

# How top women in Africa blaze the trail for economic transformation

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*Africa's financial future is female: four ways women are driving Africa's transformation and contributing to a global reset*

Sustainable development and economic transformation are a big focus for businesses throughout the continent these days. It's the fuel that propels innovative companies, keeping them ahead of the curve. So, how do you go about making this happen for your business? Promoting female empowerment and gender equality within your team could very well be the answer.

While gender inequality continues to be a challenge throughout the African continent, much progress has been made in integrating women in key decision-making roles in government, but to a limited extent in the corporate sector.

"At this year's [Standard Bank Top Women Virtual Summit](#) as organised by Topco Media, we will be shining the spotlight on the achievements of the women at the forefront of business innovation, and the immense impact they are making," says Ralf Fletcher, Topco Media CEO.

The celebrated female professionals who will be addressing the 4500 confirmed delegates at the upcoming virtual summit on the 6 and 7 October 2021 have each contributed to economic transformation and sustainable development throughout their careers, forging the way ahead despite the numerous challenges they had to overcome along the way.

Here are a few important insights gleaned from the long and winding roads these exceptional women took to the top:

## **Necessity is the mother of invention**

Female professionals are not afraid to challenge the status quo. Charlotte Karam, for instance, is the founding director of the Centre of Inclusive Business and Leadership for Women at the American University of Beirut. Recognised as a Distinguished Scholar by the Arab Fund Program, she and her team secured over \$8M to support work on Inclusive HR Systems in the MENA region.

Another trailblazer who went boldly where no man had gone before is Tabassum Qadir, the CEO of Uprise Africa who established the first equity crowdfunding platform in South Africa. This innovative platform facilitates access to alternative funding solutions for South African entrepreneurs and links everyday South Africans to early-stage investment opportunities.

## **Women bolster the workforce from the inside out**

In a recent interview with the Top Women team, Lee-Ann Samuel (Implats Group Executive: People), an experienced Human Resources professional with more than 18 years' experience, stated a simple fact that puts the gender debate into sharp focus.

"Achieving gender equality is important for workplaces not only because it is 'fair' and 'the right thing to do,' but because it is also linked to economic growth. The presence of women promotes gender equity in the industry, and they contribute to the available workforce that directly feeds the economy, so their inclusion has a noticeable socio-economic impact," she noted.

## **Women support other women**

In a [recent interview](#) with *Women's Report*, Thabile Makgala (Executive: Eastern Limb, Implats) and chairperson of Women in Mining South Africa (WiMSA), said that the importance of mentors and sponsors cannot be overstated.

"These are the people who advocate on your behalf. Those are the people who are able to catapult your career. You need to persist until you find the right mentor and sponsor. It was only later in my career that I found the right ones, and it made a world of difference.

"I often wonder, if I had found them earlier on in my career, where I would be now. They are sounding boards when you sometimes really just want to give up and require advice," she advises.

This is yet another wonderful reason to sign up for the Standard Bank Top Women Virtual Summit as organised by Topco Media. [Claim your virtual seat here.](#)

### **Women encounter many challenges and are not afraid of failure**

In a recent interview with *Conversations with Leaders*, Ipeleng Mkhari (CEO of Motseng Investments) shared that she believes success to be a lousy teacher, just like Bill Gates did.

"In October 2015, I began shifting the tone of my speeches to reflect all my hardships, failures, major sacrifices and the countless mistakes I had encountered. This was primarily driven by the fact that so many observers would reflect on only the sexiness and glamour of being an entrepreneur.

"Most entrepreneurs I have met have a multitude of ideas and seek help to implement these. The challenge lies in being able to match or link the two successfully each time," she explained

These are just a few of the reasons why female professionals are key to economic transformation and sustainable development. Find out more by taking part in the Standard Bank Top Women Virtual Summit as organised by Topco Media. [Claim your virtual seat here.](#)

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