

Investing in women, everywhere

By [Serge Sacre](#)

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International Women's Day, for us in South Africa, serves as both a pause for reflection and as a call for action. We reflect on the strides we have made to get to what is easily a better world for women than it ever was in modern history, and we take the charge to do more, faster, better, with longer lasting results. We take stock and look ahead with clarity.



Serge Sacre, CEO at L'Oréal South Africa. Image supplied

This year's International Women's Day theme 'Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress' resonates deeply with us at L'Oréal South Africa, where we see firsthand the transformative power of investing in women, and the indelible impact that leaves behind not only in women's lives, and their families, but their communities and humanity itself.

This day, this commemoration, reaffirms our commitment to fostering an environment where everyone, irrespective of gender, race, or sexual orientation, can thrive.

This charge, to invest in women and accelerate progress reflects the work we have yet to do, in driving inclusion and therefore transformation. That we are still calling for more investment is a tough reminder that many, precisely half of our population, are left behind. Yet, as an executive in the beauty industry, the question, 'what can we do,' remains a pertinent enquiry.

Moreso, 'what have we done/ are we doing' to empower and accelerate women's progress. As I reflect on the importance of this day world over, the actions that are critical for advancing women and accelerating their progress are not lost on me. As a business, we too take critical actions that positively impact women advancement.

Visionary leadership and innovation

The journey toward transformative change begins with visionary leadership. At L'Oréal South Africa, we have committed to reimagining our leadership strategies to champion diversity and drive innovation. In the beauty industry, diversity importantly includes the inclusion of women in corporate leadership.

By aligning our objectives with pivotal government initiatives, such as the National Development Plan, we underscore our

dedication to not just participating in but leading the conversation on gender equality and economic empowerment.

Responsive product development and sustainable practices

Our products serve as a testament to the diversity and vibrancy of our consumer base, reflecting a spectrum of cultural backgrounds, preferences, and needs. This dedication to responsive product development extends in our commitment to sustainability, where eco-friendly production processes and green initiatives form the cornerstone of our business operation.

Critically, aligning our sustainability efforts with national goals like the National Climate Change Response Policy, includes investing in women. In our last five renditions of Women in Science, we have awarded over R3m to women scientists pursuing projects in the climate action space.

This is not limited to science fields in beauty, but the broader fraternity where there is a notable dearth of women. This is part of our contribution to a more sustainable future, one where women are front and centre science-led innovation towards societal progress.

A commitment to scientific excellence and social responsibility

This year we are celebrating 61 years of championing beauty in South Africa, and beauty backed science remains a fulcrum for how we show up in our products and in our corporate citizenry. Over the last 61 years, our infinite engagements with women from all walks of life have expanded our view of beauty.

In South Africa, our research and innovation division is constantly at work, with 80% of whom are women, delivering products that reflect the diversity of Africa as a whole.

From products that take care of the spectrum of coils and curls in African hair to a range of skincare that is made for the wide range of textures, tones and needs of Africa. We have delivered and continue to deliver offerings that centre women, and we are committed to making sure that these very products are not only made for women, but by women too. That is investing in women, and accelerating progress, in action.

Nurturing women in the sciences

In our mission to accelerate inclusion and promote scientific excellence, L'Oréal has established a pivotal global partnership with Unesco that has a local presence in South Africa. This collaboration is designed to nurture and elevate the participation of young African women in the sciences.

Through this initiative, we seek out, recognise, and support talented young female scientists from various disciplines. This program annually honours six outstanding women for their research contributions, motivating them to advance their careers within the scientific community.

Today and this month, we are reminded of the ongoing efforts of gender equality because investing in women is as much a moral imperative as it is a strategic one. We are honoured to contribute to this transformative journey, championing a vision of beauty for all, that is inclusive, empowering, and backed by science. In driving inclusion and empowerment, we foster a more equitable society and drive innovation and progress.

It is through our collective efforts that we build a brighter, more inclusive future for South Africa and beyond. With that said, Happy International Women's Day to all women in South Africa and across the world.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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