

Standard Bank Top Women Leaders publication launches its 18th edition

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Unveiling South Africa's top gender empowered companies.



Standard Bank Top Women Leaders publication proudly announces the release of its 18th edition, a comprehensive guide dedicated to celebrating women-led business success and championing gender empowerment in South Africa. This milestone edition spans nearly three hundred pages, featuring captivating insights into almost eighty gender empowered organisations, making it the most extensive publication since 2018.

“The genesis of the Standard Bank Top Women Leaders publication was to encourage and foreground gender empowerment by celebrating women-led business success, providing inspiration to the many female entrepreneurs out there seeking role models and advice.” says Fiona Wakelin, group editor at [Topco Media](#). “The 18th edition carries on this important tradition – and packed into these pages you will find a cornucopia of tenacity, resilience, courage, compassion and inspiring stories of how to rise above the noise from women across the board.”

Celebrating the achievements of empowered women, the edition showcases Standard Bank Top Women Award winners and successful women across different sectors. It also offers valuable advice on topics like leadership survival, team building, and mental well-being.

[Read the publication here.](#)

Empowering organisations: A showcase of gender empowerment

The heart of this edition lies in the profiles of nearly eighty trailblazing gender empowered organisations. These companies have demonstrated their unwavering commitment to inclusivity, diversity, and gender equality within their corporate landscapes, setting shining examples for the business community.

Cover feature: Coca-Cola beverages – driving gender empowerment

Drawing attention to one of the nation's most influential organisations, the publication presents a captivating cover feature on Nozicelo Ngcobo, director: public affairs, Communications and Sustainability, and MD Velaphi Ratshefola of Coca-Cola Beverages South Africa (CCBSA). Readers are invited to immerse themselves in the success stories of the company's previous winner of the Standard Bank Top Women Male Driving Gender Empowerment award.

The article serves as an inspiring example for other companies to follow, highlighting how empowering women and promoting gender equality can lead to significant progress and success.

Insights from industry leaders: Thought leadership by Standard Bank executives

Valuable knowledge is shared from thought-provoking articles penned by Standard Bank's esteemed executives. Simone Cooper, Nomonde Hlongwana, Anne Alikar, and Thandeka Goba share their expertise on leadership, empowering women in the workplace, embracing challenges, and nurturing resilience.

Perspectives and expertise: Our thought leadership contributors

Empowering women in African climate action

This article by Itumeleng Monale, chief operating officer of the JSE, highlights women's innate leadership abilities and their often-overlooked roles in climate change discussions and solutions. It underscores the disproportionate impact of climate change on women in developing regions, particularly those dependent on climate-sensitive livelihoods.

Emphasising the need for inclusivity and equity, the article discusses initiatives like gender bonds and sustainability projects. It calls for increased access to venture funding, women's inclusion in defining climate solutions, and the potential of community-based initiatives. The article stresses that Africa must create its own climate solutions, with businesses playing a crucial role, while ensuring women's active participation and equality in this effort.

The changing landscape of women in mining

This article by Fatima Collins, chairperson of the Women in Mining initiative at Sibanya-Stillwater discusses the changing role of women in the mining industry in South Africa and globally. In South Africa, women now make up about 12% of the mining workforce, compared to just 2% in 2008. Similarly, global figures show an increase from 11% in 2006 to 16% in 2018.

Mining companies are actively promoting gender equality and diversity, recognising the benefits of having women in leadership positions. Women bring diverse perspectives, collaboration, and improved financial performance to the industry. Challenges remain, including changing industry perceptions and stereotypes. Initiatives like mentorship programs and structured recruitment are being employed to support women in mining.

The transformative power of women in leadership

This article by Dr Shirley Zinn, CEO of Shirley Zinn Consulting emphasises the transformative role of women in leadership. Diverse leadership, encompassing both gender and demographics, enhances decision-making and drives innovation. Gender equity should not be merely a business priority, but a fundamental value deeply embedded in every organisational decision.

Monitoring, measurement, and sharing success stories of women in leadership are essential steps. Nurturing diverse talent requires promoting unconventional career paths, sustainable succession planning, and mentorship. Inclusion is a necessity for future-ready leadership in a rapidly changing world. Gender diversity is not just a moral imperative but a business advantage, associated with improved financial performance and ethical, sustainable leadership across environmental, social, and governance aspects of business.

Tackling inequality for sustainable development

This article by Dr Judy Dlamini, chairperson of the GBV Response Fund highlights the critical importance of addressing horizontal inequality to achieve UN Sustainable Development Goal 10, which aims to reduce inequalities based on income, gender, age, disability, race, class, ethnicity, religion, and opportunity. Legislation alone cannot rectify historical and present imbalances; it requires a multidisciplinary, systemic approach championed by leaders across sectors. Financial inclusion, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMMEs), is crucial for economic growth. South Africa's dual economy, with a thriving formal sector and an underdeveloped informal one, must prioritise SMME growth to reduce inequality and unemployment. Investing in SMMEs and fostering an equitable environment can eradicate poverty and

restore human dignity, vital for sustainable peace and prosperity.

How technology has impacted women's health

In this article by Genevieve Mannel, chief digital officer, Cipla South Africa, technology's transformative impact on women's health and empowerment is discussed. Technology has facilitated access to health education, empowering women with information about their health.

Mobile apps like Clue provide menstrual health education and cycle tracking. Telemedicine offers remote healthcare access, especially beneficial for women in remote areas. Home diagnostic devices allow early health issue detection, improving outcomes. Social media platforms amplify women's voices for advocacy and awareness, exemplified by the #MeToo movement. Technology has made healthcare information, services, and advocacy more accessible, empowering women to take control of their health and demand their rights. Further innovation is needed to continue benefiting women's health globally.

Empowering SA's young women can transform our nation

In this article by Leanne Emery Hunter, COO at Yes, empowering young South African women to transform the nation is emphasised. More women in the workplace benefit businesses significantly, boosting revenues and innovation. However, globally, women's participation in the workforce lags behind men.

Creating inclusive workplaces that appeal to women, rethinking traditional roles, and promoting gender equality in policies like maternity/paternity leave are essential steps. Additionally, focusing on equitable promotion opportunities and sharing unpaid household work can free women to engage more in paid labour. Building a pipeline for young women through programs like the Youth Employment Service (Yes) is crucial for their empowerment and the nation's prosperity.

Empowering African women with Web3 technology

According to Sandy Carter, COO and head of business development at Unstoppable Domains, crypto currency was created with the goal of disrupting an unfair global financial system and literally 'banking the unbanked'. The whole ethos of this technology was to empower people everywhere to take control of their finances, careers, and lives. Web3 eliminates the need for permission to create a wallet or begin accepting payments, allowing for more freedom, such as the ability to open businesses.

Web3 technology, including cryptocurrency and blockchain, presents an opportunity to empower women in Africa. With limited access to traditional banking systems historically, women can benefit from greater control over their finances and digital identities through Web3. Education and awareness are crucial to increasing their participation in this transformative space, and initiatives like Unstoppable Women of Web3 aim to provide education to millions of African women.

Insights from the frontlines: Interviews with influential leaders

In addition, readers can expect compelling interviews with prominent leaders, Zeda's Group CEO, Ramasela Ganda, and financial director Thobeka Ntshiza, as they delve into their organisations' remarkable gender empowerment initiatives.

Nuggets of advice for new leaders

For those stepping into leadership roles, this article by Selina Fisher, founder of SelinaNewman Coaching, offers ten empowering strategies. It highlights continuous personal development, building self-awareness and self-trust, and transitioning from a 'doer' to a delegator. It emphasises that actively listening to team members, seeking support, asking questions, and reflecting on the leadership journey are essential aspects of effective leadership.

Investing in mental wellbeing

In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, this article by Cathy Jackson advocates for an integrated, employee-centric wellness programme. It emphasises that investing in mental wellbeing yields positive returns for individuals and organisations, as highlighted by the concept of mental health becoming mental wealth. The article encourages creating safe spaces, reducing the stigma of depression, and providing coping tools for employees.

Founder and owner of Healthy Living Consulting, Ronald Abvajee, says Covid-19 has literally been the firelighter that has lit the flame on mental health issues and highlighted the inadequacies of patchwork wellbeing solutions in the workplace. "We've seen the need for a more integrated holistic, proactive and texturally relevant programme which resonates with the needs of employees."

Lindiwe Miyambu, group executive for Human Capital at African Bank, who has partnered with HLC as a provider to ASI, agrees stressing the importance of linking the wellbeing drivers of your business with that of your people. "It can no longer be viewed as a beneficial add on. Employee wellness has to be placed front and centre of everything one does and literally integrated into the very fabric of the organisation."

The 18th edition stands tall as a testament to the dedication of the A team behind its creation, ensuring a jam-packed publication that inspires and empowers women across South Africa.

The annual Standard Bank Top Women Conference is taking place on 18 to 19 October 2023. Register here to get your ticket: <https://lp.topco.co.za/sbtw-conference-2023/>

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