



CEO CONNECT FORUM

South Africa

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Welcome

Vuyo Lee, Director of Marketing & Corporate Affairs, JSE

Summary of Talk: Vuyo Lee, Director of Marketing & Corporate Affairs, JSE

Focus: Gender Equality in the South African Workplace

Vuyo Lee opened the CEO Connect South Africa Forum with an urgent call for accelerating gender equality in South African workplaces. She evoked the historical significance of Women's Day, reminding the audience of the ongoing struggle for women's rights in South Africa. The data underscored the gravity of the issue: despite women making up roughly 51% of the country's population, they are severely underrepresented in executive roles. For instance, only 2% of CEOs in the top 100 listed companies in South Africa are women.

While South Africa leads emerging markets with 28% female board representation, it lags behind countries like France, which mandates a 40% quota. Calling for a multi-stakeholder approach involving both private and public sectors, Lee argued that gender equality must be a "clear management action," not just a by-product of other initiatives. She encouraged the leaders present to acknowledge their role and responsibility in closing the gender gap, asserting that there's no excuse for inaction.

KEY MESSAGES

- The gender gap is a critical issue for South Africa's future, not just its past.
- Women make up only 28% of leadership roles in top South African companies, and far less in CEO and board chair positions.
- South Africa's lead in female board representation among emerging markets is insufficient compared to developed markets.
- Gender equality requires a focused, multi-stakeholder approach, not just incidental progress.
- Corporate leaders are directly responsible for closing the gender gap; inaction is not an option.



Setting the Stage

Tiekie Barnard, CEO, Shared Value Africa Initiative

Summary of Talk: Tiekie Barnard, CEO, Shared Value Africa Initiative

Focus: Gender Equality as an Economic Game-Changer

Tiekie Barnard, CEO of the Shared Value Africa Initiative, set an impactful tone for the CEO Connect South Africa Forum with a clear message: Gender equality is not just a moral or social imperative, but an economic game-changer. She pointed to a shift in attitudes, contrasting the initial lack of interest in the Shared Value Africa GBVF #ItsNotOk movement and work to the current gathering of almost 200 business leaders.

Barnard emphasised that gender equality is a collective responsibility, independent of government or civil society, but heavily influenced by mindset and unconscious bias. Making an audacious yet strategic parallel, she argued that the significance of gender equality should be elevated to the same level as climate change in terms of urgency and impact, both for ethical and economic reasons.

The forum also served as the launch pad for the first phase of a Gender Equality Implementation Guide aimed at the private sector, informed by research released at the JSE in 2022. Please remove supported by KPMG. Barnard also announced the launch of an accompanying online assessment tool, urging corporate leaders to gauge their organisations' standing on gender equality and commit to actionable change.

In summary, Barnard called upon the leadership of South African companies critically assess and amend their organisational policies to foster gender equality, positioning it not just as a social justice goal, but a pivotal strategy for sustainable economic development.

KEY MESSAGES

- Gender equality is an economic game-changer, not just a social or ethical concern.
- The journey towards gender equality involves combating deeply ingrained mind-sets and unconscious biases, beyond just policy changes.
- Gender equality should be given the same urgency and attention as climate change, for both ethical reasons and its potential to impact sustainable development.
- The Shared Value Africa Initiative's Gender Equality Implementation Guide, supported by KPMG, offers the private sector a structured pathway to advance gender equality.





- A free online Gender Equality self-assessment tool is available for corporate leaders to evaluate their organisations' current status in terms of gender equality and to identify areas for action.
- The responsibility to act lies with the corporate leadership; change begins at the individual and at leadership level within organisations.

Opening Address - The Responsibility We Carry as Leaders

Ignatius Sehoole, CEO, KPMG SA

Summary of Talk: Ignatius Sehoole, CEO of KPMG SA

Focus: The Business Case for Gender Equality

In his opening address at the CEO Connect South Africa Forum, Ignatius Sehoole, the CEO of KPMG SA, laid down an unambiguous gauntlet to corporate South Africa on the issue of gender inequality. Sehoole emphasised the moral and economic imperative of empowering women, linking it directly to the future of South African families, which are often female-led. He also shed light on the stark reality that unless the private sector takes a proactive role in combating gender-based violence and inequality, meaningful progress will remain elusive.

He asserted the indispensable role businesses, especially private entities, play in societal transformation. Reflecting on their collective response during the COVID crisis, Sehoole argued that when businesses, with determination, commit to a cause, significant positive change ensues. Hence, there is no justification for not directing that same resolve toward tackling gender inequality.

He also highlighted the tangible benefits of involving more women in leadership roles, asserting that diversity enhances the quality of decision-making and drives innovation in the boardroom. This is not simply a matter of social justice, Sehoole argued, but a strategic necessity for companies seeking a competitive edge.

Sehoole concluded by calling on his male counterparts to step out of their comfort zones and engage directly with this issue, framing it as not just an organisational priority but a personal one, impacting their daughters and wives and by extension, their own futures. He positioned the empowerment of women as a dual pathway to both corporate success and a more equitable society, urging his fellow CEOs to lead the change.



KEY MESSAGES

- The empowerment of women is not just a social imperative but an economic necessity, directly impacting the future of South African families and communities.
- Private sector has a proven capacity to drive change, as evidenced during the COVID-19 pandemic, and must apply that same resolve to tackle gender inequality and gender-based violence.
- Women in leadership roles demonstrably improve the quality of decision-making and innovation, making their inclusion a strategic advantage for corporations.
- Male CEOs, who remain the majority, bear a particular responsibility to lead this change; it is both an organisational and a personal priority that impacts the future well-being of their own families.
- The issue is not just about women but benefits men and society at large, including the companies they lead, making it a holistic economic game changer for South Africa.

Fireside Chat: Can Private Sector Leadership Advance Gender Equality?

Hon. Chiggai, Presidential Advisor on Women's Rights, Republic of Kenya

Facilitated by Sakina Kamwendo

In a robust dialogue facilitated by Sakina Kamwendo, Hon. Harriette Chiggai, Presidential Advisor on Women's Rights for the Republic of Kenya, articulated the critical role the private sector plays in accelerating gender equality. Dismissing the traditional narrative that confines gender equity to public policy, Hon. Chiggai emphasised that private enterprises, as the largest employers and enablers of job creation, are integral to promoting an equitable workforce. She called for actualisation of existing policies rather than mere documentation, emphasising the need for measures to go beyond the paper they are written on, particularly around sexual harassment.

Drawing from issues like the "tea for sex" abuses within Kenya's tea sector, Hon. Chiggai highlighted the urgent need for actionable corporate policies. She stressed the importance of peer-to-peer review mechanisms within companies and urged the private sector to cooperate with governments in anti-gender-based violence initiatives. The issue is not merely about crafting policies but implementing them, and in this respect, Hon. Chiggai calls for stronger Monitoring & Evaluation frameworks. While acknowledging a lack of financing and coordination as obstacles, Hon. Chiggai concluded by saying that unified efforts between private and public sectors could significantly bridge the existing gender gaps.





Hon. Chiggai's talk asserts that gender equality is not a charitable cause but a necessary framework for ensuring increased productivity and economic growth. It offers a pragmatic approach that involves active policy implementation, cross-sectoral coordination, and monitoring—factors that must be integrated into the core business strategies for actual impact.

In the second part of the fireside chat, Hon. Chiggai addressed the critical role that transparency plays in advancing gender equality in the corporate sector. She emphasised the importance of shifting from mere policy formulation to effective policy implementation and monitoring. Drawing from her own experience, Hon. Chiggai revealed that systemic gender biases often exist within organisational policies—sometimes covertly—as she recalled a 'silent policy' at a previous workplace that restricted the hiring of women of childbearing age into senior roles.

Hon. Chiggai highlighted that transparency begins with robust internal policies that support all employees, including women, especially as it relates to salary bands and promotions. She stressed that without transparency, the gender pay gap will continue to perpetuate inequality, noting that disparities in pay even exist within large multinationals. The next logical step, Hon. Chiggai argued, is the stringent monitoring of these policies to ensure they are performing as intended.

She also touched upon the responsibility corporate entities have in the broader societal context, specifically through their CSR activities. Hon. Chiggai suggested that companies should deliberately design their CSR initiatives to combat cultural and social biases, advancing the cause of gender equality at a grassroots level.

For executives keen on optimising both gender parity and organisational efficiency, Hon. Chiggai's central message is unequivocal: proper policy formation, along with its diligent implementation and monitoring, are non-negotiable steps for any institution genuinely committed to achieving gender equality. In doing so, she contends that companies will not only achieve transparency but also create environments where the skills and potential of all employees, regardless of gender, are fully leveraged for collective benefit.

In the third part of the fireside chat, Hon. Chiggai laid out a comprehensive blueprint for how the private sector can substantially advance gender equality. Central to her argument is the idea that economic empowerment of women isn't just a social justice imperative but an underutilised lever for macroeconomic growth.

Hon. Chiggai cited the importance of private sector involvement in bolstering Women Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs), acknowledging the initiatives of Kenyan companies like KCB Bank, Safaricom, and Vodafone. She discussed the Wekeza Dada initiative, a state-run program partnered with the Ministry of Trade and Investment that aims to mentor and financially empower



women-led enterprises, with a target reach of over 8 million women in four years. The initiative looks to transition women from being mere traders to being investors.

Highlighting the construction sector as an untapped arena for female entrepreneurs, she called upon private companies to provide necessary training and resources. She emphasised that socio-cultural norms are a significant hindrance, as many women can't leverage property for loans due to cultural biases. Hon. Chiggai proposes that strategic collaborations between governments and private companies can circumvent this, making women 'bankable' without requiring property as collateral. Hon. Chiggai's key message was that while government policies are instrumental, the heavy lifting needs to be done by the private sector. For her, the policies aren't a burden but an avenue to foster collaboration for sustainable change. She urged the private sector to be proactive, not just compliant, and to be equal partners in shaping national policies, especially as they are key players in job markets and move economies.

KEY MESSAGES

- Gender Equality as Economic Imperative: Hon. Chiggai emphasises that gender equality isn't a social justice concern alone but a pivotal economic lever that drives productivity and growth.
- Beyond Policy Documentation: The need for private sector companies to transition from merely documenting policies on gender equality to taking actionable steps for real-world impact.
- Urgency for Transparent Mechanisms: Transparency within organisations, especially around pay and promotions, is non-negotiable for dismantling systemic gender biases.
- Monitoring & Evaluation Frameworks: A call for robust internal review mechanisms that not only track but also ensure the implementation of gender-responsive policies.
- Collaboration between Public and Private Sectors: Gender equality can only be fast-tracked through strategic collaborations that transcend the boundaries between public policy and private enterprise initiatives.
- CSR as a Tool for Societal Change: Companies should utilise their Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives strategically to combat gender biases at a grassroots level.
- Economic Empowerment via Targeted Programs: Hon. Chiggai cites successful models like the Wekeza Dada initiative in Kenya, aiming for a more significant economic role for women through mentorship and financial enablement.
- Sectors for Female Entrepreneurial Growth: Highlight on untapped sectors, like construction, where women can be significantly empowered through targeted resources and training.
- Accountability and Action: A concluding call for both public and private sectors to be proactive and accountable in shaping gender-sensitive policies and budgets.





Keynote - SAB Driving Gender Equality. An Integrated Approach through our Value Chain

Richard Rivett-Carnac, CEO, SAB

In his keynote address at the CEO Connect South Africa Forum, Richard Rivett-Carnac, the CEO of SAB, laid out the company's holistic approach to gender equality, stating unequivocally that it isn't merely a social imperative but a business one.

Rooted in data and armed with a belief in the efficacy of a gender-balanced workforce, Rivett-Carnac discussed how SAB has dismantled structural barriers hindering women's progress within the organisation. This commitment extends beyond in-house operations to encompass the entire value chain—customers, suppliers, and communities.

A crucial point was the adaptability of SAB's strategy across various departments, from sales teams operating in traditionally male-dominated liquor trading environments to breweries running 24/7. This has culminated in the hiring of women at senior levels and achieving higher efficiencies in production lines often managed exclusively by women. To create a broader impact, SAB has also diversified its brands and leveraged them to challenge gender-based societal norms.

Rivett-Carnac closed his talk on a decisive note, stating that driving the gender equality agenda is within corporate control and must be undertaken with serious commitment and measurable metrics.

KEY MESSAGES

- Gender equality isn't merely an ethical stance but a business imperative backed by data and experience.
- Barriers hindering gender balance can and must be dismantled, even in traditionally male-dominated areas like sales and production.
- The gender equality agenda should be holistic, extending beyond internal operations to the broader value chain including customers, suppliers, and communities.
- Brands wield significant power to influence societal norms and should be used deliberately in addressing issues like gender-based violence.
- The change is measurable and within our control; businesses need to commit to actionable metrics to drive gender balance.



Keynote - Addressing Gender Equality in the Workplace

Steve Kiptinness, Chief Corporate Affairs Officer, Safaricom

Steve Kiptinness, Chief Corporate Affairs Officer at Safaricom, outlined a compelling argument for gender equality as an indispensable factor in the long-term viability and competitiveness of businesses. Underlining the company's data-driven commitment to gender equity, Kiptinness revealed that Safaricom has achieved a 50/50 gender balance across its workforce, with a target of achieving 40% female representation in leadership roles. He argued that gender equality enhances organisational resilience, broadens perspectives, and enriches problem-solving capabilities, thereby equipping businesses to better face future challenges.

Beyond numerical targets, Safaricom has also invested in creating an enabling environment through targeted initiatives such as the Women in Leadership and Women in Technology programs. The company also holds managers accountable for gender-balanced hiring and has completely eliminated the gender pay gap in its workforce. These measures are not just ethical imperatives but are strategically aligned with Safaricom's long-term business goals, reinforcing the core message that gender equity is indeed an economic game-changer.

Kiptinness also touched on supply chain diversification, revealing plans to triple the proportion of women suppliers to 30% and partnering with financial institutions to offer financial products specifically tailored for women suppliers, thereby removing barriers to entry in traditionally male-dominated sectors. He emphasised that Safaricom's deliberate focus on gender equality has not only led to a more inclusive workforce but also enhanced brand equity and value.

Moreover, Safaricom is making strong community impact through its foundation's focus on maternal and child health, particularly in regions with high mortality rates. This reflects the company's broader perspective that the economic benefits of gender equality extend well beyond the workplace, serving society at large.

In conclusion, Kiptinness emphasised that Safaricom's proactive approach to gender equality has yielded tangible benefits, including enhanced brand equity and organisational resilience. The company's multi-faceted strategy serves as a comprehensive model for how gender equality can be seamlessly integrated into core business operations, proving its weight as an economic game-changer.



KEY MESSAGES

- Gender equality is not merely a societal obligation; it is a business imperative that contributes to organisational resilience and sustainable growth.
- Organisations must also move beyond numbers, to create an enabling environment for women inclusive of targeted developmental programs, gender-neutral compensation, and holding managers accountable.
- Investment in community programs, particularly in maternal and child health, amplifies the impact of gender equality beyond the organisation.
- Diversifying the supply chain and enabling women entrepreneurs through targeted financing is a win-win, contributing to both community development and business robustness.

Keynote - The Importance of Shifting Mind-sets and Implementing Gender Equality

Richard Firth, CEO MIP Holdings

Richard Firth, CEO of MIP Holdings, discussed the company's strategic approach to addressing gender equality and the broader social issue of gender-based violence in South Africa. According to Firth, MIP Holdings identified three primary challenges in 2014: the absence of black software engineers, lack of female engineers, and gender-based violence affecting productivity and workforce participation. To tackle the first two challenges, MIP initiated an internship program aimed at developing real coding skills, using a unique riddle-based selection process. This innovative approach had a 98% success rate in identifying individuals with coding capabilities, with 95% of the program's graduates being either black or women. Despite these successes, the company still faces the challenge of attracting more women into the tech sector.

Firth also highlighted the devastating impact of gender-based violence on productivity and mental well-being, citing alarming statistics on violence against women in South Africa. He stressed that gender-based violence not only hinders skill development and economic growth but also significantly disrupts the mental focus necessary for coding, which requires an uninterrupted state of "flow" that takes about 25 minutes to achieve.

He concluded with a passionate call for urgent action against gender-based violence, arguing that without personal consequences for perpetrators, the cycle of violence will not stop.



KEY MESSAGES

- Addressing gender equality and social challenges like gender-based violence are integral to business strategy, not merely compliance with legal obligations.
- MIP Holdings' unique riddle-based recruitment game successfully identifies individuals with natural coding abilities, with a focus on increasing diversity.
- Although MIP Holdings has made progress in diversifying its workforce, attracting more women into the tech sector remains an ongoing challenge.
- Gender-based violence is not only a societal crisis but also a significant disruptor to productivity and mental well-being, particularly in sectors requiring deep focus like software engineering.

KPMG Findings - Awareness

Pieter Scholtz, Partner and Africa ESG Lead, KPMG SA

In an authoritative talk, Pieter Scholtz, Partner and Africa ESG Lead at KPMG SA, turned the spotlight onto South Africa's staggering gender-based violence (GBV) statistics, and tied it back to systemic gender inequalities deeply embedded within the social fabric. Using the example of a mining company's experience with gender discrimination in a local community, Scholtz emphasised the irreplaceable role of leadership in enacting real change. His point was unambiguous: gender equality isn't just a moral imperative; it is non-negotiable for responsible businesses committed to sustainable growth.

Scholtz went further to unpack the outcomes of a KPMG pilot study aimed at evaluating the current state of gender equality mechanisms in 18 major South African companies across various sectors. Alarming, the findings revealed glaring lapses: a mere 22% had conducted a gender audit, and most companies lacked formal communication strategies around GBV. There was also insufficient gender-based violence awareness training and an absence of formalised support groups or policies aimed at GBV.

However, what the study did affirm was a clear appetite for improvement: every company surveyed expressed a readiness to collaborate cross-sectorally to develop a gender-based violence standard. Scholtz concluded by urging business leaders to join this expanded study, leveraging Nelson Mandela's words that challenge the present generation to be "great." The urgency was palpable: to neglect the fight against gender-based violence and by extension, gender equality, would be nothing short of a "crime against humanity."





Scholtz's discourse was a compelling call to action, directly aimed at South Africa's top brass. It was not merely an exposition of alarming statistics and deficient practices but an unequivocal blueprint for the role that businesses must play in addressing what is not just a social crisis but an economic imperative. As CEOs and leaders, the ball is now squarely in your court.

KEY MESSAGES

- Gender-based violence is not just a social issue but an economic imperative requiring immediate attention from corporate South Africa.
- Deeply rooted gender inequalities are barriers to both social justice and sustainable corporate growth. Leadership from the top is non-negotiable for driving change.
- KPMG's pilot study of 18 major companies reveals that most are woefully unprepared to address gender equality or gender-based violence effectively. Only 22% had conducted a gender audit.
- Despite existing deficiencies, there is a significant willingness among companies to collaborate across sectors and develop a gender-based violence standard, signaling a readiness for change.
- Addressing gender equality is not optional; it is a moral and economic obligation. Failing to address it would be, as Nelson Mandela said in a different context, a "crime against humanity."

My Story - Cultivating Empathy

Sylvester Chauke, Founder & Chief Architect, DNA Brand Architects

Sylvester Chauke, Founder and Chief Architect of DNA Brand Architects, tackled the gaping void of empathy in the South African corporate landscape, stressing its profound impact on fostering an equitable society. Speaking at the CEO Connect South Africa Forum, Chauke argued that the discrepancy between the visible societal inequality and the absence of empathy in business environments is not only confounding but also detrimental to economic participation and equal opportunities. He outlined the palpable barriers to diversity and inclusion, such as gender bias and sexual orientation discrimination, calling these the "invisible strings" that suppress varied groups. Rather than attribute this to societal factors alone, Chauke identified the quality of leadership as the primary agent in either fostering or thwarting empathetic cultures. He urged businesses to shift focus from merely optics to generating substantial impact through internal diversity and inclusion. Among his actionable suggestions was the creation of "honesty squads" within organisations to bring forth candid conversations that could catalyse meaningful change.



Key Messages:

- The absence of empathy in business is incongruous with the societal inequalities visible in South Africa, thereby impeding the advancement of a more equitable society.
- The "invisible strings" of discrimination against various social groups are maintained or dismantled by the quality of leadership in businesses.
- Structural barriers to diversity and inclusion, including gender bias and discrimination against the LGBTIQ+ community, are perpetuated daily, emphasising the urgency for immediate action.
- Businesses should instate internal measures like "honesty squads" to foster candid dialogue, thereby enabling the identification and removal of barriers to equality.
- Rather than debating the importance of equality, businesses should recognise it as the sole pathway to societal and economic advancement.

Further Work – Accountability

Prof. Corne Davis, Associate Professor, University of Johannesburg

In a piercing talk at the CEO Connect South Africa Forum, Prof. Corne Davis, Associate Professor at the University of Johannesburg, laid bare the staggering impact of gender-based violence on both society and the economy. Davis detailed how this prevalent issue is not only a social crisis but also a business one, costing the South African economy an estimated R36 billion annually. These figures are based on just 7% of reported cases; the actual cost, she warned, is likely tenfold.

Davis' argument was compelling in its urgency, as she highlighted the role of inequality as the root cause of gender-based violence. Women often don't report abuse due to financial dependence and societal stigma, contributing to a high rate of absenteeism and 'presenteeism' in workplaces. The latter refers to employees who are physically present but psychologically absent due to stress or trauma.

Moreover, Davis emphasised that this is not solely a women's issue; the system that cultivates perpetrators is built on the bedrock of patriarchy, which is as harmful to businesses as it is to individual lives. Davis argued that corporate South Africa needs to move beyond perfunctory measures like helplines to genuinely educate employees. She underscored how even a modicum of progress on gender equality could add trillions to global GDP and enhance corporate performance.



Davis ended her talk by casting gender equality as a multi-faceted issue, not limited to cis-gender individuals. With a rallying cry, she called on corporate leadership to recognise that if they aren't part of the solution, they are part of the problem.

The talk acted as a call to action for top business executives, emphasising that gender equality is far from just a social issue; it is an economic imperative. Davis challenges corporate South Africa to become an active participant in resolving this issue, for the betterment not just of their workforce, but also of their bottom lines.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Gender-based violence is not just a social issue; it has a quantifiable, damaging impact on the South African economy, conservatively estimated at R36 billion annually.
- The root cause of gender-based violence is inequality, leading to high rates of absenteeism and presenteeism in the workplace, which affects overall productivity.
- The business sector has a responsibility to educate employees on this issue, rather than simply providing perfunctory solutions like helplines.
- Achieving gender equality has vast economic upside, potentially adding trillions to global GDP and significantly improving corporate performance.
- The problem is systemic, built on the foundation of patriarchy and inequality. Business leaders who don't actively seek to be part of the solution are implicitly part of the problem.

Gender Equality Implementation Guide and Assessment Tool

Joy Ruwodo, Communications & Advocacy Specialist

Joy Ruwodo, a Communications & Advocacy Specialist, offered an actionable solution to the issue of gender inequality during her talk at the CEO Connect South Africa Forum. In contrast to the broader discussions on the statistics and impacts of gender inequality, Ruwodo centered her talk around a specific tool: the Gender Equality Toolkit Implementation Guide. This guide is positioned as the first crucial step for businesses to assess their current standing on gender equality issues and develop a pathway to improvement.

The guide focuses on policy development, operations, communication, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation. It has been specifically designed to address challenges unique to South Africa and is not a one-size-fits-all import from a global template. Ruwodo emphasised the importance of ongoing assessment, indicating that implementing changes without subsequent monitoring is futile.



One of Ruwodo's most impactful points was her call for a full organisational buy-in, particularly from leadership. Without this commitment, the toolkit becomes a theoretical exercise rather than an operational directive. She invited the audience to join a pilot program that utilises the toolkit, underlining that commitment from the top is non-negotiable for the program's success.

Ruwodo's presentation serves as a catalyst for corporate South Africa, offering a tangible blueprint to move from acknowledging the issue of gender inequality to actively solving it. Her call to action was clear: it's time to move beyond talking about problems and statistics; it's time to be a part of the solution.

Key Messages:

- The Gender Equality Toolkit Implementation Guide is a new, actionable resource designed to help South African businesses assess and improve their gender equality standing.
- The guide addresses policy, operations, communication, and includes a monitoring and evaluation component to ensure ongoing accountability and effectiveness.
- The guide is uniquely tailored to the South African context, making it more than just another global template.
- Implementation requires full organisational buy-in, especially from leadership, to ensure the toolkit moves from theory to practice.
- Invitation for companies to join a pilot program using the toolkit represents an immediate opportunity for businesses to act on gender equality.

Closing and Call to Action

Lettie-Basani Phume, Human Capital Executive, Momentum Metropolitan Group

In her closing address at the CEO Connect South Africa Forum, Lettie-Basani Phume, the Human Capital Executive at Momentum Metropolitan Group, galvanised the forum's participants with a clarion call for action. Phume celebrated the day's robust discussions, but was adamant that conversation alone is insufficient. She reiterated that gender equality is not merely a theoretical principle or moral argument but constitutes a strategic business imperative that demands immediate and deliberate action.





Phume cautioned against a narrow interpretation of gender equality as a checkbox exercise, emphasising that this is not about quotas or mere policy implementation. It is, she argues, about a fundamental transformation in culture and mindset within organisations. This involves dismantling both overt and covert biases that have long obstructed progress. She highlighted the value of mentorship and sponsorship programs to amplify the potential of emerging leaders and argued for creating spaces where previously marginalised voices are heard and respected.

Phume ended her talk by declaring that gender equality should not be seen as a distant ideal but as an urgent call to action that serves the strategic interests of organisations and the country at large. As business leaders, she said, there's a fiduciary and moral obligation to move from dialogue to measurable outcomes, a change that our future generations will judge us by.

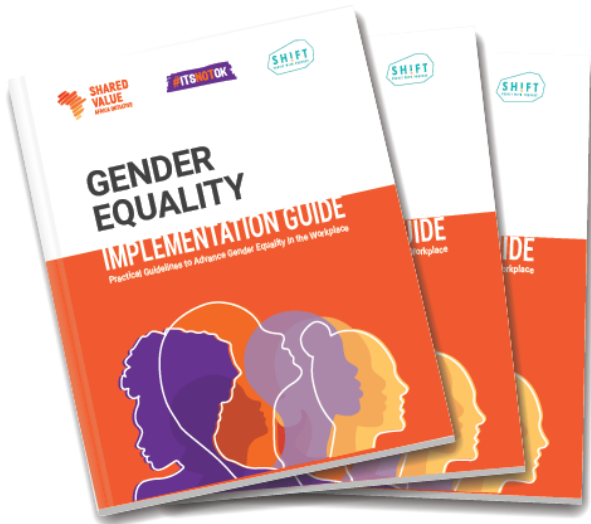
Key Messages:

- Gender equality is both a moral and a strategic imperative that requires immediate, deliberate action from leadership.
- Transformation should not just focus on quotas or policies but must also drive a deep cultural and mindset shift within organisations.
- Breaking down both overt and subtle biases is crucial, as is fostering mentorship and sponsorship programs for emerging leaders.
- The necessity for action is immediate and urgent, not a distant ideal, with leaders accountable for measurable change.
- Gender equality benefits not just women but organisations, society, and future generations.

The forum's closing session reinforced the urgency of the task at hand and reaffirmed the collective commitment to driving gender equality as an economic game-changer.



ENQUIRE ABOUT OUR GENDER EQUALITY IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE & SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL



www.itsnotok.africa

If you have any questions, would like additional information, or would like to explore a partnership with us on your gender equality efforts, please contact: Tiekie Barnard, CEO and Founder, Shift Impact Africa Group
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