreneurs,” said Birgitta Cederstrom, Frost & Sullivan’s Business Development Director for MEA and this year’s head judge for the AWIEF Awards.

“Women-owned businesses are a vital part of our African economy and the women of Africa are our most valuable, untapped resource,” commented Irene Ochom, AWIEF founder and chief executive officer. “Each year the entries to the AWIEF Awards grow in number and this response signifies the importance of recognising and celebrating women in Africa for their achievements and contribution to Africa’s economic and sustainable development.

“Seven out of 10 of the fastest growing economies in the world, are to be found in Africa. Africa is rising and we must make sure the women of the continent, the backbone of our communities and our families, are given the opportunities to rise as well,” said Ochom.

Judges

The judges for 2019 were:

- Birgitta Cederstrom, Business Development Director Middle East and Africa, Frost & Sullivan, South Africa (Head Judge)
- Chude Jideonwo, CEO, Joy Inc., Nigeria
- Vanessa Adams, Vice President, Country Support, Delivery and Partnerships, Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (Agra), Kenya
- Duncan Onyango, Team Leader and Investment Lead, Sustainable Urban Economic Development Programme, Kenya
- Regina Gounden, Provincial Manager for Retail Relationship Banking, Small Business and Professional Banking, Gauteng North, South Africa
- Beatrice Gakuba, Executive Director, AWAN Africa
- Hanan Darwish, Founder/CEO, Boldly Digital, Former Cluster President, Gulf Countries and Pakistan, Schneider Electric, UAE
- Motshabi Seedi, Founder and Chairman, Argon Financial Group, South Africa

New award

This year a new award has been introduced in partnership with APO Group, the leading media relations consultancy and press release distribution service in Africa and the Middle East, which is also principal media partner and official newswire to the AWIEF Conference this year. In honour of the partnership, APO Group is the founding sponsor of a new award – The African Women in Media Award, to honour and celebrate women journalists who support women’s entrepreneurship across the continent.

Awards event

The AWIEF Awards winners will be announced at a gala dinner on 30 October 2019, following on from the 2019 AWIEF Conference and Exhibition taking place on 29-30 October 2019 at the Cape Town International Convention Centre, South Africa. The theme this year is: Enhancing impact: digitalisation, investment and intra-Africa trade. Sponsors and key partners this year include Shell, CTA, Nedbank, Bank of Industry of Nigeria, APO Group, AGRA, OCP SA, TIA, City of Cape Town, USAID, CENFRI and SEDA. Frost & Sullivan is AWIEF Awards Auditing Partner.

“Our finalists were rigorously assessed in terms of the sustainability of their businesses, as well as the documented or prospective impact on community development and the economy,” explained Ochom.

The Africa Women Innovation and Entrepreneurship Forum (AWIEF), has announced the top finalists in its annual awards to celebrate women leaders and entrepreneurs in Africa. The winners will be announced on the last night of the annual AWIEF Conference and Expo on 30 October 2019.

The finalists for the 2019 AWIEF Awards are:

- **YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR AWARD**
  - BEATRICE HAULE
    - AfriAgric Products (Tanzania)
  - LOLA ALLI
    - Lagoa Executive Cardiovascular Clinic (Nigeria)
  - OLA (Okurukinrin) BROWN
    - Flying Doctors (Nigeria)

- **TECH ENTREPRENEUR AWARD**
  - CAROLINE CORBETT
    - SmartBlade (South Africa)
  - REBECCA ENONCHONG
    - AppsTech (Cameroon)
  - DIANE TEMOGNE
    - Engineering Consulting and Services (Cameroon)

- **SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR AWARD**
  - SIZANI NGUBANE
    - Rural Women’s Movement (South Africa)
  - EFUA ASIBON
    - Dislabelled (Ghana)
  - LAURENCE ESTEVE
    - Zip Zap (South Africa)

- **GLOBAL BRAND AWARD**
  - SHANTELL BOOYSEN
    - Elim Spa Products (South Africa)

- **AGRI ENTREPRENEUR AWARD**
  - EVELYN NAMARA
    - Vouch Digital (Uganda)
  - CAROLINE POMBEyE
    - Profish (Ghana)
  - AFFIONG WILLIAMS
    - RedFruit (Nigeria)

- **EMPOWERMENT AWARD**
  - MARY INZOFU
    - Njia Empowerment Organisation (Kenya)
  - NAMUBLA KACHUMI
    - WeCreate (Zambia)
  - CHARLOT MAGAYI
    - Mukuru Clean Stoves (Kenya)

- **CREATIVE INDUSTRY AWARD**
  - KAPASA MUSONDA
    - Mangoshi Doll Co. (Zambia)
  - GENET KEBEDE
    - Paradise Fashion (Ethiopia)
  - ABBY IKOMI
    - House of Itawo (Nigeria)

- **LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**
  - KRISTINE PEARSON
    - Lifeline Energy (South Africa)
  - OUMOU SANGARÈ
    - Festival International du Wassulu (Mali)
  - JOKE SILVA
    - LUFODD Group (Nigeria)
THE ROLE THE MEDIA PLAYS IN SUPPORTING FEMALE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

By Nicolas Pompigne-Mognard

APO Group are the founding sponsor of a new AWIEF award: the APO Group African Women in Media Award. The prize has been introduced to recognise, celebrate and empower women journalists who support female entrepreneurship in Africa.

I’ve long believed Africa is a hive of entrepreneurial activity. That’s why the Africa Women Innovation and Entrepreneurship Forum (AWIEF) events are so important to help inspire and encourage our continent’s next generation of innovators and business leaders.

What’s exciting about the situation in Africa, is the impact women are making in a traditionally male-dominated environment. A 2018 report by the World Bank found that Africa stands alone in having more new female entrepreneurs than male. The MasterCard Index of Women Entrepreneurs 2017 has also listed two African countries, Uganda (34.8%) and Botswana (34.6%), as having the highest percentage of women entrepreneurs globally.

But it is also true to say that women face more challenges than their male counterparts. Boardrooms in Africa - and indeed all over the world - tend to be slower to reward female-led initiatives. Getting your foot in the door is harder, and investment is more difficult to secure. That same World Bank study found capital in male-owned start-ups was six times greater than in those run by women.

APO Group started out in my living room - literally - and during the first years I had to be the IT manager, the sales consultant, the PA, HR, Finance, Marketing - everything. I had to learn it all from scratch.

But I’ve never stopped learning. The past 12 years have been a constant education. When I started, I could barely speak a word of English, but I realised quickly that it was critical to the success of the business, so I made it a priority.

In my experience, creating and developing a company is one of the most difficult things a human being can do. It requires a huge amount of time and energy, a lot of sacrifice, a healthy lifestyle and many other ingredients too. It goes without saying, you will also need a huge slice of luck!

REWARDS

If you can survive those first few years, Africa is a continent that can reward you greatly. It is a place where entrepreneurial spirit has always abounded, even if startups have, in the past, lacked the support, financing or international exposure to move to the next level of global recognition.

Life might be tough for many in Africa, but its people are resilient. They understand the value of hard work. I’ve always thought that if you can make it in Africa, you can make it anywhere.

Events like those hosted by AWIEF are showing that our collective passion for diversity and equality is driving success and helping entrepreneurs turn their dreams into reality. Remember: Africa is a perfect showcase for rich cultural diversity, as well as a hotbed of ideas and innovation. We are a continent of 54 countries. The birthplace of humanity. It is in our blood to try new things and to push the boundaries.

I’m proud to say our own attitude to diversity and equality has always been a vital part of APO Group’s success. Five of the nine
members of our senior leadership team are women - and all are from different countries. We have built our company culture on fairness and flexibility. We do not want to be a company where employees are forced to choose between their careers and their families.

We are also in the privileged position of being able to harness the power of media to support entrepreneurship in all its forms - and women in business in particular.

WOMEN IN MEDIA

As an official sponsor of AWIEF, APO Group is delighted to be coordinating the APO Group African Women in Media Award which is designed to recognise, celebrate and empower female African journalists who support female entrepreneurship in Africa.

The media industry has had its own challenges to overcome in the drive towards equality. Newsrooms have been traditionally male-dominated, but female journalism students now outnumber male students all over the world, and the next step is for these changes to materialise at a senior level, with increased numbers of women in leadership positions.

We hope the APO Group African Women in Media Award inspires more women to follow their passion for journalism and encourages them to persevere in their careers despite the obstacles.

All nascent business ideas need journalists to support them. A positive mention in the media can mean the difference between success and failure for entrepreneurs and small businesses. AWIEF is the perfect platform for women in the media to get behind women in business by championing the best ideas, technologies and innovations. And the fact that women typically invest 90% of their earnings back into their families and communities mirrors APO Group’s own dedication to making sure African people thrive both at a local and a national level.

Our CEO, Lionel Reina, allows APO Group to further bridge the divide between business and media. He has been an important figure in helping future business leaders as they go through the early part of their careers. As a company board member for DAZZL, for example, Lionel’s aim is to inspire the next generation of talented tech entrepreneurs offering new technologies to the broadcast industry in Africa.

TALENT

Even the biggest media companies and PR Agencies tend to promote their executive talent from within, meaning they remain unfamiliar with the cut-and-thrust of the commercial sector.

Lionel is a business veteran, uniquely qualified to advise APO Group’s clients on their communication strategies in Africa and the Middle East. For more than a decade, he was CEO for Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa at Orange Business Services, the B2B division of French telecoms giant Orange – a remit that covered more than 80 countries. He was also Middle East Director in the Gulf region for Accenture. So, when Lionel talks to entrepreneurs and startups, he truly has the inside track to success.

Since I brought Lionel in and stepped aside from CEO duties at APO Group in December 2018, it has given me a chance to follow my own passions for helping entrepreneurship in Africa. I’ve spent a lot of time visiting different countries, meeting new people and giving talks on how the media and business worlds can work better together. I have particularly enjoyed the conferences I’ve hosted for young journalism students in Senegal, Uganda, Zambia and Ethiopia. It is the start of a continent-wide initiative to help promote entrepreneurship to the next generation of young Africans.

I’ve tried to challenge their preconceptions and encouraged them to think big. In many of them, I see myself at their age - inquisitive, passionate - perhaps a little naive - but extremely well-placed to achieve entrepreneurial success.

Because now is the perfect time to strike. With a decent idea, a well-placed to achieve entrepreneurial success.

The winner will be announced at the 5th Africa Women Innovation and Entrepreneurship Forum (AWIEF) (www.AWIEForum.org) Conference, Expo and Awards, hosted at the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC) on 29-30 October 2019. Lionel Reina, CEO of APO Group said, “We are extremely excited for the opportunity to highlight the work of African female journalists sharing the stories of women entrepreneurs in Africa.

The APO Group African Women in Media Award is part of our commitment to supporting the development of journalism on the continent. We are delighted to present this award at AWIEF in Cape Town as we celebrate women in journalism and entrepreneurship.”

The jury in-charge of selecting the winner, which will be announced at the AWIEF Awards taking place on the evening of 30 October at the CTICC, are as follows:

• Aida Diarra, Senior Vice President for Sub-Saharan Africa at Visa.
• Rukmini Glanard, Executive Vice President Global Sales and Marketing at Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise.
• Bola Adesola, Senior Vice-Chairman at Standard Chartered Bank Group.
• Lee Martin, Senior Vice President, Global Strategic Development at Getty Images.
• Nicolas Pompigne-Mognard, Founder and Chairman of APO Group.

Nicolas Pompigne-Mognard is the Founder and Chairman of the APO Group, the leading media relations consultancy and press release distribution service in Africa and the Middle East. A former journalist for online Gabonese media Gabonews, Pompigne-Mognard created APO Group from nothing in 2007, using his own savings. The company now works with more than 300 prestigious clients - including 57 of the biggest public relations agencies operating in Africa. Previously, he served as deputy-director of the French regional daily newspaper Le Petit Journal and as parliamentary assistant at the French parliament (Assemblée nationale France). In December 2018, Pompigne-Mognard stepped down as CEO and became chairman of APO Group. The move has allowed Pompigne-Mognard to focus on the development of an investment fund dedicated to Africa. Web: https://apo-opa.com/
2020
SAVE THE DATE

NOVEMBER 2020
AWIEF ANNUAL CONFERENCE, EXPO & AWARDS
Cape Town International Convention Centre, Cape Town, South Africa

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AWIEF CONFERENCE, EXPO & AWARDS 2018
8 & 9 November 2018

AWIEF ANNUAL CONFERENCE, EXPO & AWARDS
Cape Town International Convention Centre, Cape Town, South Africa

PHONE: +27 21 826 8878
EMAIL: INFO@AWIEFORUM.ORG
WWW.AWIEFORUM.ORG
Organised under the theme, ‘Unleashing Ideas: Innovation, Sustainability & Enterprise Growth’, the AWIEF 2018 Conference, Expo and Awards, took place 8-9 November 2018 at the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC), Cape Town, South Africa. AWIEF is a platform that sees global thought leaders, industry experts, policymakers, academics, development organisations, and investors gather to dialogue, connect, network, share, collaborate and transact in a combined effort to boost Africa’s entrepreneurship ecosystem.

As a Pan-African non-profit organisation, AWIEF is dedicated to promoting and supporting women’s economic empowerment across Africa, through innovation and entrepreneurship, and in 2018, the AWIEF annual conference, awards and expo hosted 1300 attendees, 650 delegates, as well as over 50 exhibitors at the expo featuring 300 young entrepreneurs.

Nestling in the shadow of the majestic Table Mountain, and overlooking the spectacular Atlantic Ocean, the CTICC is a magical place where the imagined becomes real, visions turn into strategies, consumers become customers, and strangers from across the globe become colleagues, partners and friends.

So much more than a multi-purpose event destination, this African icon combines expansive venues, impeccable service, cutting-edge technology and the finest global cuisine, to transform your convention, conference, exhibition, banquet or meeting into an extraordinary experience.

For more information, or to book your event at the CTICC, call +27 21 410 5000, email sales@cticc.co.za or visit www.cticc.co.za.

“Everyone went the extra mile and worked together with our team as ‘partners’ to ensure the success of our Annual Congress event.”

Amanda Stops
CEO
South African Council of Shopping Centres (SACSC)
Already home to several top international listed companies, Cape Town is currently regarded as one of the best cities on the continent in which to invest.