



Mail & Guardian

2025

POWER OF

WOMEN

Supplement to the Mail & Guardian October 10 to 16 2025



**Celebrating  
women who turn  
the impossible  
into unstoppable**



EDITOR'S NOTE

The power is in the rights hands

You are holding in your hands one of the most exciting projects the Mail & Guardian is proud to produce each year. This project, driven by our editorial team, has been running for almost two decades now. And each year, the quantity of entries and the quality of nominees has far exceeded our expectations. From over 1200 entries, it was an arduous task to whittle the entries down to the finalists you see here. The M&G Power Of Women is a special moment for us to reflect, recognise, and celebrate the phenomenal women in our country, who are doing amazing work in every sector they occupy. In many ways, this project serves as a reminder to us all of the power South African women wield in each and every space they occupy – and against all odds – as they emulate those that came before them, and inspire those that will come after them. From the struggle days to the freedom days, this country has never been short of phenomenal women. From Charlotte Maxeke, Lilian Ngoyi, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, Ruth

First, Albertina Sisulu, Miriam Makeba, Helen Suzman, Dr Mamphela Ramphele, Dr Naledi Pandor, Wendy Ackerman, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Gill Marcus, Wendy Luhabe, Helen Zille, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Professor Puleng LenkaBula, Dr Precious Moloi-Motsepe, Ferial Haffajee, Phuthi Mahanyele-Dabebengwa, to young lions such as Pumeza Matshikiza, Nozipho Tshabalala, Lindiwe Mazibuko, Simpiwe Dana, Caster Semenya and the late Tshidi Madia, their names inspire generations. Our country has been blessed with distinguished women who have all been torch bearers in their fields and in communities. This space here is not enough to profile all of them, but we hope that this project is a major step in appreciating them and celebrating their achievements. This year we have a record 12 categories spread across key sectors of the economy, from agriculture, the arts, banking and finance, health, education, mining to justice, politics and government. There are gems in every category, top women doing unbelievably great transformative work that keeps



South Africa working despite the plethora of challenges the country faces. In their own way, and collectively, they are leading the charge towards economic prosperity and unapologetically pushing the agenda towards gender equality. The finalists featured in this edition are a reflection of the quality of leadership we have in our country, ambitious, tenacious and driven by their desire to make South Africa a better place for all its citizens. This is a clear sign, to us, that our country is endowed with quality women leaders who have the power to uplift communities, lead society and inspire generations. These are women our editorial panel found to be assertive and setting the pace for leadership, excelling in mentorship and ensuring diver-

sity and transformation in the work- place and in communities where they work. To our sponsors, a heartfelt thank you for doing this with us. Your incredible support in honouring and celebrating these amazing women has seen this project grow and get better each year. To all the nominees we couldn't include in these top 100, please be assured that your work is recognised and that we are proud of you. Your turn shall come. To the finalists, I wish to thank you all, on behalf of my editorial team and the panel that makes this possible each year. Without you, this project wouldn't be possible.

Japhet Ncube  
Editor-in-chief

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HOW WE CHOOSE THE WINNERS

You will not find conventional celebrities among the 100 women recognised by the Mail & Guardian's Power of Women. Our criteria are broad and encompass individual accomplishments, the nominee's ability to take a leading role in their field, peer and public recognition, and a willingness to give back to society.

Every year, we empower the public by opening the nominations process through our website, [mg.co.za/powerofwomen/](https://mg.co.za/powerofwomen/), making them an integral part of the program. This year, we received hundreds of nominations from the public. Once nominations close, we go through the list and shortlist potential finalists for

each category based on the motivations submitted by the nominees. The finalists are sent questions and the profiles are written based on their answers. Keep your ears to the ground and eyes open for the new crop of upcoming talent in the class of 2026 and be sure to nominate them.

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# AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT

## **Ipeleng Kwadi-Seboni** **Farm co-owner, Seboni Agri Farms | Provincial chairperson, Youth in Agriculture and Rural Development (YARD)**

**I**peleng Kwadi-Seboni, the co-owner of Seboni Agri Farms and the provincial chairperson of Youth in Agriculture and Rural Development (YARD) in the North West, is a passionate advocate for youth in trade and policy discussions. She holds an MBA from North West University Business School and combines hands-on farming with strategic leadership, shaping both her community and the broader agricultural landscape. Alongside her husband, Ipeleng manages a thriving cattle farm, overseeing animal nutrition, welfare, and market access. She also drives sustainable supply chains and mentors in-service agricultural students through workplace training and exposure. Her days are balanced between animal care, staff management, and youth-focused capacity building, ensuring the farm is both productive and socially impactful. Her passion for agriculture started during childhood on a family farm in Brits, where she learned the value of land and food production. Today, her mission is to position young people as innovators and leaders in agriculture, transforming perceptions of farming from a subsistence to an entrepreneurial endeavour. Beyond the farm, Ipeleng's advocacy for youth in trade and policy discussions, including on platforms such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), is inspiring. Her unique blend of farmer, mentor, and continental voice positions her as a driving force for youth empowerment, food security, and sustainable agricultural development.



## **Jackie Tucker** **Director | Entrepreneur, Keystone Collection & Keystone Cafe**

**G**rowing up in Midrand, Jackie was captivated by biology and the natural world. Childhood dreams of becoming a marine biologist, wildlife scientist, or animal expert eventually guided her into a 16-year career in the animal nutrition industry. There, she honed both scientific knowledge and strategic thinking, laying the foundation for her next chapter: empowering the next generation of agricultural leaders. She holds a Master's degree in Animal Science from the University of Pretoria. As director of Keystone Collection and Keystone Café, Jackie's dedication to her work is unparalleled. She divides her time between business operations and mentorship, often spending mornings managing staff, suppliers, and day-to-day operations, and afternoons guiding young agricultural graduates, helping them build confidence, competence, and vision. Her greatest satisfaction comes from witnessing transformation—mentees discovering their potential and thriving in their careers. The café itself embodies her values of sustainability, community, and connection, with each dish reflecting responsible sourcing and mindful eating, inviting customers to engage with food that nourishes both people and planet. Jackie's entrepreneurial spark ignited when she noticed a gap in soft skills and business readiness among scientists entering industry, prompting her to exchange corporate stability for purpose-driven leadership. Outside of work, she finds inspiration in hiking, birdwatching, and cooking, where creativity and calm meet in perfect balance.



## **Siphiwe Sithole** **Founder and chief executive farmer, African Marmalade**

**S**iphiwe Sithole is the founder and chief executive farmer of African Marmalade. Her journey from a corporate career to farming is a testament to her courage and determination. She cultivates and promotes indigenous African crops, manages a growing seed bank, and trains smallholder farmers in sustainable, traditional farming methods. Her day begins at 4am with emails and task allocation, followed by hands-on fieldwork, mentoring, processing orders, and hosting farm visits or workshops. She also engages with media, speaks at strategic events, and experiments with indigenous ingredients in her kitchen. Siphiwe's passion for indigenous foods stems from her childhood, when she learned from her maternal grandmother and extended family. Later, seeing the scarcity of traditional crops among South Africans and the diaspora inspired her mission to restore these foods to kitchens

and markets. Her journey was catalysed by the Tony Elumelu Foundation, which provided seed funding and mentorship. Fluent in seven South African languages, Siphiwe enhances her teaching and mentorship through strong communication and cultural connection. She has expanded African Marmalade's influence by exhibiting at the Good Life Show, sponsoring its Masterclass Kitchen, joining the SA Chefs Association Sustainability Committee, securing a 10-year offtake agreement, and guiding farmers towards organic certification. Her greatest lessons are focus and consistency, while the best advice she has received is to find a mentor who offers unwavering support, helping navigate the challenges and rewards of entrepreneurship.



## **Tlhalefo Dithebe** **Director, Agro Queen (Pty) Ltd**

**T**lhalefo Dithebe, the director of Agro Queen (Pty) Ltd, a thriving farming enterprise specialising in high-quality livestock and dairy production, is a shining example of adaptability in the face of change. Her typical day is hands-on and diverse, encompassing tasks such as preparing livestock feed, conducting stock counts, administering vaccinations, and milking goats, as well as ensuring that young animals receive proper care and attention. She also manages meticulous records, client interactions, and product deliveries with precision. What she loves most is the satisfaction of providing nutritious food to her community. Her journey into agriculture began during her retail career, when delivering stock revealed the high demand for meat and goat milk. The Covid-19 pandemic, a significant challenge for many, reinforced the essential nature of food, solidifying her conviction that "food is life" and fueling her dedication to farming.

Tlhalefo is passionate about learning and upskilling, sharing her knowledge to strengthen the agricultural sector. Her proudest achievements include her contributions to the Serdev/Sernick project, her strategic work in logistics, and her successful expansion into dairy farming. The most valuable lesson she has learned is that hard work, patience, and dedication yield results. Guided by the principle that effort leads to fruitful outcomes, Tlhalefo's determination and passion make her a true force in South African agriculture.



## **Dr Makgoshi Priscilla Masipa** **Community projects coordinator, Molemole Food Processing Cooperative and Itekeng Maano Horticultural Cooperative**

**D**r Makgoshi Priscilla Masipa, a strategic leader in rural development, holds a PhD in Rural Development from the University of Venda. Her life's work is dedicated to promoting food security, community development, and education in rural areas. With a background that spans a Bachelor's and Honours degree in Home Economics from the University of Zululand (UNIZULU) and decades of hands-on experience, she has combined academic excellence with practical leadership in agricultural initiatives. Although officially retired, Masipa remains deeply engaged as a coordinator for multiple community projects, including the Itekeng Maano Horticultural Cooperative, the Molemole Food Processing Cooperative, and her own family food security initiatives. Her work involves guiding daily agricultural operations, from orchard management to vegetable production, and supporting the commercialisation of indigenous foods, such as prickly pear jam, marula jelly, and peanut butter. She also mentors cooperative executives, offering strategic guidance and ensuring projects meet community needs. Masipa is particularly proud of her role in establishing the Department of Consumer Science at UNIVEN, which now produces Master's and PhD graduates, and of founding schools and pre-schools in Botlokwa. Her approach emphasises consistency, quality, and purpose-driven action. She believes that meaningful community engagement, combined with diligence and integrity, creates lasting impact and trust. Through her work, she continues to uplift her community, foster employment opportunities, and promote food security across rural South Africa.



## **Tandiswa Hopa** **Chief executive, Riverbend Farming Enterprises**

**T**andiswa Hopa is the chief executive of Riverbend Farming Enterprises, where she leads operations that combine sustainable food production with community empowerment. Her responsibilities include overseeing livestock and crop management, ensuring efficient operations, and managing a food hub at the Fresh Produce Market that sources fresh produce from emerging farmers and connects them with buyers. She also serves as director of a non-profit organisation promoting agroecological farming practices and food systems advocacy. Her journey into agriculture began unexpectedly. Growing up in Mdantsane, Tandiswa developed a love for the land while helping her parents tend their garden, where they planted maize, pumpkins, spinach, and other greens. After a career in education and later in development funding, where she assisted agricultural entrepreneurs in securing funding and writing business plans, she realised her true calling. In 2016, she left formal employment to pursue farming full-time. Under her leadership, Riverbend has trained farmers transitioning to sustainable agriculture and hosted interns from agricultural colleges. Her influence extends globally through her appointment as a C20 facilitator, contributing to a G20 policy brief on poverty alleviation and food sovereignty. Tandiswa believes that actual growth comes through perseverance, continuous learning, and nurturing both people and the planet.





**Dr Khanya Mthethwa**  
**Lecturer, Department of Jewellery Design and Manufacture, University of Johannesburg**

**D**r Khanya Mthethwa grew up in KwaZulu-Natal with a love for creating, dreaming of a life shaped by art, design, and storytelling. Today, she channels that passion as both a practicing artist and a lecturer in jewellery design, guiding students to turn ideas into innovative, practice-led creations. She holds a PhD in Art History, a Master's in Design, and a degree in Jewellery Design and Manufacture from the University of Johannesburg. She has trained in Rough Diamond Evaluation and Diamond Cutting at the Harry Oppenheimer Diamond Training School. Her days are a combination of teaching, mentoring, and shaping curricula. At the same time, her own work

interrogates colonial legacies, reimagines cultural narratives, and celebrates ubuntu—the interconnectedness of humanity—through contemporary jewellery and multidisciplinary art. As one of the first Black South African women in her field to earn a PhD, Mthethwa has forged a path of personal achievement and mentorship, bringing a unique perspective to her work. Her work has captivated audiences from Athens to Milan, earning accolades including the 2023 Susan Beech Mid-Career Award and the PPC Imaginarium Jewellery Award. For Mthethwa, creativity is more than self-expression; it is a tool for connection, storytelling, and transformative impact. Her guiding principle is simple yet powerful: stay true to your vision and learn from every experience. Through her art and mentorship, Khanya continues to redefine South African jewellery and design, leaving a legacy that resonates far beyond the studio.

**Sarah Jane Nicholson**  
**Managing director, Paradise Africa Distribution | Founder, Africa Rising Music Conference | Manager, Money Badoo**

**S**arah Jane Nicholson is a force in African music, blending creativity, business acumen, and a strategic vision that inspires. As managing director of Paradise Africa Distribution, founder of the Africa Rising Music Conference, and manager of Money Badoo, her days are never the same—releasing music, building fan bases, curating industry conversations, or producing shows that inspire audiences across South Africa and Berlin. Her inspiration for Africa Rising emerged during a challenging

period in her artist management career, sparking a mission to create networks and knowledge-sharing opportunities for the African music community. Today, the conference remains the continent's premier platform for collaboration and growth. Sarah Jane has collaborated with heavyweights such as Mi Casa, Moonchild Sanelly, and Zakes Bantwini, and helped establish Paradise Worldwide's African division, thereby amplifying the global reach of African talent. Her proudest milestones include launching Africa Rising, creating Women in Music South Africa, facilitating Mamas in Music, curating SAMPRA export programs, and releasing Zakes Bantwini's global hit Osama—projects that collectively generate over 150 paid industry jobs annually. A former show jumper, she draws inspiration from discipline and balance, believing leadership is ultimately about people. Her mantra: take control, stay composed, and let impact follow.



**Zibu Sithole**  
**Self-employed**

**Z**ibu Sithole is a freelance writer and author whose work, characterised by its unique blend of fiction, journalism, and advocacy, sets her apart in the literary world. She holds a BA in Journalism from the University of Johannesburg. Balancing her writing career with homeschooling her son, she starts her days immersed in news and social media, staying tuned to the world she reflects in her fiction. Her breakthrough came with *"The Thing with Zola"* in 2023, followed by *"I Do... Don't I?"* and the trilogy-closing *Love, Zola* in 2025. Completing the series in just three years, Zibu earned longlist recognition from both the *Sunday Times* and the South African Literary Awards. The Zola series explores love, identity, and personal growth, offering compelling narratives of women as they pursue happiness and agency on their own terms. Beyond accolades, Zibu connects with readers through interviews, online platforms, and storytelling that sparks dialogue and inspires change. A single mother and serial "rerouter," she champions second chances, guiding others to redefine themselves. Her philosophy—"it's not just okay, but vital to start over and dream a new dream"—shapes both her life and her writing. Through her fiction, Zibu empowers readers to embrace possibility, resilience, and authentic joy, demonstrating that even in a rapidly changing world, stories can serve as a lifeline, a roadmap, and a call to dream boldly.



**Zinhlezonke Zikalala**  
**Editor-in-chief, Sibizi Magazine | Founder, Sibizi Media**

**Z**inhlezonke Zikalala is the dynamic editor-in-chief of Sibizi Magazine, a youth-driven publication amplifying South African voices in entrepreneurship, creativity, and social impact. She holds a BA in Communication (with a focus on Media Studies and Journalism) from the University of the Free State. She will complete her Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration at TSIBA Business School in December. At Sibizi, Zinhlezonke oversees the whole editorial process — from conceptualising stories and managing contributors to curating content that reflects authenticity, ambition, and empowerment. Her leadership ensures that every issue aligns with the magazine's mission: to celebrate black excellence, resilience, and innovation while driving meaningful conversations among the youth, engaging them in the issues that matter. Inspired by the lack of platforms that authentically represent young South Africans, she founded Sibizi Media to change that narrative. Beyond her editorial work, she mentors learners in her hometown of Bergville, encouraging them to dream beyond their circumstances. Her trailblazing work has earned her recognition, including a Champions of KZN Award (Media Category) and being named a Sunday World Unsung Hero (2022) for Media Innovation. Zinhlezonke's guiding philosophy: "Consistency and purpose are more powerful than perfection. Start where you are, with what you have — and grow from there."



**Vicki Fourie**  
**Director, writer, producer, actress, and disability activist, Sacambaya Films**

**V**icki Fourie turned a world of silence into a stage for inclusion and creativity. Growing up as a pastor's kid in the Western Cape with 97% hearing loss, she learned to speak and read lips fluently, excelling in drama, dance, and sports—even competing internationally against hearing peers. Her breakthrough came as the first speaking winner of Miss Deaf South Africa, where she used the platform to challenge stereotypes and advocate for inclusion. Vicki holds a BA Honours in Motion Picture Medium with a scriptwriting focus from AFDA Port Elizabeth. As the director of Sacambaya Films, Vicki not only shapes every aspect of her projects—from writing screenplays and managing production logistics—but also plays a crucial role in mentoring d/Deaf actors and ensuring authentic representation of d/Deaf experiences. Her stories open doors she once found closed, combining artistry with advocacy. Her accomplishments are remarkable: she is a 2025 NFVF Film Grant recipient, a Forty Under 40 finalist, published author of two books, and leader of acclaimed theatre and film projects. Vicki's driving principle is simple but powerful: she holds the key to her own future. "Write the vision on your heart and keep it before you," she says. Through her storytelling, mentorship, and advocacy, Vicki not only redefines what is possible for d/Deaf creatives but also proves that inclusion, vision, and determination can transform an entire industry.



# ARTS, FILM & MEDIA



**Dr Portia Malatjie**  
Senior lecturer, University of Cape Town | Adjunct curator, Tate Modern

**B**orn in Tzaneen and raised in Johannesburg, Dr Portia Malatjie has become one of South Africa’s most compelling voices in contemporary art discourse. A PhD graduate from Goldsmiths, University of London, she is a senior lecturer in Art History and Discourse of Art at UCT’s Michaelis School of Fine Art and an adjunct curator at Tate Modern’s Hyundai Tate Research Centre: Transnational. Dr Portia’s curatorial practice is deeply rooted in reimagining African art histories and amplifying voices that have long been erased from the narrative. Her acclaimed exhibitions — including *“When Rain Clouds Gather: Black South African Women Artists, 1940–2000”* and *“Quiet Ground”* at the 60th Venice Biennale (2024) — have redefined how audiences engage with the artistic legacies of Black women. Her work bridges scholarship, spirituality, and sensory experience, exploring themes of sound, ecology, and Black feminist thought. Beyond the gallery, Dr Portia is a mentor, inspiring the next generation of artists and scholars, a researcher, and a global thought leader, having delivered talks at institutions such as Yale, Oxford, and the Nairobi Contemporary Art Institute. Honoured with numerous awards — including the UCT College of Fellows Young Researcher Award (2023) — she continues to challenge how art is taught, curated, and remembered. Her guiding philosophy? “Maintain healthy boundaries. Rest. Once you have a vision, pursue only what brings you closer to it.”

**Roshina Ratnam**  
Artistic director for Inala Theatre | Independent artist | Puppeteer | National councillor for UNIMA South Africa

**R**oshina Ratnam’s world is one where imagination breathes, stories move, and even the inanimate comes alive. As an artist, director, puppeteer, and National Councillor for UNIMA South Africa, she stands at the heart of a growing creative movement that blends performance, education, and community. Her journey, which began in the homeland of Bophuthatswana, is a testament to the power of curiosity and the transformative nature of storytelling. This curiosity found its form in theatre and later, in puppetry — an art that, as she says, “demands humility; to serve the puppet, you must step aside from ego.” Through her company, Inala Theatre, and collaborations with Magnet Theatre, Roshina continues to push the boundaries of physical and children’s theatre. Her award-winning production Lumka won the Fleur du Cap for Best Theatre Production for Children and Young Audiences in 2020, with Surge (2024) and Glimmer (2025) following as celebrated nominees. She also spearheaded the UNIMA SA Puppetry Masterclass Series, creating a vibrant network for artists across the country. For Roshina, puppetry is more than performance — it’s empathy in motion. “Trust the process,” she says. “If you stay present and faithful to the work, the truth always reveals itself.”



**Zandi Wardle**  
Senior producer, continuity and programming, Ukhozi FM

**Z**andi Wardle is a creative force in South African media, serving as senior producer for Continuity and Programming at Ukhozi FM, one of Africa’s largest radio stations with over seven million listeners. She leads the station’s production ecosystem, overseeing content strategy, quality control, and the seamless execution of campaigns across all platforms. “Creativity is not something I keep to myself — it’s meant to be experienced, to spark thought, and to connect people,” Zandi says. Her work spans radio, television, and film, including the award-winning Rights of Passage Anthology showcased at the Durban International Film Festival. She also engages audiences through her YouTube channel, which has grown to over 72,000 subscribers. At Ukhozi FM, Zandi translates audience insights into content that resonates culturally and emotionally, guiding producers, on-air talent, and technical teams with a perspective that elevates storytelling. She thrives on collaboration, debate, and pushing boundaries, believing that great content emerges when ideas are challenged. For Zandi, producing isn’t just about airtime — it’s about impact. Her campaigns consistently connect audiences and spark conversation, proving that media can both entertain and inspire. “Growth doesn’t happen in comfort zones,” she notes. Grounded, visionary, and deeply committed to her craft, Zandi continues to shape South African media, inspiring teams and audiences alike, and demonstrating the power of authentic storytelling.



**Zola Nombona**  
Award-winning actress, TV presenter, digital entrepreneur, content creator & facilitator, To The Max Brand Management

**Z**ola Nombona is an award-winning actress, TV presenter, and digital entrepreneur whose work is defined by purpose, authenticity, and versatility. She is represented by To The Max Brand Management, which supports her career beyond acting — positioning her as a brand ambassador, curating her digital presence, and creating partnerships that amplify her influence across media and business. “Acting has always been my plan A,” says Zola. “It allows me to connect with people in a way that words alone sometimes can’t.” From school plays in Mthatha and Matatiele to acclaimed television roles, she has become one of South Africa’s most compelling and respected talents. Her accolades include the SAFTA Award for Best Actress, multiple Golden Horn nominations, and recognition as a Forty under Forty Theatre & Arts nominee (2024). Recently, she expanded her creative footprint behind the camera, directing the Salt & Sand music video — a move that demonstrates her evolution from performer to visionary storyteller. For Zola, success is about mastering her craft and staying authentic. “Growth doesn’t happen by chance,” she says. “It happens through intention and consistent effort.” Grounded by faith and guided by purpose, she continues to inspire audiences, connect meaningfully with brands, and build a personal brand that extends far beyond the screen.





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# BANKING & FINANCE



## **Mbali Phejaolema** Group manager for strategy development & integration, Exxaro Resources

**W**ith a B.Eng in Mining Engineering and an Honours in Technology Management from the University of Pretoria, as well as an MBA from GIBS, Mbali Phejaolema has built a career that spans mining, finance, and corporate strategy. As group manager for strategy development and integration at Exxaro Resources, she collaborates with executives to devise long-term strategies that address complex challenges, including climate change and sustainable growth, across 11 business functions. Her role blends analysis, risk assessment, and strategic alignment, ensuring that no two days are ever the same. Her career spans mining, finance, and corporate strategy, providing her with a unique perspective on how capital, operations, and communities

intersect. Beyond Exxaro, Mbali serves as chairperson of ABSIP Women in Focus (AWIF), leading initiatives that develop female professionals, support entrepreneurship, and promote financial inclusion. Under her leadership, AWIF has launched programmes, webinars, and events that have empowered hundreds of women nationwide. A dedicated fitness enthusiast and mother of three, Mbali's commitment to her work and her conviction that meaningful change begins within one's own sphere of influence are genuinely inspiring. "It begins with us — leading with purpose and lifting others as we rise," she says. Guided by this principle, she continues to make an impact not just through business but by mentoring, empowering, and creating opportunities for others to thrive alongside her. Mbali exemplifies leadership with vision, purpose, and heart.



## **Michelle Landman** Independent consultant

**M**ichelle Landman is a leader who transforms organisations from the inside out. As chief financial and operations director at the South African Institute of Taxation (SAIT) for 13 years, she grew membership from 2,000 to over 8,000, transformed the Tax Indaba into Africa's largest tax conference, and fostered a culture of accountability, collaboration, and excellence. Today, as an independent consultant, she helps organisations design systems that promote integrity, growth, and long-term impact. Her leadership philosophy is simple: recognise potential, develop people, and ensure everyone understands not just what they do, but why it matters. "A positive culture is essential to getting the job done," she says. Michelle's journey has been shaped by resilience and authenticity—once feeling "barefoot" in spaces where others seemed to belong, she learned that leadership isn't about

perfection; it's about embracing your uniqueness and helping others find their own "glass slippers." Beyond work, she channels creativity into storytelling, reflective writing, pole fitness, and music, sharpening focus and balance. Her proudest achievements include completing an MBA while recovering from a brain injury and evolving into a leader who listens, empowers, and holds herself accountable. Guided by the principle, "Always leave the system stronger than you found it," Michelle's commitment to driving meaningful impact in people, organisations, and communities is unwavering.

## **Dr Pulane Modiha** Chief operations officer, FNB Home and Structured Lending | Part-time lecturer, Wits Business School and Johannesburg Business School



**D**r Pulane Modiha, the chief operating officer for FNB Home and Structured Lending Solutions, is not only a leader in banking and academia. She is a visionary who believes in the transformative power of education and financial resources. With a PhD in Management from Wits Business School and an MBA from GIBS, she is a part-time lecturer at Wits Business School and the Johannesburg Business School, where she mentors MBA students and teaches courses in leadership, global business, and personal development. Her upbringing in a small Free State township instilled in her the conviction that access to education and financial resources can transform lives. This belief fuels her mission to build systems that open doors rather than close them. "Boundaries are not walls; they're starting lines," she says, a philosophy that resonates in both banking and academia. Her typical day is a blend of strategy and execution, from chairing executive meetings to developing solutions that simplify and make banking more inclusive. Her greatest joy comes from seeing people thrive—whether a customer secures a home, a colleague steps into a leadership role, or a student defends their MBA research. Outside work, she enjoys mentoring young professionals, travelling with her daughter, and staying fit through boxing, spinning, and gym workouts. Her proudest achievements include leading BOTCEP Phase 1, supervising MBA students, completing her PhD on women in executive leadership, and launching the Deep Thought Leadership Conversations Podcast.

## **Nono Mkhondo** Chief executive, Value Capital Partners



**N**ono Mkhondo is redefining leadership in South Africa's investment sector. As chief executive of Value Capital Partners (VCP), a boutique activist investment firm managing close to \$1 billion, she leads a model that proves capital is not passive — it's powerful. A CA(SA) and Mo Ibrahim Scholar with an MBA from London Business School, Nono has spent nearly a decade building VCP into one of the country's most respected activist investors, driving long-term value across some of South Africa's most iconic companies. At VCP, she oversees the entire investment lifecycle — from sourcing opportunities and executing deals to unlocking value through active board engagement. She serves on the boards of PPC Ltd and Metair Investments Ltd, where she chairs key committees that align executive performance with shareholder value. Her track record includes a significant role in guiding companies through complex turnarounds, such as stabilising Sun International during lockdown and supporting strategy shifts at Tiger Brands and PPC. In an industry where only 18% of CEOs are women, Nono's appointment represents progress — and purpose. For her, shareholder activism is about accountability, integrity, and building trust. "Character compounds faster than capital," she says. "Over time, reputation and relationships are the truest form of wealth."



## **Shiluba Mashudu Mawela** Founder and managing partner, Tshiamo Impact Partners

**S**hiluba Mashudu Mawela is a transformative force in finance and social impact as the Founder and Managing Partner of Tshiamo Impact Partners, a 100% Black women-owned impact advisory and boutique asset management firm. She uses capital as a tool for social change, guiding investments that deliver both strong financial returns and measurable social impact. Since 2019, Shiluba has led two angel groups of 36 Black women investors, deploying capital into businesses that advance gender equity and economic inclusion. She also manages the Tshiamo Impact Fund, a R400 million target fund supporting gender-inclusive companies across South Africa. "What excites me most," she says, "is seeing capital intentionally unlock opportunities for growth-stage businesses and shape a more equitable country and continent." Her

dedication to impact has earned her recognition as a 2023 Echoing Green Fellow, joining a global network of changemakers committed to tackling systemic inequities. Shiluba combines her expertise in finance with creativity and curiosity — from photography and writing to long walks and swimming — maintaining balance while driving social innovation. Grounded, visionary, and purpose-driven, she is deeply committed to closing the SME funding gap, a mission that reassures us of her dedication to supporting women entrepreneurs and building a generational institution that uplifts communities and empowers the next generation. Her guiding principle: "Trust God and never self-exclude."

## **Simphiwe Magangane** Chief operations officer, Howden Broking South Africa Pty Ltd



**S**imphiwe Magangane, a pioneering force in South Africa's reinsurance sector, is the chief operations officer and co-founder of Howden Broking South Africa. She holds a BCom and a BCom Honours in Insurance and Risk Management, as well as an MBA from GIBS, making her one of the few professionals in the country with an honours degree in this specialised field. Her career in insurance was steered by a bursary from Alexander Forbes, a decision she has never regretted. Simphiwe's role in establishing Howden SA, now a recognised challenger to South Africa's top three reinsurance brokers — AON, Guy Carpenter, and Gallagher, is significant. As the COO, she is responsible for driving business development, key account management, and operational leadership, ensuring the firm consistently delivers high-quality services to its high-profile clients while managing HR, compliance, and IT functions. In 2023, she became the youngest female President of the Insurance Institute of Gauteng, a historic achievement reflecting her leadership and influence in the sector. She is especially proud of building a successful business from the ground up, attracting international capital, and breaking barriers in a male-dominated industry. Outside work, Simphiwe channels her discipline into weightlifting, mirroring her professional focus. Her guiding principle: "Always put your best foot forward so you have no regrets." Through innovation, strategic vision, and resilience, she continues to shape the future of re/insurance in South Africa, inspiring a new generation of leaders.





# MS SEBINA HLAPOLOSA

## Board Chairperson - ALGA

With a keen focus on governance and strategy, I serve as the Board Chairperson of the African Lotteries & Gaming Association (ALGA), guiding the long-term objectives that drive our mission. I facilitate meetings to organizational growth and act as a figure of accountability

and transparency, ensuring that ALGA operates with integrity and purpose. My mandate is to ensure that every board decision and organizational initiative reflects not only ALGA's operational capability but also our values of transparency, accountability, and ethical governance.

My mandate is to ensure that every board decision and organizational initiative reflects not only ALGA's operational capability but also our values of transparency, accountability, and ethical governance.

My strategic focuses encompass guiding long-term organizational objectives, shaping initiatives that advance responsible gaming, and ensuring the board provides effective oversight across all areas of operation. I serve as the steward of governance within the organization, safeguarding stakeholder interests while aligning them with ALGA's mission and strategic vision.

In doing so, I champion continuous improvement, ensuring our policies, processes, and initiatives are not only fit for purpose but positioned to drive sustainable growth and impact across the African gaming sector.

This position affords me the responsibility of fostering strong relationships with key stakeholders, including policymakers, industry partners, and the broader gaming community, to enhance trust, credibility, and collaboration. To achieve this, I cultivate open communication across the board, executive team, and external partners, ensuring that strategic priorities are executed effectively and with integrity.

*“My philosophy transforms oversight and foresight by combining rigorous governance with strategic guidance, anticipating challenges, and positioning ALGA to lead responsibly and innovatively in a rapidly evolving industry.”*



**Captains of industry gathered at the African Lotteries & Gaming Association's CEOS FORUM - "The Black Table" 2025**





# POWERFUL LEADERSHIP PORTRAYED BY ALGA'S BOARD CHAIRPERSON AT INAUGURAL CEOS FORUM

ALGA Board Chairperson Ms. Sebina Hlapolosa has portrayed a powerful display of leadership as she spearheaded an impactful gathering that brought together over 24 Lottery and Gambling regulatory body CEOs under one roof. This event stood out as one of the most prestigious assemblies for the gaming industry in Africa this year, emphasizing the importance of collaboration and shared insights within the sector. Dubbed the CEOS FORUM - "The Black Table," the event not only showcased Africa's vast potential but also unveiled its immense power, highlighting the continent's burgeoning industries, innovative technologies, and the incredible talent of its youth. Attendees were able to engage in meaningful discussions focused on investment opportunities, sustainable development, and partnership models that could drive further economic growth. By bringing together influential business leaders and policymakers from around the continent, the forum aimed to create a collaborative environment that fosters progress and inspires confidence in Africa as a formidable player on the world stage.

As a stalwart leader of the gaming association, Sebina has taken significant steps to introduce a groundbreaking initiative—a game-changing inaugural forum dedicated to the exchange of ideas among gambling and lottery leaders. This forum aims to foster an environment where industry standards, policies, and practices can be harmonized for the benefit of all stakeholders involved. The initiative is designed not only to enhance regulatory frameworks but also to encourage innovation and ensure a sustainable future for the gaming industry across the continent. By facilitating discussions and encouraging diverse perspectives, Sebina's leadership promises to pave the way for a more cohesive and forward-thinking gaming landscape in Africa, ultimately contributing to the responsible growth and development of the industry. The Forum will be followed by the exciting launch of an exclusive inaugural magazine, thoughtfully curated and published by the Mail & Guardian team. This magazine will be distributed across the continent, connecting with a wide array of stakeholders, partners, and consumers. It aims to illuminate the remarkable insights of regulatory board CEOs from 23 African countries, who are at the forefront of the global gambling and lotteries industry.

The Forum will be followed by the exciting launch of an exclusive inaugural magazine, thoughtfully curated and published by the Mail & Guardian team. This magazine will be distributed across the continent, connecting with a wide array of stakeholders, partners, and consumers. It aims to illuminate the remarkable insights of regulatory board CEOs from 23 African countries, who are at the forefront of the global gambling and lotteries industry. These leaders are not only shaping policies but are also embracing innovative practices that drive the sector forward, offering a unique perspective that is sure to inspire and inform. In this inaugural edition, readers will take a deep dive into the unique leadership styles of these CEOs, exploring their individual approaches to governance and regulation. We will delve into the intricacies of their regulatory bodies, analyzing what sets them apart in a rapidly evolving landscape. This exploration will provide a comparative look at their annual performance plans, reflecting on how they intentionally implement their mandates with a focus on good governance and ethical practices. Furthermore, we will highlight case studies that illustrate successful initiatives and best practices within the regulatory framework. These insights will not only celebrate achievements but also identify challenges and opportunities for collaboration among stakeholders. By fostering dialogue between these trailblazing leaders, we hope to pave the way for deeper connections and a shared vision for the future of the gambling and lotteries industry in Africa. For more information on how to become a part of the magazine and to advertise within the magazine, please feel free to contact the following email address; Ms. Jady Lira - Ladyl@alga.org.za. We welcome individuals and businesses alike who are interested in sharing their ideas or promoting their products with our audience. Whether you are looking to contribute articles, stories, or advertisements, Ms. Lira is available to discuss the various opportunities we offer and guide you through the process of becoming involved in our vibrant publication.



**Captains of industry gathered at the African Lotteries & Gaming Association's CEOS FORUM - "The Black Table" 2025**



# BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEURSHIP



**Aditi Radhakrishna**  
**Co-founder, Ruby Rose Feminine Hygiene SA (Pty) Ltd | Director, Akhile Management and Consulting (Pty) Ltd**

**A**diti Radhakrishna, a chartered accountant and social entrepreneur, is redefining the business landscape with her belief that purpose and profitability can coexist. She holds a Bachelor of Business Science in Finance and Accounting from the University of Cape Town and an MBA. As the co-founder of Ruby Rose Feminine Hygiene SA and director at Akhile Management and Consulting, Aditi is a pioneer in merging financial leadership with purpose-driven innovation. At Akhile, she leads projects in local government that focus on economic sustainability, govern-

ance, and digital transformation. Ruby Rose, however, is where her mission-driven spirit truly shines. The company manufactures environmentally friendly, SABS-approved sanitary pads, provides menstrual health education, and creates entrepreneurial opportunities for women. But for Aditi, Ruby Rose is more than a business. It's a platform to eradicate period poverty, challenge harmful taboos, and empower women to take control of their future. Her proudest milestones include commissioning a state-of-the-art sanitary pad facility in Paarl, securing SABS approval, and positioning Ruby Rose as one of South Africa's few entirely women- and youth-owned sanitary pad manufacturers. Recognised on platforms from Good Hope FM to the Cape Argus Women in Business Initiative, Aditi proves that purpose and profitability can coexist. Her mantra is simple: purpose and perseverance go hand in hand, and magic happens when you step into discomfort. Through her work, she inspires a generation of women to build businesses that truly matter.

**Letty Nthabiseng Baloyi**  
**Founder and director, Hyades Cleaning Solutions**

**L**etty Nthabiseng Baloyi, an entrepreneur from Leeufontein, Mpumalanga, has made a significant impact in the business and community sectors. After completing her matric in the science stream in 2015, she pursued certificates in computer literacy, call centre training, and a short course in entrepreneurship at Chartall Business College. Motivated by a desire to serve, Letty founded Hyades Cleaning Solutions, a business delivering professional cleaning services while creating jobs and empowering her community. "No two days are ever the same," she says. "I coordinate teams, oversee projects, liaise with clients, and

ensure high-quality standards. The most rewarding part is watching our staff grow, gain skills, and provide for their families while transforming spaces for our clients." Since its inception, Hyades has expanded across multiple cleaning sectors and secured a year-long contract with a leading property management company. Letty's exceptional leadership earned her the 2024 Global Recognition Award for excellence in business and community impact. Beyond running her company, she mentors emerging entrepreneurs, champions community initiatives, and invests in personal development, making empowerment a central part of her mission. Guided by resilience, purpose, and the mantra, "focus on what you can control and give your best," Letty is building more than a company — she's creating a platform for opportunity, growth, and transformation.



**Dr Phindile Msomi**  
**Group chief executive, Hazile Group**

**D**r Phindile Msomi's journey began in Orlando West, Soweto, a place where resilience and community were the cornerstones of her early life. Her initial aspiration was to become a doctor, driven by a deep-seated desire to make a difference. However, her path led her to a different kind of leadership. She earned a doctorate in Business Administration and became a force to be reckoned with in entrepreneurship and agribusiness. As the group chief executive of Hazile, Msomi leads ventures that span agribusiness, consulting, and social development. Her days are a whirlwind of activity—she reviews operations, meets with

clients, oversees governance, mentors women and youth, and even works hands-on in hydroponics tunnels. She drives innovation through water-efficient farming solutions and sustainable business strategies, combining leadership with practical impact. Personal challenges, including becoming a mother at 19 and losing her husband at 27, only served to fuel her commitment to empowerment. She teaches entrepreneurial skills, leadership, and confidence-building through initiatives like Basadi Bakopane NPO, which fosters community development and opportunities. Her achievements include expanding Hazile's hydroponics farm, launching the Eco-Farm Pod prototype, and completing her DBA at the age of 53, all while balancing leadership, motherhood, and social impact. Guided by the principle "Lift as you rise," Msomi measures success by the opportunities she creates for others, turning setbacks into stepping stones and multiplying impact through mentorship, empowerment, and sustainable innovation.

**Rapelang Ramatlhodi**  
**Founder and chief executive, Solarev Solutions**

**R**apelang Ramatlhodi is reshaping South Africa's energy landscape as the founder and chief executive of Solarev Solutions, a renewable energy company creating green economy opportunities while addressing the nation's energy challenges. She holds a Diploma in Events Management from Tshwane University of Technology and a Certificate in Brand Marketing from Vega Institute. Her days are dynamic, as she provides strategic direction, oversees operations, and ensures her team maintains high standards of safety, professionalism, and innovation. But what she enjoys most is nurturing client relationships, ensuring their

needs are met and their expectations exceeded. Solarev began as a solar panel cleaning and maintenance business and has grown into a whole ecosystem offering solar PV installation, training, and capacity-building programs for youth and entrepreneurs. Rapelang's inspiration stems from her belief that renewable energy is a new gold mine, capable of transforming lives and communities. Her proudest milestones include helping clients achieve up to 135% efficiency performance, being named a Top 3 Future Bold Women Award nominee by Veuve Clicquot, and serving as a founding member of the Global Solar Cleaners Network. Her philosophy is simple yet powerful: believe in your vision, surround yourself with like-minded people, and protect the light of your dream. Through Solarev, Rapelang advances renewable energy while building careers and hope across South Africa.



**Taryn Hunter Sharman**  
**Co-founder and managing director, Faith and Fear and The Brave Collective**

**T**aryn Hunter Sharman, a trailblazer in entrepreneurship and women's empowerment, holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in marketing communications from the University of Johannesburg (formerly Rand Afrikaans University, RAU). As co-founder and managing director of Faith & Fear and creator of The Brave Collective, she has built platforms that empower women to rewrite their own stories. Her work spans managing campaigns for major brands like Profmed, Liberty, and RMB, while The Brave Collective now supports over 2,000 women monthly in

conversations about leadership, money, and self-worth. Taryn's entrepreneurial spirit was sparked early—having lost her father at seven and witnessing her mother's resilience, she began selling homemade goods at the age of nine. From corporate advertising to leading Ebony + Ivory and finishing in the top three on The Apprentice South Africa, she has consistently pushed boundaries in male-dominated industries. Through Faith & Fear, she has built a R20 Million, 100% women-owned business and a network of over 25 women-led contractors. Her philosophy, which she lives and breathes, is simple yet powerful: self-worth and net worth are inseparable; when women recognize their value, they unlock opportunities for themselves and those around them. Guided by the principle, "Don't strive to be well known. Strive to be worth knowing," Taryn continues to create impact, opportunity, and empowerment across South Africa.



# BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEURSHIP



**Mahlasedi Mmakola**  
Chief executive, TO-BE-US Holdings Pty Ltd

**M**ahlasedi Mmakola, the chief executive of TO-BE-US Holdings Pty Ltd, the franchise owner of McDonald's Groblersdal, and the founder of the Mmakola Outreach Foundation, is a firm believer in the potential of young people. She also owns a Game Lodge, which she is developing into a sustainable, community-linked hospitality and conservation project. Her daily work spans business operations, staff mentorship, community outreach, and the development of new initiatives. She is hands-on with her teams, ensuring the highest standards while fostering an environment that encourages young people to grow. Mahlasedi finds joy in seeing potential come to life — whether a young employee becomes a manager or a child supported through her foundation gains confidence. Her late father inspired her approach to business and community. Following his passing, she has expanded his legacy, ensuring that her ventures not only succeed commercially but also uplift others. The Mmakola Outreach Foundation supports underprivileged children, giving them the tools and confidence to dream beyond their circumstances. The forthcoming Mahlasedi Institute of Excellence continues this mission, combining education, leadership, and community enterprise. Mahlasedi is deeply passionate about children, education, and creating opportunities in rural Limpopo. She believes leadership begins with service, humility, and lifting others as you rise. Guided by her father's words — "Never let success make you forget why you started" — she strives to build purpose-driven ventures that create lasting impact.



**Nomazibulo Tshanga**  
Group executive officer of Ziyana Group

**N**omazibulo Tshanga is the group chief executive of Ziyana Group, where she leads with vision, strategy, and people. She holds an MBA from Henley Business School, reflecting her commitment to continuous growth and global leadership. Her typical day balances engaging with clients and partners, overseeing operations across business consulting, training, and technology, and guiding her team to deliver impactful solutions. She also focuses on shaping proposals and strategies for leading organisations, ensuring innovation aligns with real-world impact. What excites her most is building people and creating opportunities. Through Ziyana Group, the Ziyana Foundation, and Africa Rising Leadership, she develops young leaders, supports women, and transforms workplaces across the continent. "Seeing lives and organisations change in real time is the most rewarding part of my work," she says. Her upbringing inspires Nomazibulo's journey in Zwile, where limited opportunities fueled her passion to create access for others. Her work is grounded in the belief that leadership is measured by the impact one makes, not the titles one holds. She serves on the 4IR Advisory Committee, a role that enables her to make significant contributions to shaping Africa's future of work and technology. Outside of work, she enjoys travelling, storytelling, and spending time with her family, which keeps her grounded and inspires her leadership.

**Zanele Njapha**  
Founder and chief executive, The UnLearners

**Z**anele Njapha, founder and chief executive of The UnLearners, begins her days with a focus on physical and mental well-being, incorporating yoga or strength training, team check-ins, workshops, keynote delivery, strategy sessions with clients, coaching leaders in The UnLearning Circle, and developing program content. She particularly enjoys witnessing the moment someone smiles with understanding—a concept or idea finally clicking. She holds a Master of Arts in Diplomacy and International Relations from Seton Hall University, United States, NJ, School of Diplomacy and International Relations. Zanele was inspired to create The UnLearners after observing how society often judges change, despite growth and adaptation being central to life. Through tailored workshops, coaching, and corporate facilitation, she empowers individuals and organisations to embrace transformation in accessible and engaging ways. In response to her own early encounters with suicide, she founded The UnLearning Children Foundation, supporting youth facing similar challenges. Her proudest achievements, including receiving the Rising Star recognition in the 2024 Santam Women of the Future campaign and being part of the 2023 KZN Top Business Women cohort, are a testament to her dedication and leadership. Her guiding lesson is clear: persistence, grit, and a strong network can overcome any challenge, and life is always worth living. Through her work, Zanele inspires others to embrace change, growth, and personal transformation.



**Gugu Sepamla**  
Group corporate affairs & public policy executive, Babcock Africa | Board member

**G**ugu Sepamla is a visionary leader in corporate affairs, serving as group corporate affairs & public policy executive at Babcock Africa. She holds a Master's in Leadership & Strategy from IE University in Madrid, complemented by programmes at INSEAD and Harvard. She brings a global perspective to shaping the company's relationships with government, media, investors, and society. "Not one single day is the same," she says. "This role is about strategy, action, and creating meaningful impact." A passionate advocate for women in leadership, Gugu co-founded the NALA Executive Leadership Programme with the Boston Consulting Group. This nine-month journey accelerates the leadership and success of senior women. She also leads My Table Is Big Enough, a mentorship initiative encouraging women to create space for one another in corporate settings. Her leadership style blends strategic insight with inclusivity, nurturing emerging talent while translating vision into action. A Harvard Fellow, she embraces continuous learning and innovation. Equally proud of her role as a mother, Gugu balances career and family with intention and purpose. Her guiding principle: "Success is not owned, it is leased. Rent is due every month. So show up." Through advocacy, mentorship, and decisive leadership, she continues to shape South Africa's corporate and social landscape, inspiring others to lead with courage, integrity, and impact.



**Katie Mohamed**  
Chief executive | Founder, BrandFusion, W-Suite and ChangeHub

**K**atie Mohamed is a powerhouse of purpose — a storyteller, strategist, and social changemaker shaping South Africa's narrative through creativity and impact. As chief executive of BrandFusion, she leads with vision, helping brands move markets and mindsets through authentic storytelling. Her work spans boardrooms and communities alike, blending strategy with a sense of soul. Through W-Suite, Katie champions women in leadership and investment, creating platforms that turn empowerment into action — from mentorship sessions to policy dialogues. With ChangeHub, she takes that mission further, driving socio-economic development that connects business and community, transforming ideas into measurable change. A documentary filmmaker, Katie brings her unique storytelling skills to the forefront. As the author of Brave Today and host of The Influence Equation on 919FM, Katie uses every medium at her disposal to amplify voices and challenge conventions. She's also a fashion icon, judge for the SA Style Awards, and regular keynote speaker on women's empowerment and ethical leadership. For Katie, bravery and purpose are inseparable. "Real leadership begins the moment you choose to lead with authenticity — even when it's uncomfortable," she says. Whether she's building brands, inspiring women, or curating conversations of influence, Katie leads from the heart — proving that courage, creativity, and compassion remain the proper measures of legacy.



**Nadia Hearn**  
Founder, Get Published | PR strategist, business mentor, purpose agent

**N**adia Hearn is a powerhouse in PR and marketing communications, blending creativity, strategy, and purpose to transform brands and lives. Nadia, founder of Get Published, a bespoke Cape Town-based agency, has spent over two decades shaping national and international campaigns, guiding SMEs, NGOs, and global brands to articulate their essence and connect deeply with their audiences. Certified as a Chartered Public Relations Practitioner (CPRP) and a licensed facilitator of development courses, Nadia brings a unique approach to brand strategy. Through her Brand Soul Map method, she helps clients uncover their purpose and craft emotionally resonant narratives that drive impact. Beyond business, she mentors individuals to discover their calling, equipping them with the tools to design the lives they truly want. Her portfolio includes impactful initiatives such as the Better Bellville Together campaign for CTP and the CoCT, as well as the Rotary District 9350 ACT4IMPACT membership drive, demonstrating her ability to create meaningful change through effective communication. For Nadia, life and business are guided by principles of consistency, adaptability, and empowerment. "Change is the only constant," she says. "Use it as a gift to build initiatives that enable women to challenge limitations, gain financial literacy, and create the lives they choose." Her work demonstrates that purpose-driven communication can not only reshape brands but also communities.



# CIVIL SOCIETY



**Aphiwe Ngalo**  
**Programme coordinator & popular education officer, Ndifuna Ukwazi**

Aphiwe Ngalo, a programme coordinator and popular education officer at Ndifuna Ukwazi, is a force for positive change. Her work focuses on supporting communities and social movements in their struggles for land and housing justice. She blends strategy with grassroots engagement, developing programme strategies, coordinating advocacy campaigns, and facilitating workshops that translate complex policy into accessible, community-driven knowledge. “What I enjoy most is combining strategy with direct community engagement,” she reflects. “It’s gratifying to create spaces where activists and communities can build knowledge collectively, strengthen solidarity, and push campaigns that demand systemic change.” Aphiwe’s inspiration lies in challenging dominant narratives, amplifying marginalised voices, and dismantling systems of inequality. Storytelling remains central to her work, as it connects individual experiences to broader struggles for justice. Her proudest achievements include the Tafelberg Campaign, which influenced provincial government action on social housing; the Land & Housing School; and regional learning exchanges that fostered solidarity across Southern Africa. Aphiwe lives by the principle that “time is the ultimate test of both truth and character,” guided by Maya Angelou’s wisdom: “Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.” Through her transformative impact, she turns knowledge into action, building stronger, more empowered communities across the region.

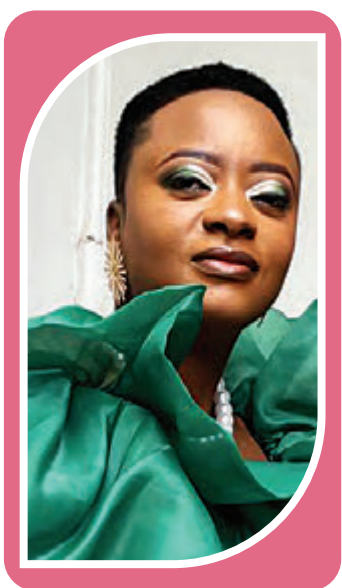


**Bongiwe Mhlongo**  
**Founder and managing director: Zama’sizwe Resource Centre**

Bongiwe Mhlongo, a force for community transformation, is known for her unique leadership style and approach to community service. As the founder and managing director of Zama’sizwe Resource Centre, she leads programmes that uplift vulnerable populations, including running a soup kitchen, advocating for women’s and children’s rights, and serving as principal of an early childhood development centre. Bongiwe holds a Diploma in ABET and a BEd from UNISA, completed Computer Studies at UKZN, and trained as a Paramedic at Saint Jones Paramedics. Overseeing two offices and three businesses, she also facilitates workshops, women’s empowerment events, and networking programs, building deep, trusted relationships with children, youth, women, and people living with disabilities. Bongiwe’s leadership style is characterized by her belief in showing up fully for others, believing that actual impact comes from hands-on engagement. Inspired by her late grandmother, a committed community activist, she carries forward a legacy of grassroots leadership and service. Known for taking personal responsibility rather than delegating, she ensures programmes are delivered successfully and with integrity. Her achievements include the SHERO award and recognition from government leadership in the eThekweni district. Bongiwe lives by the principle: “If you want to get it done right, do it yourself,” paired with the belief that there’s no such thing as failure—only attempts to achieve success. Through her dedication, she continues to create meaningful change, empowering communities and inspiring others to lead with compassion, courage, and a sense of purpose.

**Joyce Nomagugu Baloyi Msomi**  
**Executive coordinator, Ukukhanya Kwesizwe Community Project**

Joyce Nomagugu Baloyi completed her matric at Sivananda High School in KwaMashu and pursued a Diploma in Marketing and Advertising at Natal Technikon, as well as a Diploma in Office Administration from Damelin. As the Executive Coordinator of the Ukukhanya Kwesizwe Community Project, she is a transformative force in community empowerment, dedicating her time to uplifting women, youth, children, and the LGBTQIA+ community through skills development, financial literacy workshops, mentorship, and rapid-response support for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV). Her initiatives include school awareness campaigns, court accompaniment, economic empowerment programs, and the establishment of a Thuthuzela Care Centre in KwaMashu, which is scheduled to open in 2025. Joyce’s advocacy is deeply personal; having survived GBV herself, she channels her experiences into mentoring others, helping them turn trauma into triumph. She complements her lived experience with extensive training in HIV counseling, financial literacy, GBV and trauma response, sign language, housing development, health and safety, theology, parenting, and facilitation. Joyce’s work has garnered recognition, including the eThekweni Newspaper Awards for Most Influential Leader in 2025, the Mzansi Media Awards for Best Community Leader in 2025, and the Gagasi FM SHERO Award in 2023. Joyce embodies resilience, compassion, and purpose, guided by the belief, “I can’t change everyone’s life, but I can change at least one person’s life.” She continues to inspire meaningful change throughout South Africa.



**Nomsa Cynthia Dinalane**  
**Chief executive, Tshegofatsa Rona Welfare & Community Organisation**

Nomsa Cynthia Dinalane is a beacon of hope and resilience. Born in Tembisa and raised in Phalaborwa, Limpopo, she dreamed of becoming a social worker, driven by a desire to help others. Nomsa completed her matric at Tembisa High School and later pursued qualifications in HR Management at Allenby Home Studies, as well as certificates in Computer Literacy and Office Management at Havatec College. Today, she channels that passion as chief executive of Tshegofatsa Rona Welfare, a shelter she founded in her own home in Kempton Park for abused women and children. “Money or no money, I will continue to do good for my country,” she says. Through her self-funded initiative, Nomsa has empowered over 120 women to regain confidence and independence. Her daily work involves providing guidance, support, and essential resources to help beneficiaries thrive safely and independently. Inspired by her own experience as a survivor of gender-based violence, her mission is deeply personal—creating safe spaces, restoring hope, and transforming lives. Her efforts have earned her international recognition, including the Best Gauteng Humanitarian Award, the South African Heroes Award, the UK Universal Award, the Humanitarian Global Award in Ghana, and the African Humanitarian Award in Nigeria. Through discipline, focus, and dedication, Nomsa continues to turn victims into victors, serving as a beacon of hope and empowerment for South Africa’s most vulnerable.



**Lucinda Collette Evans**  
**Founder & director, Philisa Abafazi Bethu Women Centre**

Lucinda grew up in District 6, Cape Town, dreaming of becoming a trauma doctor. A gunshot wound to her hand ended that path, but it became the catalyst for her true calling: defending and healing survivors of gender-based violence (GBV). She founded Philisa Abafazi Bethu Women Centre, a first-responder GBV and child protection organisation that provides emergency safehouses, court support, and holistic care for women, children, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and cisgender males in distress. Lucinda’s work is both hands-on and courageous. She rescues survivors from violent situations, oversees their safety during critical 14-day stays, and provides emotional, legal, and social support. She also runs community initiatives, including a senior citizens’ club that focuses on safety education, the arts, and health screenings. What she loves most is witnessing survivors reclaim their sense of safety and dignity—the first unafraid smiles and words of relief are what keep her motivated. Her inspiration came from seeing a woman being beaten in public while bystanders did nothing; this spurred her to act and eventually transform her home garage into a safe haven. Today, her Centre continues to grow, including an early-intervention ECD programme for children affected by trauma and GBV. Lucinda’s guiding principle is: “You cannot lead if you haven’t served.” The most valuable lesson she has learned is the importance of service in leadership. Her best advice: “Don’t be afraid to ask for help; surround yourself with people who know more so you can learn and grow.” Her work underscores the importance of community support and the need for collective action in addressing GBV.



**Lydia Hlongwane**  
**Co-founder & director: I.C.A.R.E Organisation and Changing Lives Foundation | Managing director: Imbali Group of Companies**

Lydia Hlongwane is a dynamic changemaker transforming lives across South Africa and beyond. She holds a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) from UNISA and a Civic Leadership Certificate from the Young African Leadership Initiative (YALI). As co-founder and director of I.C.A.R.E Organisation and Changing Lives Foundation, and managing director of Imbali Group of Companies, she blends strategy, mentorship, and advocacy to create tangible impact. Her days are filled with leading empowerment campaigns, coordinating events, engaging partners, and mentoring young people, with the ultimate goal of ensuring no voice goes unheard and no potential is wasted. Lydia’s inspiration comes from her roots in Hammanskraal, where she witnessed firsthand the struggles of women and youth with limited opportunities. She is also an author, life coach, and motivational speaker, with three books exploring resilience, identity, and empowerment. Her proudest achievements include leading the Mpumalanga Creative Arts Summit, empowering over 200 women creatives, running the Treat Her Like a Queen campaign for rural schoolgirls, and fundraising for children with rare diseases. Her impact is not limited to South Africa, as she has been internationally recognised, receiving the Women In Africa Laureate (2022), Women4Africa Best International Business Woman of the Year (2023), and being named one of Africa’s 50 Most Impactful Women (2022). Guided by the principle that true leadership is service, Lydia carries the wisdom of her late great-grandmother: “Your story is your power. Don’t be afraid to use it to light the path for others.” Through her work, she continues to inspire, empower, and uplift communities worldwide.



# CIVIL SOCIETY

**Carol Dyantyi**  
**Founder and managing**  
**director, Uzima**

**C**arol Dyantyi is the founder and managing director of Uzima, which means “Life” in Swahili. Based in Soweto’s Ezimbuzini informal settlement, Uzima nurtures children and young women through education, psychosocial support, and community transformation. For instance, they have turned illegal dumping sites into safe spaces for children, supported teen mothers to return to school, and placed over 200 children in quality early childhood centres across Soweto. She is a human rights advocate and a 2014 honoree of the Human Rights Advocates Programme (HRAP), affiliated with Columbia University in New York, USA, selected for her outstanding work in community advocacy. Carol’s humanitarian journey began over two decades ago when, inspired by the late Dr. Aggrey Klaaste, she founded Ikageng, which she describes as her “trophy”—a community-based organisation that transformed the lives of children whose parents were diagnosed with or died from AIDS. She describes herself as a humanitarian at heart, an advocate for children’s rights, and a believer in the power of community-driven change. “Even in broken communities,” she says, “life can grow again.” Her guiding lessons are rooted in faith and resilience: trust the process, believe in people, and keep serving humanity. “Betrayal doesn’t define the journey,” she reflects. “Purpose does—and hope always finds a way.”



**Emmerentia Kim Kotze**  
**Founder and strategic**  
**partner, Lesego Community**  
**Services**

**E**mmerentia Kim Kotze, a woman of resilience and determination, was raised in a township where she drew inspiration from the ‘Power Women’ in her community. Her life’s work, dedicated to caring, advocacy, and community empowerment, is a testament to her personal journey. Currently pursuing a Bachelor of Commerce in Industrial and Organisational Psychology and holding a Certificate in Skills Development Facilitation, she has channeled her expertise into founding Lesego Community Services, an NGO that partners with multiple community projects across South Africa. Kim’s work focuses on creating meaningful access and inclusion for individuals who are visually impaired. Notably, she developed the Booklet of Patriotism, a national identity resource translated for visually impaired communities. She spearheaded the introduction of Braille exhibits at the Nelson Mandela Museum, ensuring that the legacy of South Africa’s iconic leader is accessible to all. Her initiatives exemplify her belief that background shapes you but does not determine your future. Operating primarily on a pro-bono basis, Kim’s efforts combine strategic vision with a hands-on approach, bridging systemic gaps and building capacity where it is most needed. Her work reflects the values instilled in her by the strong women in her life: care, courage, and an unwavering commitment to others. “See yourself as a winner,” she says, “and the world will follow suit.”



**Kelo Kubu**  
**Country director, CorpsAfrica South Africa**

**K**elo Kubu is a trailblazer in youth-led community development, serving as Country Director of CorpsAfrica South Africa. She leads a programme that places young graduates in rural communities for a year of service, using Human-Centered Design to co-create solutions that address pressing local challenges — from food security and digital skills to water access and income-generating projects. “Our work is about empowering communities and the young people who serve them,” she says. “Change happens when people are trusted to lead alongside those they support.” Early in her career, Kelo worked with foundations across the SADC region, witnessing firsthand



the systemic challenges that rural communities face. This inspired her to combine creativity, entrepreneurship, and social impact to design initiatives that are both sustainable and community-driven. Her achievements include co-founding the Mandela Poster Project, which showcased 95 posters celebrating Nelson Mandela’s legacy worldwide, and bringing TEDx to her region for over 16 years, sharing South African ideas with the world. A passionate advocate for youth and rural empowerment, Kelo Kubu’s commitment to civic engagement, social innovation, and grassroots transformation is unwavering. Guided by the principle “Let go of what you can’t control. Focus on what you can change,” she inspires both young leaders and the communities they serve.





**Nombulelo Khanyisile Blaai**  
Manager, student governance, leadership development | Coordinator student innovation and entrepreneurship development hub, Walter Sisulu University

Nombulelo Khanyisile Blaai grew up in the dusty streets of Idutywa, Eastern Cape, where she first dreamed of becoming a geologist. Today, she channels that same curiosity and determination into shaping the next generation of student leaders and social innovators at Walter Sisulu University, where she serves as manager of Student Governance and Leadership Development and Coordinator of Student Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Hub. Armed with qualifications in Financial Information Systems and Management Science, and currently pursuing an Honours degree in Business Administration, Khanyisile brings over 20 years of experience in education management and student development. She oversees leadership programmes, entrepreneurship initiatives, and governance activities while mentoring the ENACTUS WSU team — a global experiential learning platform that nurtures student entrepreneurs and changemakers. Beyond academia, Khanyisile is a passionate advocate for the arts. As Administrative Secretary of the Choral, Opera, and Orchestral Music Federation of South Africa (COMFESA) and founder of the Higher Education Institutions Performing Arts Festival (HEIPAFEST), she empowers young artists and celebrates cultural expression. Her work has earned multiple accolades, including the Vice-Chancellor’s Award for Excellence and ENACTUS Faculty Advisor of the Year. Guided by authenticity, feedback, and service, Khanyisile believes education, entrepreneurship, and the arts are powerful levers for social change and transformation.



**Nicolette Mashile**  
Financial literacy advocate, entrepreneur & best-selling author; founder, Financial Fitness Bunnies

Nicolette Mashile is on a mission to make financial literacy accessible, engaging, and practical for all South Africans. She holds a Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration from UNISA, alongside certifications in debt management, regulatory compliance, and financial planning. As the founder of Financial Fitness Bunnies, she utilises media, corporate programmes, and interactive tools to empower individuals to make informed financial decisions. From TV, radio, and social media content to children’s programmes like Coco the Money Bunny, board games, and university initiatives, her work turns financial education into an experience that’s fun, relatable, and impactful. Her passion for teaching financial literacy was sparked by personal experience—a costly home-buying attempt revealed gaps in her own knowledge, inspiring her to ensure others avoid similar pitfalls. Guided by her father’s advice to “collect information and share it with the less fortunate,” Nicolette has dedicated her career to mentoring, teaching, and creating platforms for applied financial knowledge. Her achievements include authoring the best-seller *What’s Your Move?*, building a platform with over 1 million social media followers, representing African voices at the Gates Foundation Goalkeepers initiative and Google Africa Leaders Summit, and serving on the FSCA Consumer Advisory Board. For Nicolette, the greatest reward is witnessing knowledge transform into empowerment—turning insight into tangible financial freedom in real life. Through her work, she continues to inspire South Africans to take control of their finances and unlock opportunity, making a significant impact on the financial well-being of her fellow citizens.



**Prof Kulsum Kondiah**  
Vice dean of teaching and learning, Faculty of Science and an associate professor, Department of Biotechnology and Food Technology, University of Johannesburg

Prof Kulsum Kondiah, the vice dean of teaching and learning in the Faculty of Science and an associate professor in the Department of Biotechnology and Food Technology at the University of Johannesburg, is a beacon of innovation in her field. With a PhD in Microbiology from the University of the Free State and over 15 years of experience in academia, she balances multiple roles as a faculty leader, educator, researcher, and supervisor. Her work focuses on enhancing student success, transforming curricula, and deepening the societal impact of science. In the classroom, she teaches Biochemistry and Immunology, guiding students from undergraduate to postgraduate levels with a commitment to excellence and a curiosity-driven approach to learning. Her research centres on developing nano-based rapid detection assays for water-borne pathogens—innovations that provide early warning systems to safeguard public health, particularly in low-resource communities. As a supervisor, she has trained and mentored numerous postgraduate students, many of whom have gone on to successful scientific careers. She is also a patent holder and co-inventor, dedicated to translating research into real-world solutions. Guided by the philosophy that “helping others shine only makes my own light grow brighter,” Kondiah leads with empathy and purpose. Her best advice remains profound yet straightforward: “Don’t carry someone else’s pressure as your own.”



**Phakamile Mazibuko**  
Lecturer, Community-Based Educational Research (COMBER), North-West University

Phakamile Mazibuko grew up in Ulundi, KwaZulu-Natal, where rural challenges shaped her resilience and instilled a belief in education as a tool for transformation. As a child, she dreamed of becoming a teacher, seeing knowledge as a means to break the cycle of poverty. Today, at just 28, she is the youngest lecturer in her department at North-West University and a PhD candidate at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, combining teaching, research, and mentorship to create meaningful change. Her work focuses on gender and education, including research on gender-based violence in university residences. Her days are a mix of lecturing, supervising student research, mentoring young academics, and driving initiatives to create safer, more inclusive institutions. Phakamile is passionate about helping students realize their potential and translating scholarship into tangible community impact. Inspired by her own experiences navigating limited opportunities and gendered challenges, she founded the Phakamile Mazibuko Foundation. The foundation has had a significant effect, empowering over 3,000 rural learners with career guidance and access to higher education. Beyond academia, she mentors young people, runs motivational programmes, and champions pathways for social upliftment. Her guiding principle is simple: “Lift as you rise.” For Phakamile, resilience and purpose turn obstacles into opportunities, ensuring her success creates opportunities for others. Through her dedication, she is shaping lives, breaking cycles of inequality, and leaving a lasting legacy of empowerment and transformation.

**Semakaleng Dhlamini**  
Project coordinator, READ Educational Trust - Roger Federer Foundation | Co-founder and director, TechFlow Afrika

Semakaleng Dhlamini, a passionate educator and innovator, is transforming learning across South Africa. In her role as a project coordinator at READ Educational Trust, supported by the Roger Federer Foundation, she assists Grade R teachers in North West classrooms. Her responsibilities include observing lessons, coaching educators, and helping them in integrating creative and inclusive strategies to enhance learning effectiveness and engagement. She also ensures the School Readiness Initiative meets its goals through project planning, monitoring, and reporting. At TechFlow Afrika, a venture she co-founded, Semakaleng is leading the charge in preparing schools for the



digital revolution by integrating coding, robotics, and STEAM education. She designs training programmes, develops resources, and builds partnerships to expand the initiative’s reach, empowering schools and teachers to adopt technology with confidence. Her inspiration comes from witnessing transformation in real time—be it a teacher regaining confidence or a child’s eyes lighting up as they master a new concept. She also champions natural playgrounds and interactive “talking walls” that spark curiosity, creativity, and environmental awareness. Her achievements, which include judging at the Deep Learning Indaba and ACET, speaking at the Africa Tech Summit and All African Youth Forum, co-founding TechFlow Afrika, and leading the School Readiness Initiative to strengthen early learning in rural communities, are a testament to her dedication and impact. Semakaleng’s guiding principle is clear: sustainable impact comes from collaboration and inclusion—a reassuring approach that empowers communities and fosters scalable change.



**Mukundi Lambani**  
Founder and chief executive,  
Ambani Africa

Mukundi Lambani is transforming education across Africa. As founder and chief executive of Ambani Africa, she leads an edtech company dedicated to multilingual learning, making education accessible in African languages. She has a Master's in Creative Media Leadership from Bournemouth University. Her days blend leadership, product development, and family life — encompassing tasks such as checking in with her team, testing products, gathering feedback, building partnerships, and ensuring solutions meet the needs of schools and learners. Mukundi's journey began with a childhood move from Venda to Gauteng, where she entered a multiracial school without speaking English. That experience of navigating language barriers and cultural assimilation planted the seed for her vision: empowering learners through tools that honor their language and identity. Her proudest achievements include winning MTN App of the Year early in Ambani Africa's journey and digitising rural classrooms in KwaZulu-Natal, where 39% of previously low-performing learners moved into the high-performing category within a month. Balancing entrepreneurship with parenthood, Mukundi draws inspiration from the transformative power of education. Her guiding philosophy is simple: "We are all made of the same stuff — if someone else can achieve it, so can I." She also stresses sustainability, believing that even mission-driven work must be managed wisely to create lasting impact. Through Ambani Africa, Mukundi continues to change lives, one learner at a time, with a commitment to sustainability that reassures us of the long-term effects of her work.



**Boniswa Siwundla Madikizela**  
Senior lecturer, Department  
of Accountancy, University of  
Johannesburg

Boniswa Siwundla Madikizela made a bold leap from senior corporate banking to academia, trading financial security for a "step into purpose." Today, she is a senior lecturer and PhD candidate in accounting education at the University of Johannesburg, exploring how family financial socialisation shapes young people's money mindsets. In the classroom, she thrives — preparing lectures, guiding bursary and placement applications, and mentoring first-generation graduates. Affectionately known as "Sis B," she inspires students navigating higher education without familial guidance, combining expertise with empathy. Her academic journey spans a BCom in Accounting from Wits, a Master's in International Accounting from UJ, and leadership fellowships at Harvard and INSEAD. Boniswa's impact extends beyond teaching. She founded FLIC\_SA, a platform promoting financial literacy — a crucial skill in today's world — and has been recognised with the AWCA Trailblazer in Academia Award. Balancing motherhood and a demanding career, she embodies leadership grounded in integrity: "You can't lead without serving first, and you can't serve without living in truth." Her story reflects a dedication to shaping not just minds but futures, empowering the next generation of financially conscious leaders. Through mentorship, advocacy, and scholarship, Boniswa continues to transform lives — turning knowledge into opportunity and purpose into lasting impact.



**Dr Lynn Bowie**  
Director of mathematics, OLICO  
Mathematics Education

Dr Lynn Bowie is on a mission to make mathematics meaningful for every South African child. As the director of Mathematics at OLICO Mathematics Education, her days are dynamic — spending mornings in rural Limpopo playing maths games with grade 1 learners or observing high school tutors tackle algebra, and afternoons in seminars with national and international educators designing numeracy lesson plans or collaborating with tech experts to improve educational apps. "What I enjoy most is working alongside passionate young South Africans committed to making mathematics accessible for all," she says. Dr Lynn's dedication to inclusive education is unwavering, stemming from her experiences witnessing both the privileges and inequalities of apartheid-era schooling, which drive her to ensure that quality mathematics education nurtures every learner's potential. A proud holder of a PhD in

Mathematics Education, Dr Lynn takes pride in her four daughters, the talented tutors and facilitators she has developed through OLICO, and the learners who persevere despite obstacles. Outside of work, she is a self-proclaimed math nerd who loves solving challenging puzzles. Her guiding principles are simple: remain open to learning, listen to diverse voices, and surround yourself with colleagues who challenge and support you. Through her work, Dr Lynn continues to transform mathematics education, empowering students and educators alike and proving that learning can be inspiring, inclusive, and transformative.



**Almien Noko Mokobodi**  
Founder - Tutor Mentor  
Connect | Human rights youth  
advocate, OHCHR - EEA

Almien Noko Mokobodi, a human rights youth advocate with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and Education Above All (EAA), as well as the founder of Tutor Mentor Connect, is making a significant impact in the field of education. She holds an LLB from the University of Limpopo and completed her Practical Legal Training with the Law Society of South Africa. Her advocacy focuses on education as a fundamental human right and on ensuring that young people's voices are represented in global decision-making. Through Tutor Mentor Connect, she works to make quality education accessible — designing mentorship and learning programmes that empower learners, especially in underserved communities. Inspired by

her brother's struggle with literacy, Almien's mission is deeply personal: to ensure that no child is left behind due to barriers such as language or access. Her efforts have earned her the Sunday World Unsung Hero Award in Education and a nomination to the 40 Under 40 South Africa list. "I've learnt that impact is born from empathy and action," she says. "Empowering one child through education can transform families, communities, and nations — because hope begins with learning."

**Adri Marais**  
Chief executive, Christel House  
Education SA

Adri Marais is a visionary education leader dedicated to transforming lives through access, purpose, and opportunity. As chief executive of Christel House South Africa, she leads a dynamic, female-driven organisation committed to breaking the cycle of poverty through education and character development. "Every day is fast-paced and full of purpose," she says. "The work is fundamentally about leadership — the better one can steward the cause, the more effective everyone becomes." Before joining Christel House, Adri co-founded TSIBA Education, a pioneering institution that opened pathways for under-resourced youth to access accredited business education. Under her leadership, TSIBA launched its BBA and Postgraduate Diploma in Small Enterprise Consulting — achievements that reshaped entrepreneurial learning in South Africa. At Christel House, she has since led the expansion of the organisation's Simunye Project and Youth Bridge Initiative, as well as the development of a second high school, extending its impact to even more communities. With an MSc in Biochemistry, an MBA from City University (USA), and a Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education Studies from UCT, Adri's scientific background instills confidence in her leadership. Grounded, innovative, and purpose-driven, she continues to build systems that empower young South Africans to shape their own futures.



**Candice Potgieter**  
Chief executive: The Unlimited  
Child

Candice Potgieter is the visionary chief executive of Unlimited Child, South Africa's largest early childhood development (ECD) programme, which has reached over 2.2 million children across Africa and the Middle East. Her work combines community-based initiatives, digital innovation, and strategic partnerships to ensure that every child has access to quality early learning, regardless of their circumstances. "A single empowered practitioner can uplift an entire community of children," Candice says. Her days balance strategic leadership with human connection — reviewing impact data, aligning partners, guiding teams, and exploring innovative financing models to drive systemic change. She excels at problem-solving at scale, demonstrating that data, when measured and sustainable, can drive social impact. Under her leadership, The Unlimited Child has won the 2024 Khalifa International Award for Education for Best Programme and Curriculum, expanded a network of over 12 000 female-led micro-enterprises delivering quality early learning, and launched the AI-powered ECD Blueprint, transforming early childhood systems through real-time data and digital training. Candice's passion for brain health and neuroplasticity informs her approach to leadership, innovation, and lifelong learning. "Trust both the data and your intuition," she says. Grounded, imaginative, and relentlessly focused on transformation, she continues to redefine what is possible in early childhood development, leaving a legacy that will shape the first years of learning for millions of children.





# HEALTH & WELLNESS

## Annah Mametsa Professional nurse | Founder, Mphoentle Pelong Haven of Care Community Centre

Annah Mametsa, a professional nurse, has a heart for care that extends far beyond the clinic. She is the founder of Mphoentle Pelong Haven of Care Community Centre, a non-profit dedicated to uplifting disadvantaged learners and community members. Her journey began with empathy for children in her community, and a pivotal moment came when her own child was bullied over torn shoes. Witnessing the struggles behind that small act inspired her lifelong dedication to service. Since 2005, Annah has annually donated school shoes, sanitary pads,

food parcels, and pre-loved clothes, while also conducting home visits, awareness campaigns, and motivational talks that instill hope and resilience. Her approach combines practical support with mentorship, enhancing learners' confidence, reducing absenteeism, and promoting menstrual dignity for girls. Her work has earned recognition, including the SA Heroine in Health award, the Fabulous Woman Award, and the *Sunday World* Heroic Woman award. Yet, for Annah, the greatest reward is seeing lives transformed. Her work has significantly improved the lives of many in her community, creating lasting change one learner at a time. She lives by a simple principle: stay focused, humble, and committed to the Ubuntu spirit. Her guiding advice: "Walk tall despite challenges and never give up, no matter how tough the obstacles may be." Through dedication, compassion, and action, Annah continues to uplift her community.



## Boitumelo Peete Senior physiotherapist, Gauteng Department of Health

Boitumelo Peete, a senior physiotherapist at the Gauteng Department of Health and a Master's in Public Health candidate at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University, is a mentor par excellence. Her work is a harmonious blend of hands-on clinical expertise, mentorship, and professional development. Each day, she assists patients in overcoming complex neurological and musculoskeletal challenges, guides final-year physiotherapy students, and organizes continuing professional development for her team. Her driving force is the moments when patients achieve milestones they once thought impossible—affirming their agency and her role in their success. Boitumelo's upbringing in Soweto, where she



witnessed how socio-economic barriers limited access to healthcare, ignited her passion for championing equitable health and improving the quality of life for her community. Beyond the clinic, she nurtures creativity and focus through cinema, music, reading, and hiking—interests that sharpen her problem-solving and holistic approach to care. Her proudest achievements include being named Best Therapist at Odi District Hospital in 2025, implementing a clinical supervision program in collaboration with SMU since 2018, and coordinating the rehabilitation unit's CPD programme in 2023–2024. Her guiding principle, inspired by neuroplasticity, is a testament to her belief in the potential for change: "Never confuse the structure of a problem with the potential for its solution." This philosophy permeates her clinical work, mentorship, and commitment to public health, serving as a powerful reminder that change is always possible.



## Prof Heidi Abrahamse DSTI NRF SARCHI Chair: Laser Applications in Health | Director: Laser Research Centre, University of Johannesburg

Prof Heidi Abrahamse, distinguished professor, is a pioneer in health research and laser applications, serving as DSTI NRF SARCHI Chair and Director of the Laser Research Centre at the University of Johannesburg. Her leadership at the Laser Research Centre, which includes six senior researchers, around 30 Master's and PhD students, and 10 postdoctoral fellows, is a testament to her ability to manage a large team and lead complex projects. She holds a PhD in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology from the University of the Witwatersrand and further honed her

leadership skills at GIBS and Harvard Medical School's Global Clinical Scholars Research Training Program. Her days are a combination of mentoring, strategic leadership, grant development, and presenting research internationally. She thrives on seeing emerging researchers grow in confidence, innovate boldly, and make meaningful contributions to science. Her work focuses on pioneering therapies that utilise photodynamic and photobiomodulation techniques, achieving breakthroughs in molecular pathways and the development of autologous stem cell grafts. Beyond the lab, Abrahamse finds joy in gardening, history, travel, and celebrating the growth of her students and children. She credits her perseverance and dedication to lessons from her mother and years of rigorous research. For Abrahamse, meaningful progress comes from patience, persistence, and nurturing potential in others. She embodies a rare combination of scientific brilliance and mentorship, creating ripples of impact that extend from the laboratory to communities, inspiring a new generation of researchers to pursue discovery with curiosity, courage, and a sense of purpose.

## Dr Samke Ngcobo Medical doctor | Chief executive | Founder, Vocal Mentality (Pty) Ltd

Born and raised in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, Dr Samke Ngcobo dreamed of becoming a teacher—until her first experience with mental illness at 14 redirected her path. Living with Bipolar Disorder Type 1, she has turned her personal challenges into a source of strength, combining lived experience with professional expertise as a medical doctor in mental health. In 2011, Ngcobo completed her Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and she has since been a leading figure in the field of mental health. In 2020, she founded Vocal Mentality, a platform dedicated to mental health advocacy and psychoeducation. Through Vocal Mentality, she provides wellness



advisory, consultations, educational content, and speaking engagements, helping individuals and organisations navigate mental wellbeing while breaking the stigma surrounding mental illness. Ngcobo is also the author of *Reflections of a Convolved Mind: A Journey with My Mental Illness* (2020), which uses storytelling to inspire awareness, hope, and resilience. Her achievements include being a Top 5 finalist in the 2022 Rising Star Awards in Entrepreneurship, a Forty Under 40 South Africa nominee in 2025 in Wellness, and a finalist for Author of the Year at the 2025 African Health Excellence Awards. Guided by faith and determination, Ngcobo believes every challenge carries a purpose: "My resilience and courage are the light that emerged from my darkest moments." Her advice to others: "Never give up."

## Thato Schermer Chief executive and co-founder, Zoie Health

Thato Schermer, the chief executive and co-founder of Zoie Health, is a leader in creating solutions for women's health. Growing up in a family of doctors, she witnessed both the strengths and gaps in the healthcare system, which inspired her to reimagine access, affordability, and dignity in care. Today, she leads a dynamic team dedicated to creating innovative solutions that reach women across the continent. Her work blends strategy, product development, and community engagement. She is currently pursuing an executive MBA at the Quantic School of Business & Technology in the USA. Thato listens closely to users, healthcare providers, and

partners, identifying gaps and translating them into practical solutions. One of them is EasyDoc, a telemedicine service that provides healthcare consultations to low-income South Africans via WhatsApp. She also oversees the Zoie Foundation, which drives menstrual health education and access. Her approach combines healthcare insight with technological innovation, ensuring that impact is both meaningful and sustainable. Her achievements include co-founding Zoie Health, expanding it across four verticals, securing global partnerships and funding, and driving initiatives that empower women to take control of their health. Outside the office, she is a passionate deep-sea diver, finding meditation and inspiration beneath the waves. Her guiding principle: start before you feel ready—often, the first step creates the momentum to figure out the rest. Her greatest lesson: meaningful impact requires resilience, patience, and, above all, listening.





# HEALTH & WELLNESS

**Kgaogelo Photoane**  
**HOD of speech therapy, Far East Rand Hospital | Founder and life coach, Kgosi Life Coaching | Wellness podcast host**

**K**gaogelo Photoane has transformed her personal struggle into a purpose and achieved remarkable success in her professional life. Growing up in Mabopane, Pretoria, she faced immense challenges, including multiple suicide attempts and a diagnosis of major depression, borderline personality disorder, and anxiety. Instead of letting these define her, she found a mission in healing—both her own and that of others. Kgaogelo holds a degree in Speech Therapy and Audiology (SMU), a Psychology degree (UNISA), and is pursuing her Honours in Psychology. As the head of department (HOD) of Speech Therapy



at Far East Rand Hospital, she supervises students, manages the department, and treats patients. Beyond healthcare, she is the founder of Kgosi Life Coaching, offering personalized coaching, employee wellness programs, and keynote speaking, empowering individuals and organisations to thrive. Her advocacy extends to Not Alone SA, a non-profit she co-founded to provide safe spaces for those struggling with mental health, ensuring no one faces their journey alone. Recognised by platforms including Metro FM, Channel Africa, and YFM, and nominated for motivational speaker awards at SASMA and Emerge Africa, she has built Kgosi Life Coaching into a trusted platform for transformation. A devoted mother, Kgaogelo balances personal growth, advocacy, and family with grace. Her mantra—“It’s never too late to start again. Healing is not linear. Breathe—you are still here”—reflects her resilience and inspires others to embrace hope, healing, and possibility.



**Ramona Kasavan**  
**Founder and chief executive, Mimi Women**

**R**amona Kasavan is the founder and chief executive of Mimi Women, an FMCG business dedicated to providing sanitary pads to women and girls across South Africa — from urban retail shelves to rural communities. She holds a Master’s degree in Entrepreneurship and New Venture Creation from Wits Business School. Her days are fast-paced and varied, encompassing stock management, packaging, project leadership, menstrual health talks, and assembling hygiene packs. She thrives on problem-solving that directly impacts communities and witnessing the confidence and joy of the women and girls she serves. Entrepreneurship, she notes, is all-consuming, requiring immense resilience and patience, and a clear sense of purpose. Ramona draws inspiration from her family, individuals with disabilities, and the women and girls she encounters on a daily basis. Her journey is fueled by a commitment to gender equality, mentorship, and creating lasting societal impact. Highlights of her career include becoming the first Black female-owned sanitary pad company in South Africa and seeing Mimi Women products available nationwide at Pick n Pay. Beyond her business endeavors, she lectures at business schools and advises on policy, utilising her platform to empower the next generation of women. Her guiding principle is: “Be true to yourself, the rest will follow.”

**Dr Norah Maitisa**  
**Global medical services director, Organon**

**D**r Norah Maitisa, a medical doctor and global medical services director at Organon, is a leader in the fields of medicine, epidemiology, and healthcare. Her academic qualifications include an MBChB from MEDUNSA, an MSc in Infectious Diseases Epidemiology from Wits, and an MBA from Wits Business School. In her current role, Maitisa is instrumental in creating efficiencies and streamlining operations within Organon’s international medical teams, ensuring smooth processes for medical review, scientific communication, and the dissemination of medical information. Her previous role involved leading medical personnel across Sub-Saharan Africa, overseeing the training of healthcare professionals on company products to ensure patient safety and optimal clinical outcomes. Her career is driven by a passion for public health and women’s health advocacy. As a founding member of the Coalition of Women’s Health in Africa (COWHA), she has contributed to advancing policy and improving access to care across the continent. She believes that women’s health is foundational to societal well-being, emphasizing that nations cannot thrive without prioritizing the health of women. Her guiding principle is lifelong learning, balanced with professional responsibilities, personal health, and family. Maitisa exemplifies leadership that merges medical expertise with strategic vision, demonstrating how thoughtful, committed leadership can create a lasting impact on healthcare delivery globally.



**Azukile Nzuzo**  
**Manager: Assistive Technology, Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI) South Africa**

**A**zukile Nzuzo is driving inclusion and innovation in South Africa’s public health sector as manager for assistive technology at the Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI). A Chevening Scholar with an MSc in Innovation Management and Entrepreneurship from Kingston University, London, Azukile leads programmes that enable early identification of disabilities across five provinces. His work focuses on scaling dual sensory screening initiatives that integrate mobile health tools for hearing and vision testing — bringing vital diagnostics to communities that need them most. “I was inspired by the inequities I saw in health access,” he says. “I wanted to combine innovation, community action, and technology to make healthcare inclusive and locally relevant.” At CHAI, he forms strong partnerships with government, social enterprises, and local organisations, ensuring the effectiveness and sustainability of his interventions. A passionate marathon runner, Azukile, is on a mission to run 40 marathons in 40 countries before turning 40, using each run to raise awareness and funds for disability inclusion. Whether in health innovation or on the racecourse, he is driven by persistence and purpose. “Use your difference as your advantage,” he says — a mantra that defines both his leadership and his lifelong mission to build a more inclusive future.





# LAW & JUSTICE

## Natasha Rene Naidoo

### Lecturer, Applied Legal Studies | Director of the University of Johannesburg Law Clinic

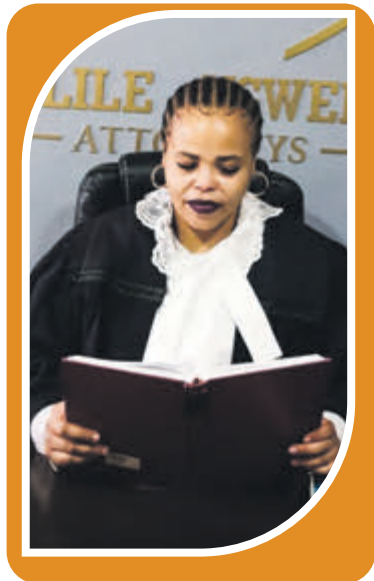
Natasha Rene Naidoo is a lecturer of Applied Legal Studies and director of the UJ Law Clinic at the University of Johannesburg. Her work combines lecturing, student mentorship, and community engagement, creating meaningful impact both in and beyond the classroom. A typical day involves teaching, conducting student consultations, coordinating projects, engaging with stakeholders on social justice matters, assisting attorneys at the clinic, and performing administrative duties. Natasha's nurturing approach to students is a source of pride, as it helps them develop confidence and skills. She measures success when former students reach out to share achievements or seek guidance. Her passion for law stems from a deep desire to serve communities whose voices are often unheard. At the UJ Law Clinic, she leads initiatives that integrate legal education with social justice, empowering students while providing critical support to vulnerable communities. Outside work, Natasha enjoys spending time with children, cherishing their honesty and authenticity. The most valuable lesson she has learned is to trust the timing of life, allowing purpose to unfold with patience and grace. Her guiding advice is simple yet profound: "Don't change who you are. Stay true to yourself, and you will always succeed." Integrity and compassion remain central to her leadership, shaping both her professional and personal life.



## Dr Vanessa Lynch

### Director, DNAforAfrica

Born in Kenya and raised in Johannesburg, Dr Vanessa Lynch originally aspired to a career in fashion design but ultimately pivoted to law, where her love of debate found its true home. She holds a Doctorate of Laws (LLD) from Stellenbosch University. As regional director of DNAforAfrica and a government affairs consultant, Lynch operates at the intersection of law, science, and policy. Her work encompasses advising African governments on national DNA legislation, conducting policy workshops, mentoring postgraduate students, and serving on international boards, including the ISFG Forensic Databasing Advisory Board. For instance, she played a key role in the development of South Africa's DNA Act, which has significantly improved the country's criminal justice system. A typical day may include supervising research, attending policy meetings, or presenting at global conferences. She thrives on collaboration, capacity-building, and seeing how DNA systems transform justice, solve crimes, and bring closure to families. Her path into forensic DNA was shaped by personal tragedy: the murder of her father in 2004 and the absence of a system to use DNA evidence inspired her to found The DNA Project, which laid the foundation for South Africa's DNA Act. Lynch is also a children's author, creating the DNA-inspired character Professor Frite to spark curiosity in young forensic scientists. Her guiding principle: strive for excellence, not perfection, and never doubt yourself, even when others do.



## Xolile Ngwenya

### Director of Xolile Ngwenya Attorneys and a practicing attorney

Xolile Ngwenya, the director of Xolile Ngwenya Attorneys, is a practicing attorney with a passion for justice and a commitment to lifelong learning. Her journey in law was inspired by her father and a childhood fascination with Ally McBeal, which sparked her early love for law and presenting information. She holds an LLB from the University of Limpopo and manages her firm with dedication, representing clients, drafting legal documents, mediating, arbitrating, negotiating, and attending court daily. She describes her work as both rewarding and ordained by Jehovah, allowing her to learn something new every day—a blessing she likens to "bliss." Beyond the courtroom, Xolile channels her creativity through fashion entrepreneurship. Through her company, Ms. Curvy

Creations (Pty) Ltd, she designs bespoke dresses, court attire, and bibs, blending professional rigor with creative expression. Her proudest achievements include being admitted as an attorney of the High Court, registering her firm on the eve of the 2020 lockdown, securing panel attorney positions with multiple public and private entities, and expanding to a branch in Tonga, Malalane. Xolile's journey has taught her that patience can "cook a stone" and that success depends on the depth of one's desire to achieve a goal. She follows the advice of Eckhart Tolle: "Limit thinking and generate presence," a philosophy that guides both her legal practice and creative ventures.



## Kagiso Annette Maphalle

### Chief director: research and information management, Department of Traditional Affairs

Kagiso Annette Maphalle, the chief director of Research and Information Management at the Department of Traditional Affairs, is a passionate advocate for the rights of women and children. Her work focuses on strengthening access to justice and equity within customary law, spanning research on traditional leadership recognition, dispute resolution, the establishment of traditional councils, the documentation of customary succession laws, and advocacy for women's and children's rights. She also oversees initiatives supporting land access for rural women, Khoi-San leadership recognition, and the implementation of the Customary Initiation Act. She holds a Master of Laws specialising in African Customary Law from the University of Cape Town and a Certificate in Public Policy from Harvard University. A trained sangoma, Kagiso uniquely merges legal expertise with cultural insight, designing empowerment initiatives that are both effective and culturally informed. Her work has contributed to the 3rd edition of *The Law of Persons in South Africa* (Oxford University Press), ensuring law students understand legal personhood within traditional contexts and promoting justice for marginalised groups. Kagiso's guiding philosophy is that a vision need not make sense to others — persistence and results will prove its value. Her inspiration comes from witnessing the challenges women face in rural communities and the lack of African expertise in customary law. She follows the advice: "Whoever tells the story controls the narrative," using research and advocacy to amplify the voices of women and children and transform lived realities.

## Basetsana Koitsioe

### Acting executive director, Lawyers against Abuse

Basetsana Koitsioe is the acting executive director of Lawyers against Abuse (LvA), where she leads strategic direction, programme oversight, financial management, fundraising, and team development. Her days involve reviewing organisational updates, supporting programme implementation, meeting with staff or partners, and contributing to donor proposals and reports. She thrives on seeing the tangible impact of LvA's work, collaborating with a passionate team, and strengthening the organisation's growth and sustainability. Basetsana holds a Master of Laws in Sexual and Reproductive Rights in Africa from the University of Pretoria. Her commitment to social justice began during her university years, when she ran leadership workshops for high school girls in Diepkloof. Witnessing challenges with legal dimensions inspired her to study law and specialise in human rights and gender justice. She has represented clients facing workplace sexual harassment, gender-based violence, and violations of sexual and gender minority rights. Deeply rooted in her Soweto heritage, Basetsana draws inspiration from her community, using her platform to amplify the voices of the marginalised and drive meaningful change. She has presented at international conferences on sexual and reproductive health, and was named one of the Top 25 Women Lawyers in Africa to Watch in 2025. Her guiding principle: "You've studied and listened — now it's time to put action to knowledge."



## Kamogelo Ditabo

### Founder and director, Nexus Legal

Kamogelo Ditabo is the founder and director of Nexus Legal, a firm dedicated to providing accessible and impactful legal services. Nexus Legal is committed to breaking down barriers in the legal system. Growing up in a previously disadvantaged community, Kamogelo understands the challenges many face and channels this insight into empowering others through law. A Bachelor of Laws (LLB) graduate from the University of South Africa, she draws on her personal journey from a previously disadvantaged background to guide her mission of empowering her community through law. Her days are varied — she conducts legal research, reviews cases, drafts documents, meets with clients, and collaborates with other professionals. She thrives on solving complex legal challenges while ensuring her work directly improves the lives of those she serves. Continuous learning and professional growth remain central to her approach, keeping her abreast of evolving legal trends. The inspiration for Nexus Legal came from her personal journey, including becoming the first law graduate in her family and funding her studies through side hustles. Kamogelo founded the firm to bridge gaps in access to justice, delivering innovative legal solutions that enable individuals and organizations to thrive. She is most proud of establishing Nexus Legal as a platform for community upliftment. Her guiding principle draws from Maya Angelou: "Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better." For Kamogelo, lifelong learning and meaningful impact go hand in hand.







**Kgomotso Mufamadi**  
Chief executive, Lotus  
Labour Consulting

**K**gomotso Mufamadi is the chief executive of Lotus Labour Consulting, a boutique labour law and organisational development firm that helps corporates, SMEs, and public institutions build compliant, inclusive, and sustainable workplaces. She holds an LLM from the University of the Witwatersrand, where she also serves as President of the Wits Convocation, representing alumni in higher education governance. A former CCMA commissioner and head of Industrial Relations at BMW, Kgomotso founded Lotus Labour Consulting to transform workplaces from conflict-driven environments into spaces of dignity, growth, and collaboration. Her daily work involves advising clients on complex labour matters, leading policy development workshops, mediating disputes, and mentoring HR and legal teams. What she enjoys most is helping organisations shift towards proactive, people-centred workplace cultures. Kgomotso also serves on the boards of Greenpeace Africa, Make Your Mark,

Richmond Farms Zambia, and Southern Africa Philanthropy, where she influences governance and social impact initiatives. Grounded in her Christian faith, she believes authentic leadership begins with self-awareness and healing, inspiring others with her values: “You cannot carry your traumas into leadership — that’s what creates toxicity in workplaces.” Inspired by her first mentor, Justice Kate O’Regan, Kgomotso strives to lead with love in every space she occupies.



**Prof Nomthandazo Ntlama-Makhanya**  
Professor: Public Law,  
University of Fort Hare

**P**rof Nomthandazo Ntlama-Makhanya, a senior professor of Law at the University of Fort Hare, is a leading figure in Constitutional Law and Human Rights. Her daily routine involves a delicate balance of lecturing, research, and mentoring junior colleagues, all while contributing to the university’s key performance areas, including community engagement. Her passion for teaching is evident in her commitment to transferring knowledge to future legal professionals and staying at the forefront of developments in her field. Beyond academia, she has made significant contributions as a Judge in various Divisions of the High Court, producing judgments that have significantly influenced South Africa’s jurisprudence. Her appointment as a commissioner to the Judicial Service Commission, representing the Society of Law Teachers of Southern Africa, is a testament to her standing as both a scholar and a contributor to the practical understanding of the law. She holds a Doctor of Law (LLD) from the University of South Africa — a qualification she remarkably completed in just 18 months. Soon after, she was promoted to associate professor and later delivered her Inaugural Address as a senior professor. “I strive for excellence,” she says. “In this profession, there is no point of arrival — only continuous learning, reflection, and the responsibility to make a lasting impact.”



**Mmakola Foundation**  
Restoring Dignity Through Compassion

Mahlasedi “Sedi” Mmakola, the founder of the Mmakola Foundation, a South African initiative built on one timeless belief: that genuine care, freely given, can change the course of a life.

Born and raised in Nebo, Sekhukhune, in Limpopo, Mahlasedi’s worldview was deeply shaped by her late father; a man she remembers as disciplined, visionary, and kind. He taught her that leadership is not a title, but an act of service; that dignity is something we restore in others through compassion and consistency. His lessons became the cornerstone of her life, and the compass that continues to guide her work today.

The Mmakola Foundation was born from this legacy. Built on the principles of compassion, dignity, and social responsibility, the Foundation extends a helping hand to underprivileged children, vulnerable families, and the elderly; not only in Limpopo, but across South Africa. Its reach has grown steadily through partnerships, collaborations, and volunteer networks, allowing it to bring hope to communities in multiple provinces.

What sets the Mmakola Foundation apart is its deeply personal approach to giving. Rather than focusing on scale or visibility, the Foundation focuses on meaningful impact; listening carefully, responding authentically, and delivering assistance that restores both confidence and connection. Each outreach is guided by empathy, humility, and a commitment to honour the dignity of those it serves. For Mahlasedi, philanthropy is not about charity; it is about humanity. “Helping someone doesn’t require wealth,” she says. “It requires the will to see another person’s pain and to do something about it.” This philosophy continues to guide her leadership and the Foundation’s approach to service.

Over time, the Mmakola Foundation has become a quiet but powerful presence; a symbol of hope and reliability in communities across South Africa. Its growth has been organic, driven by trust and genuine relationships rather than campaigns or slogans. In every outreach, whether small or large, Mahlasedi insists on one thing: that every person helped must be treated with the same respect and dignity as anyone else. The Foundation’s ethos reflects its founder’s personality; calm, purposeful, and steadfast. Behind its compassionate work is a structure defined by accountability and consistency. Each initiative is carefully planned, executed, and monitored to ensure that help reaches where it’s needed most.

For Mahlasedi, every act of giving is also an act of remembrance; of her father’s teachings, of her community’s resilience, and of the countless South Africans who continue to hold each other up in difficult times. “Service is not an act of charity,” she says, “it’s an act of gratitude.”

As it continues to expand its reach, the Mmakola Outreach Foundation remains committed to the small but powerful actions that create lasting change: a meal for a child, a blanket for a family, a pair of shoes for those who walk to school barefoot, or the opportunity for a young learner to continue their education with dignity. Each act, however simple, carries profound meaning. In doing so, the Foundation reminds South Africa that compassion — sincere, humble, and consistent — remains one of the greatest forces for restoration and hope in our time.



Everyday Life Can  
Feel Flat:  
Here's How Liqui  
Fruit Sparkling  
Helps You Keep It  
Popping

**There's no denying it:** life's daily grind can sometimes feel a little, well, flat. The same routine; wake up, work, sleep, rinse, repeat can leave even the most vibrant spirits searching for a spark of something more. Enter Liqui Fruit Sparkling, the refreshing new innovation that's transforming ordinary moments into extraordinary pops of joy.

**Liqui Fruit Sparkling isn't just another beverage;** it's a burst of flavour and fizz designed to elevate your day, no matter what's on your plate. This sparkling delight combines expertly crafted flavours with a lively carbonation, creating a taste experience that's both fresh and exciting. From zesty citrus notes to juicy berry blends, every sip reveals a crisp, invigorating taste that wakes up your palate and refreshes your soul.

Liqui Fruit Sparkling is more than just its amazing taste. It's a lifestyle fit for those who believe the everyday deserves celebration. Whether you're powering through a workday, unwinding with friends, or simply pausing for a moment of you-time, Liqui Fruit Sparkling adds that extra pop the little yai that turns the "meh" into more.

The heart of the brand beats to one simple message: Keep it Popping. It's a call to inject energy, vibrancy, and a splash of fun into every moment. Because no matter what life throws your way, you deserve a drink that matches your rhythm and lifts your spirit.



So, if your days feel like they're missing something, it's time to make a change. Grab a chilled Liqui Fruit Sparkling, let the bubbles tickle your taste buds, and embrace the joy of keeping it popping. After all, every routine deserves a spark, and every moment has the potential for a pop of happiness.

Ready to turn your "meh" moments into magic? Liqui Fruit Sparkling is here to remind you to celebrate life's little bursts one fizzy sip at a time. Keep it fresh, keep it fun and above all Keep it Popping.



Elevate Your At-Home Vibes with Liqui  
Fruit Sparkling Mocktails

Sparkling Apple Mojito

A fresh twist on a classic, this mocktail combines lime cordial, peach syrup, and citrus juices, topped with sparkling apple juice and a sprig of mint. It balances citrus tang and fruity sweetness with a pop of effervescence.

- 10ml Lime Cordial
- 10ml Peach Syrup
- 20ml Lime/Lemon Juice
- Top-up with Sparkling Apple Juice
- Garnish: Fresh Mint

Method: Shake lime cordial, lemon juice, and peach syrup with ice, strain into glass, top with sparkling apple juice, and finish with fresh mint.

Liqui Fruit Sparkling isn't just a drink; it's a celebration of life's moments, big and small. These mocktails transform everyday occasions into a playful pause, a moment to savour, and a chance to Keep it Popping. So whether it's a sunny brunch, a midweek treat or a party pre-game, pour, pop, sip and sparkle your way through the day.

Try these recipes, get creative, and bring the fizz home because every day deserves a little sparkle.

Everyday moments deserve a little sparkle, and with Liqui Fruit Sparkling, bringing that pop of joy to your routine is easier and tastier than ever. Whether it's a casual catch-up, a solo unwind, or adding flair to your weekend, these creative and refreshing mocktail recipes unlock a playful, sophisticated vibe you can make right at home.

Here are three effortlessly chic mocktail ideas starring Liqui Fruit Sparkling each designed to inspire and tantalize your taste buds:

Sparkling Lemonberry Daiquiri

This bright, zesty cocktail blends the warm spice of ginger syrup with the tang of lemon and lime, all elevated by the sweet fizz of sparkling strawberry lemonade. Garnished with fresh strawberries, it's a sip of sunshine you can enjoy any time.

- 20ml Ginger Syrup
- 15ml Lemon/Lime Juice
- Top-up with Sparkling Strawberry Lemonade
- Garnish: Fresh Strawberries

Method: Shake ginger syrup and lemon/lime juice with ice, strain into an ice-filled glass, top up with sparkling lemonade, and garnish.

Sparkling Cranberry Carnival

Layered and luscious, this mocktail mingles elderflower sweetness with a splash of lime, perfectly paired with the tart sparkle of cranberry juice and fresh lime wheels. Visual and palate-pleasing, it's your elevated pop of refreshment.

- 25ml Elderflower Syrup
- 10ml Lime Juice
- Top-up with Sparkling Cranberry Juice
- Garnish: Cranberries and fresh lime wheel

Method: Fill glass with ice and cranberries, shake elderflower syrup and lime juice, strain into glass, gently layer cranberry juice for two-tone effect, and garnish elegantly.



George & Manana Wines

George & Manana Wines is a proudly South African brand built on passion, community, and quality. What started as a personal love for wine has grown into a business that celebrates connection and good taste in every bottle.

Based in Johannesburg, we supply restaurants, hotels, event planners, and private clients across the country with both alcoholic and non-alcoholic wines. Each product is carefully selected to suit every occasion — from intimate gatherings to large corporate events.

Our wines are made for people who value style, authenticity, and a sense of togetherness. We believe that every sip should be an experience, whether you're toasting to success, hosting clients, or sharing a meal with friends.

Wholesale pricing begins at R480 per case (six bottles), with tailored packages available for events, restaurants, and corporate gifting.

For orders or partnership enquiries, contact us at:

Tel: 082 858 8719

Instagram: @georgeandmanana\_wines

Facebook: George and Manana Wines



George & Manana Wines – The Bliss Is in a Sip.





**Nosiphiwo Mzamo**  
Chief Executive Officer, State Diamond Trader

Nosiphiwo Mzamo was born in Mdantsane, East London. As a child, she dreamed of becoming a medical technologist. Still, her path led her to geology and the mining industry, where she has become a trailblaser for transformation and inclusion. She holds an MBA from Regenesys Business School. As the chief executive of State Diamond Trader, Nosiphiwo ensures equitable access to diamonds for Historically Disadvantaged South Africans, enabling them to participate in beneficiation, training, and international markets. She provides opportunities for youth, women, and black professionals to thrive in an industry historically closed to them. Her days are dynamic, as she oversees operations, engages with markets, runs training programs, and drives strategic initiatives to grow South Africa's diamond-cutting and polishing sector. Her proudest achievements include launching Africa's first Diamond Show at Mining Indaba 2024, opening a R300 million diamond cutting and polishing factory in Gauteng, and securing partnerships with Botswana to expand diamond access. Nosiphiwo is passionate about mentoring young women in the mining industry, encouraging them to persevere in a traditionally male-dominated field. She believes that fear of failure kills dreams, not failure itself, and that when everyone says it has not been done before, following your instincts and proving them wrong is the key to success. Her journey has not been without challenges, but she has always believed in her abilities and persevered, inspiring others to do the same.



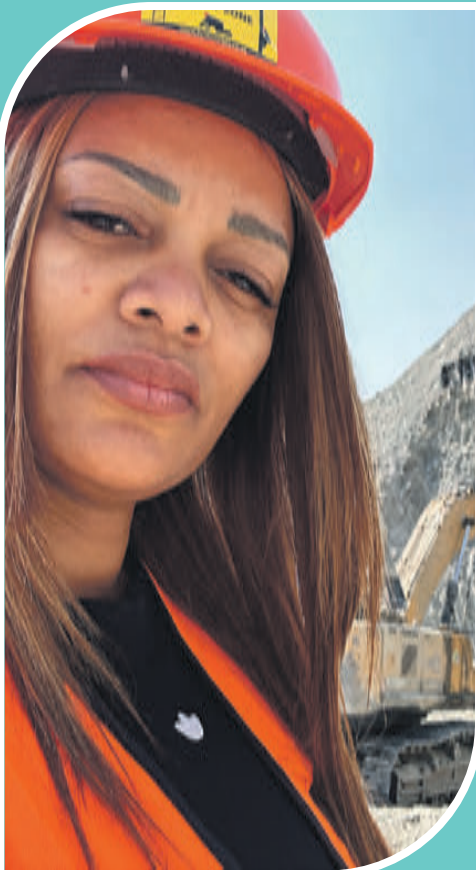
**Rumisha Chaithram**  
Vice president, Australia & Southern Africa, Robit

Rumisha Chaithram, a beacon of change in the mining industry, grew up in Lenasia South with dreams of becoming a teacher. However, life had other plans, leading her into the mining industry, a twist that became her true calling. Today, she serves as vice president for Australia & Southern Africa at Robit, driving strategy, market expansion, and operational excellence in one of the world's most complex and traditionally male-dominated sectors. Rumisha holds an MBA and a Programme for Management Development (PMD) from the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS). She oversees end-to-end mining operations, ensuring equipment efficiency, safety compliance, and profitability across multiple sites. Her leadership emphasizes operational excellence while mentoring emerging leaders, particularly women and youth, to thrive in the sector. She is also the author of *Women@Work: My Journey into a Macho World*, a candid account of her experiences navigating the mining industry as a woman. Rumisha is a staunch advocate for diversity, inclusion, and the empowerment of women in technical industries. Her proudest achievements include publishing her book and successfully leading large-scale mining operations while creating a platform for women in the industry. She lives by the mantra: "Fail, and fail forward — every failure is a stepping stone to progress," turning challenges into opportunities for growth and leadership.



**Namhla Ludidi**  
Director and commodities trader, Sulphur

Namhla Ludidi is a driven energy and metals commodities trader and director at Sulphur, a company operating within the construction and professional services sector. Currently completing her Bachelor of Economics at the University of South Africa, Namhla is building an impressive career in one of the most demanding and traditionally male-dominated industries — mining and commodities trading. Her role involves not only monitoring global markets for price fluctuations and identifying opportunities to buy and sell commodities such as coal, copper, chrome, and fuel, but also negotiating trade deals locally and internationally. This global perspective, combined with her expertise in trade negotiations, sets her apart in the industry. She works closely with shipping, transport, and insurance companies, ensuring seamless transactions while advising clients on market trends and investment opportunities. Namhla's journey began with the thrill of fast-paced trading, but she soon discovered that her true passion lies in the purpose behind it — fostering growth, building trust, and proving that women can excel in sectors once closed to them. Outside of work, she finds joy in painting, pottery, visiting art galleries, and hiking, often drawing inspiration from the intersection of creativity and nature. Her guiding philosophy: "Embrace mistakes and challenges as opportunities for growth. Take responsibility, stay kind, and pursue self-improvement — especially when fear tells you not to."



**Thabisile Phumo**  
Executive vice president: stakeholder relations and social sustainability for the Southern Africa region, Sibanye-Stillwater

Thabisile Phumo, a prominent figure in the mining industry, currently serves as the executive vice president: stakeholder relations and social sustainability for the Southern Africa region at Sibanye-Stillwater. She leads initiatives that transform communities, from building schools where children now play in thriving playgrounds to establishing clinics that bring healthcare to those who need it most. "The moments when you see real change happen — a school filled with laughter or a clinic saving lives — that's what drives me," she says. Thabisile's work spans stakeholder engagement, regulatory oversight, and strategic programme leadership, ensuring every project delivers lasting impact. Her approach combines strategic vision with human connection, forging partnerships with governments, communities, and collaborators to create shared value and enduring legacies that extend beyond the lifespan of the mines. Her passion for women's empowerment is evident in her leadership of the Inspired Women Network, her contributions to research, and her co-editing of *Strategic Communication: SA Perspectives*, which connects theory to practice. Her career milestones include the Alumni Dignitas Award from the University of Johannesburg and leadership in programmes supporting families affected by the Marikana Massacre. Grounded, empathetic, and fiercely driven, Thabisile believes in the power of purpose-led action. Her guiding principles — "Work hard and be gentle with yourself" and "Know when to get off the stage" — reflect a leader who shapes communities, inspires others, and leaves an indelible mark on South Africa.





# POLITICS & GOVERNANCE

## Prof Danielle Nel-Sanders Professor, public management and governance, School of Public Management, Governance and Public Policy, University of Johannesburg

Prof Danielle Nel-Sanders is a professor of public management and governance at the University of Johannesburg and holds a PhD in public management. She teaches, conducts research, and provides academic leadership in the School of Public Management, Governance and Public Policy. Her work focuses on public sector risk management, alternative service delivery, and sustainable development. Nel-Sanders is particularly passionate about mentoring master's, doctoral, and postdoctoral students, guiding them to develop research skills, confidence, and independent thinking.



She also serves as chief editor of *Administratio Publica*. She participates in professional bodies, including the Association of Southern African Schools and Departments of Public Administration and Management and the LGSeta Research Committee. Danielle's love for education began early, tutoring peers and supporting students at every level. She firmly believes that equipping future public servants with knowledge and critical thinking is central to societal transformation, a belief that underscores the importance of her work. "Being an academic is not just a job," she reflects, "it's an opportunity to shape decisions that impact society." Outside academia, Nel-Sanders enjoys mountain biking, hiking, rebounding, and gardening, which blend fitness and nature for a balanced approach. Her accolades include NRF Thuthuka and Emerging Researcher grants, international fellowships, and academic awards. Her guiding principle: "Take initiative wherever you are, and meaningful progress will follow."



## Lesego Louw Youth human rights associate, United Nations Human Rights Office - Southern Africa

Lesego Louw is a fierce African feminist activist and human rights champion from Galeshewe, Northern Cape. Raised by resilient women—her maternal grandmother, a dedicated domestic worker, and her entrepreneurial paternal grandmother — Lesego learned early the values of service, empowerment, and self-determination. She holds a Master's in Public Policy and Governance from the University of the Witwatersrand, which underpins her relentless advocacy for the rights of youth and women. Lesego's unwavering commitment to these causes is evident in her current role as Youth

Human Rights Associate at the United Nations Human Rights Office in Southern Africa. She leads the "Working With and For Youth in Vulnerable Situations" project, conducting training, building advocacy capacity, and partnering with civil society to support marginalised youth across South Africa, Namibia, and Botswana. She also contributed to the UN's publication on youth rights in South Africa and represents the UN in the Youth Theme Group. Her activism is rooted in justice and service, earning her the nickname, "Black Paragon of Excellence" from her community. Key achievements include co-founding the Period Poverty initiative, leading #DemocracyWeek for youth voter education, and serving as deputy president of the University of the Witwatersrand Student Representative Council (Wits SRC). The most valuable lesson Lesego has learned: "A dream delayed is not a dream denied." Her guiding advice: "Arrive as the version of yourself that has already conquered obstacles. Be humble before those you serve, not about your greatness."

## Philile Ntuli Commissioner, South African Human Rights Commission

Philile Ntuli is a committed human rights advocate, cultural preservationist, and social justice leader serving as a commissioner at the South African Human Rights Commission. She holds a Master of Social Science from the University of Pretoria and a certificate in African Political Economy from the Thabo Mbeki African Leadership Institute (UNISA) — academic foundations that reinforce her work in policy, advocacy, and transformative community engagement. Her days are guided by dialogue, investigation, and collaboration with communities, government, and civil society, turning lived experiences into practical policy recommendations.



Her work spans land and housing rights, food security, cultural preservation, and social cohesion — ensuring that marginalised voices are both heard and acted upon. Philile's commitment is deeply personal. Growing up on a farm during South Africa's transitional years, she witnessed inequality alongside the beauty of the land — shaping her conviction that justice and healing begin with dignity, culture, and belonging. She channels this through initiatives like the South African Water Justice Tracker, the Kwa-Ntu Heritage Sanctuary, and the Sisters' Keepers Football Club for young girls. A creative at heart, she expresses herself through clay sculpture and storytelling, honouring women's resilience and preserving cultural memory. Guided by collaboration and empathy, Philile believes lasting change begins with people.

## Refiloe Ntšekhe Member, Gauteng Provincial Legislature, DA

Refiloe Ntšekhe, a member of the Gauteng Provincial Legislature for the DA, is a dedicated champion for the vulnerable. Her role involves overseeing public institutions, proposing legislation, and holding executives accountable for their actions. With a Master's degree in Policy Development & Practice from the University of Cape Town, she is deeply committed to ethical leadership and good governance. Refiloe's work is not confined to a typical day; every day presents new challenges and opportunities to make a difference. Her greatest reward is the knowledge that she has helped someone

in need. Her work is driven by a belief in the transformative power of public office, challenging stereotypes about black leaders and demonstrating that it can be a space for integrity, service, and meaningful impact. Beyond politics, she enjoys travelling, playing tennis, and giving talks on human trafficking at high schools. She previously served as the DA's national spokesperson for nine years and has been elected to the party's provincial top 10 for three terms. Her proudest achievement is raising her three sons as a single mother and seeing them grow into men of honour. Reflecting on her journey, she believes, "When you find a job that feels like a calling, you are never just working — you are answering the call." For Refiloe, leaving high-paying corporate roles to serve her community has been the most fulfilling choice of her life.



## Zukiswa Mqolomba Deputy chairperson and national commissioner, Public Service Commission

Growing up in King William's Town, Eastern Cape, Zukiswa Mqolomba dreamed of becoming a medical doctor, inspired by her grandmother, a nurse. In matric, however, she discovered a fascination with social sciences and realised her true calling: serving society. She holds multiple master's degrees from the University of Sussex and the University of Cape Town. She is currently pursuing a PhD in Sociology and Development, equipping her to understand and strengthen South Africa's public sector. As deputy chairperson and national commissioner of the Public Service Commission, Zukiswa

champions ethical governance, accountability, and constitutional values. She engages directly with government leaders, oversees service delivery, and mentors emerging public servants, ensuring that people — especially those who are marginalised — remain at the centre of public service. Every day involves oversight, leadership, and capacity-building, and what she enjoys most is witnessing tangible change: a professional, ethical, and responsive public sector that shapes lives. Zukiswa draws inspiration from the principle of "Batho Pele" — People First. She has designed fellowship programmes for emerging leaders, trained public servants across Africa, and created thought leadership platforms that redefine service excellence. Her guiding lessons are clear: meaningful change is never easy, but perseverance, resilience, and vision make it possible. She lives by the advice: "God does not call the qualified, He qualifies the called," and "We are the ones we have been waiting for."





**Boitumelo Sehlapelo**  
**Immediate Supervisor,**  
**Records and Archives**  
**Clerk, Polokwane Local**  
**Municipality | Youth and**  
**Gender activist**

A passionate advocate for transformation and youth empowerment, Boitumelo Sehlapelo blends public service with purposeful activism. Holding an LLB from the University of South Africa and a Higher Certificate in Records and Archives Management, she currently serves as a Records and Archives Clerk at the Polokwane Local Municipality, where she oversees the classification of government gazettes and official records while supporting administrative and performance functions within her department. Boitumelo is also part of the ANC Peter Mokaba Regional Executive Committee, where she continues to champion youth inclusion, gender equality, and social justice. Her leadership journey began as a student activist in SASCO, ANCYL, SAYC, BLASC, and SAWLASC, where she advocated for access to education, youth employment, and transformation in the legal profession. Through these platforms, she learned to pair compassion with action — from fundraising for student initiatives to leading legal aware-

ness campaigns on gender-based violence and discrimination. Proud of her academic achievements and community work — including school uniform drives for underprivileged learners — Boitumelo remains deeply committed to service and progress. Her guiding belief: “Every chance we have to transform others positively, we must do it with love and commitment.”

**Chrissy Kwanele Dube**  
**Chief stakeholders,**  
**projects and advocacy**  
**officer, Good**  
**Governance Africa.**

Chrissy Kwanele Dube serves as the chief stakeholders, projects, and advocacy officer at Good Governance Africa’s Southern Africa Regional Office. She advocates for the interconnectedness of organisations in promoting sustainable governance. In her role, she leads stakeholder relations and strategic partnerships and is responsible for designing, delivering, and monitoring governance-focused initiatives. Her duties include mapping stakeholder priorities, organising meetings and roundtables with government officials, the private sector, and civil society, negotiating partnership agreements, supervising project teams, reviewing Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) reports, and translating research into actionable recommendations for decision-makers. Driven by her passion for stakeholder engagement, Chrissy builds trust and creates environments where leaders can use evidence to make informed, impactful decisions. She firmly believes that no organisation — public or private — operates in isolation, and that effective stakeholder management is critical for achieving lasting results. Chrissy holds a Master of Commerce from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, along with certifications in advanced risk management, ethics, project management, and data analysis. With her extensive experience and educational qualifications, she is well-equipped to navigate complex governance challenges. Outside of her professional life, Chrissy is a mother of two who enjoys hiking, golf, and music. Guided by Aristotle’s principle—“We are what we repeatedly do; therefore, excellence is not an act, but a habit”—she strives every day to be the kind of leader she would want to have, inspiring and empowering those around her and empowering those around her.



# UNIQ BROWS

## Empowering Entrepreneurs - Unaiza Suliman Shares Her Top Tips for Startups and SMMEs

By Mail & Guardian Contributor

In a time when entrepreneurship is more than just a buzzword—it’s a necessity—Unaiza Suliman stands out as a voice of experience, resilience, and insight. As a successful businesswoman, motivational figure, and founder of multiple ventures including a rapidly growing beauty product line, Suliman has become a beacon of inspiration for small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs) across South Africa and beyond.

Speaking exclusively to Mail & Guardian, Suliman shares powerful, practical tips for entrepreneurs looking to build sustainable businesses, while navigating the evolving economic landscape.

### 1. Understand Your Business Inside and Out

According to Suliman, too many entrepreneurs start with excitement but not enough depth.

“You can’t build something you don’t understand. Take the time to research your industry, understand your competitors, and know your numbers. You should be so familiar with your offering that you can pitch it in 30 seconds or spend 3 hours explaining it.”

She stresses that successful businesses begin with clarity of purpose. That means identifying what problem you’re solving, who your ideal customer is, and what sets you apart from everyone else.

### 2. Your Brand Is Everything

Unaiza is known for her sharp personal branding evident in her own image, digital presence, and growing beauty empire.

“People don’t just buy products; they buy stories, values, and experiences,” she says. “Your branding should reflect who you are and what you stand for. Invest in your visual identity, tone of voice, and social media presence those are often your first impression.”

She believes branding doesn’t have to break the bank but does need to be consistent. Whether it’s packaging, email communication, or how you respond to DMs every touchpoint tells your customer something about your business.

### 3. Networking is Currency

One of Suliman’s strongest pieces of advice is to stop building businesses in isolation.

“Your network is your net worth. Attend events, collaborate with others, and ask for help when needed. The right conversation can open doors that no amount of advertising can.”

She encourages entrepreneurs to be strategic about who they connect with, suggesting they seek out mentors, industry peers, and potential clients and always follow up. “Relationships lead to opportunities. Keep showing up.”

### 4. Target Market? Know Them Like You Know Yourself

Suliman emphasizes that understanding your audience is the difference between success and struggle.

“If you’re trying to speak to everyone, you’re speaking to no one,” she says. “You have to know exactly who you’re targeting age, lifestyle, income, habits. Once you do, you can market more effectively, design better products, and price yourself appropriately.”

She suggests conducting regular market research, engaging with your audience through social media, and adjusting your offering based on feedback.

### 5. Start Small, But Think Big

Entrepreneurs often get stuck trying to launch perfectly. Suliman believes in progress over perfection.

“Don’t wait for the perfect time or the perfect product. Start where you are, with what you have. Learn, adapt, and keep going. What matters most is momentum.”

She highlights that even micro-businesses, when built on strong values and smart strategy, can evolve into major brands over time.

Unaiza Suliman’s rise in the entrepreneurial space is no accident. It’s the result of deep knowledge, relentless execution, and a strong belief in empowering others.

Her message to startups and SMMEs is clear: Know your worth, know your work, and never underestimate the power of a strong network and brand. With the right foundation and mindset, even the smallest idea can become a movement.





# UJ STEM leaders driving societal impact through research and innovation



Despite women representing only 30% of researchers worldwide, the University of Johannesburg (UJ) is challenging global patterns and redefining the narrative of African excellence in science and innovation. Eighty-two of its scientists feature among the world's top 2% in the latest Stanford/Elsevier report, affirming that African universities are not merely participating in knowledge creation but are shaping it.

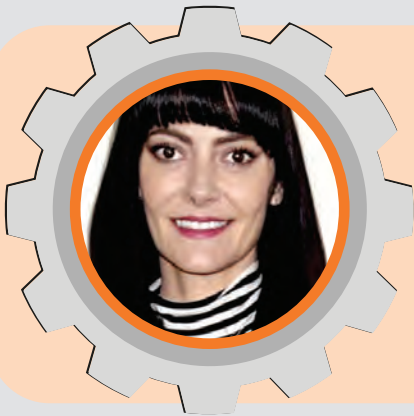
This recognition is more than a ranking. It reflects UJ's long-term commitment to inclusive excellence, strategic investment in world-class infrastructure, and empowerment of scholars whose work delivers tangible societal impact. At the heart of this achievement are remarkable women in STEM whose research is transforming industries, solving urgent societal challenges,

and inspiring the next generation of scientists.

UJ Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Letlhokwa George Mpedi, reflects on this milestone with pride.

"It is a matter of immense pride that 82 of our researchers have been recognised among the world's top 2% scientists. This acknowledgement reflects our academic strength and our commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Our scholars are producing research with real-world impact, both locally and globally."

At UJ, research is not confined to laboratories or lecture halls. It is a catalyst for sustainability, economic growth, and innovation. Among the global achievers are eight women who are redefining STEM education and research.



**Professor Heidi Abrahamse**

Director of the Laser Research Centre and SARCHI Chair, is an NRF A-rated scientist and a pioneer in photobiomodulation whose medical innovations are transforming health-care worldwide.



**Professor Nickey Janse van Rensburg**

Head of UJ PEETS, advances clean technologies through academia-industry collaborations that drive sustainable solutions.

**Professor Philiswa Nomngongo**

SARCHI Chair in Nanotechnology for Water, is internationally recognised for her research on nanotechnology-based water purification, providing communities with safe, affordable water.



**Professor Thandiwe Sithole**

Vice Dean of Chemical Engineering Technology, champions the circular economy by converting industrial waste into usable resources while mentoring young female engineers into leadership roles.



**Professor Stella Bvuma**

Director of the School of Consumer Intelligence and Information Systems, focuses on digital inclusivity and cybersecurity, ensuring technology empowers rather than divides.



**Professor Thea de Wet**

Leading special projects in academic development, has been a pioneer in digital learning innovation, expanding access and impact for more than two decades

**Professor Suné von Solms**

Head of Electrical and Electronic Engineering Science, integrates cutting-edge systems engineering with people-centred education and is celebrated for her teaching excellence.



**Professor Mahloro Hope Serepa-Dlamini**

Head of Biotechnology and Food Technology, is unlocking the potential of indigenous plants through genomics, producing breakthroughs in pharmaceuticals and food innovation.



Recognition as a research-intensive institution is the outcome of deliberate vision and strategy. By attracting leading scholars, fostering collaboration, and investing in world-class infrastructure, UJ is driving breakthroughs in health, climate change, digital innovation, and sustainability. These advances are not incidental as they reflect UJ's Strategic Plan 2035, which positions UJ as a global hub for knowledge creation and societal transformation.

For Prof Mpedi, the value of research lies not only in the discoveries themselves but in the people who are empowered to make them.

Diversity, he stresses, is not a luxury but rather it is essential for developing inclusive solutions to the world's most complex challenges. This principle is embedded in UJ's approach, where research is more than an academic pursuit as it is a commitment to society.

From laser therapies and nanotechnology to clean tech, genomics, digital inclusion, and waste valorisation, UJ scholars are redefining what it means to be a research-intensive African university. Their work is shaping industries, improving lives, and positioning the institution at the forefront of global change.





**Avuzwa Ntshongwana**  
**Project manager, DLA/Fak’ugesi,**  
**Tshimologong Innovation Hub | Game**  
**developer, South Game Studio**

Avuzwa Ntshongwana, a project manager at DLA/Fak’ugesi - Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct and a game developer at South Game Studio, is not just a tech professional but also a passionate mentor. Her dual role involves a combination of creativity and strategy, as she designs socially impactful games while championing Pan-African animation, gaming, and XR talent on global platforms. Her tech journey was shaped by resilience. After being retrenched from a call centre

job, she pursued her passion for coffee and launched Azanian Beans, a proudly African brand. When the pandemic forced her business to close, Avuzwa pivoted, teaching herself to code through online courses. A Google Africa Android development programme and her first game jam win at Fak’ugesi became the spark that launched her career in game development. Today, her studio develops innovative projects, including a menstrual cycle game that addresses period poverty. She co-created Sizwe Iqhawekazi LakwaZulu, which won first place at the Games for Change Africa design sprint and third place at the Fak’ugesi Game Hackathon. Avuzwa’s commitment to mentorship is evident in her efforts to empower young people to embrace tech careers and explore new possibilities. Reflecting on her journey, she says: “I’ve learned that when you’re afraid to take the next step, that’s exactly when you should. No matter how uncertain the path feels — keep moving forward.”

**Dr Bonita de Swardt**  
**Programme manager: strategic partnerships**  
**for human capital development, National**  
**Research Foundation’s (NRF) South African Radio**  
**Astronomy Observatory (SARAO)**

Dr Bonita de Swardt holds a PhD in Astronomy from the University of Cape Town. She is the programme manager for strategic partnerships at the National Research Foundation’s South African Radio Astronomy Observatory (SARAO), where she plays a key role in designing and implementing initiatives to develop scientific talent across Africa. Her work involves mentoring students — particularly young women in STEM — overseeing programmes, collaborating with scientists on training events, and drafting proposals for innovative initiatives.

Dr Bonita’s favourite part of the job is seeing students grow, succeed, and return as mentors, contributing to the next generation of scientific leaders. Her passion for human capital development grew from her academic and research journey. After completing her postdoctoral fellowship at the South African Astronomical Observatory and coordinating the National Astrophysics and Space Science Programme, she realised she could make a broader impact by building capacity rather than pursuing purely academic research. Her programmes promote inclusivity, focusing on women and students from historically disadvantaged institutions. Dr Bonita is particularly proud of initiatives such as the Big Data Africa Programme, which has trained over 550 students in AI and data science, with 60% female participation, as well as the Open Data for Social Impact Challenge and SARAO’s Graduate Programme. The most valuable lesson she has learned is reflected in a mentor’s advice: “Focus on planting seeds, not just picking fruit.” This philosophy guides her commitment to fostering a thriving, inclusive scientific workforce across Africa.



**Dr Charlotte Maserumule**  
**Senior Manager: Biotech Innovation and**  
**Commercialisation, Market Access Africa**

Driven by purpose and powered by science, Dr Charlotte Maserumule is shaping the future of Africa’s health innovation landscape. With a PhD in Medicine from the University of Cambridge, she leads biotech innovation and commercialisation at Market Access Africa, where she develops strategies that accelerate the uptake of diagnostics, vaccines, and other health technologies across the continent. Her work sits at the intersection of science, innovation, and impact — guiding the translation of cutting-edge research into life-saving



products. Previously, chief scientist at Mintek’s Health Platform and Nanotechnology Innovation Centre, Charlotte has contributed to the development of pioneering diagnostic tools, patented technologies, and market-ready products now under review by the WHO for prequalification. Recognised among Africa’s top scientific minds, she has received numerous honours, including the South African Women in Science Distinguished Young Woman Researcher Award (2024) and the 2025 Sowetan SMag Woman of the Year in Health and Education title. These recognitions and awards are a testament to her exceptional contributions to the field. Beyond her technical achievements, Dr Charlotte is a passionate mentor, empowering young African innovators to develop sustainable and inclusive health solutions. For her, science is personal — shaped by early loss and a lifelong curiosity about how disease can be defeated. “Purpose and impact often emerge from pain,” she reflects. “Resilience, compassion, and curiosity — that’s where real innovation begins.”



**Dr Dephney Mathebula-Periola**  
**Professor of Mathematics: Department of**  
**Computational Sciences in the Pure and Applied**  
**Mathematics Discipline, University of Fort Hare**

Dr Dephney Mathebula-Periola, a professor in the Department of Computational Sciences, Pure and Applied Mathematics Discipline, at the University of Fort Hare, is a beacon of academic success. She holds a PhD in Mathematics from the University of Venda, becoming the first South African to achieve this milestone. Her work spans teaching undergraduate and post-graduate modules, conducting research in DHET-accredited journals, supervising doctoral students and postdoctoral fellows, and providing academic leadership and mentorship. She is deeply passionate about nurturing young

talent in STEM, both inside and beyond the classroom. A typical day for her is a delicate balance of lectures, research collaborations, and mentorship. Yet, she finds her greatest joy in witnessing her students’ “lightbulb moments” — when complex problems suddenly click. These moments, she says, are the most exciting and fulfilling part of her work. They reflect her lifelong love for mathematics, inspired by her sister Conny Mabunda, whose joy in problem-solving sparked Dr Dephney’s passion. Beyond academia, she celebrates student and mentee achievements on social media, coining the term, “Celebration waya waya” to highlight growth and success. Her accolades include membership in the Institute of Mathematics and its Applications (IMA) and being named one of the Top 100 Career Women in Africa. Her guiding principle is integrity and perseverance: “Be honest with yourself and those around you, treat setbacks as motivation, and invite God into every journey of your life.” She encourages aspiring professionals to seek mentors who inspire and support their path.

**Eulenda Hlongwane**  
**Director and chairperson, Mwanda**  
**Foundation**

Eulenda Hlongwane, the director and chairperson of the Mwanda Foundation, is deeply committed to her cause. She holds an MBA from Mancosa, which underpins her strategic leadership and vision for impactful initiatives. On a typical day, Eulenda provides direction and guidance across governance, compliance, stakeholder engagement, and team mentorship. She also coaches young minds in robotics and coding, blending innovation with hands-on teaching to equip youth with critical digital skills. Her signature project, the Fayando Robotics



and Coding Programme, is a testament to her dedication, fostering creativity, problem-solving, and confidence in learners from under-resourced communities. Her journey from a seven-year career as a medical technologist to IT and community development was inspired by her own experiences growing up with limited access to opportunities. She witnessed how barriers can stifle potential and has dedicated her career to opening doors for others. Beyond her professional life, she values lifelong learning, collaboration, and aligning with people who share her vision. Her proudest achievements are the lives she has impacted and the programs she has nurtured from inception. Her guiding principle: “Education is the best inheritance you can ever have. No one can take it away.”

**Jeanine Jackson**  
**Head of Business Development,**  
**Sparki Solar**

Jeanine Jackson leads business development operations across South Africa at Sparki Solar, driving the company’s growth and managing commercial and industrial solar projects from concept to commissioning. Her work spans project oversight, relationship-building with financial institutions, leading bids and tenders, shaping marketing strategies, and representing the company at key industry events. She ensures projects run efficiently, on time, and within budget, delivering tailored energy solutions that meet clients’ needs. Jeanine’s path

into renewable energy began during the Covid-19 pandemic, when she transitioned from talent management to a Solar Advisor role — a move that ignited her passion for sustainable innovation. Despite the challenges, she quickly rose through the ranks, leading projects ranging from 30kW to 1MW and helping establish a solar business in Kenya, where she managed a diverse international team. Her expertise later inspired her to launch a solar compliance business, assisting clients to ensure safe and legally compliant installations. Beyond solar, Jeanine is also a professional makeup artist, empowering women to embrace confidence and authenticity through self-expression. Her guiding principles are resilience, trust, and authenticity, and her best advice — “sometimes the greatest growth happens when you step outside familiar environments” — reflects her fearless approach to leadership and life.





# 2024/25 PRASA Group Performance: A Defining Year of Growth, Improvements and Turn Around.

The Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA) has released its 2024/25 Group Annual Report, and proudly announced that the organisation has achieved an overall performance level of 93%, up from 87% from the previous year. This is the highest in more than a decade and marks an upward trajectory in performance in three consecutive years against its Annual Performance Plan (APP).

In another historic milestone, PRASA has received an Unqualified Audit Opinion from the Auditor-General for the first time in 9 (nine) years. This achievement follows years of adverse findings - four years of Disclaimer opinions (2019-2022) and two years of Qualified opinions (2023-2024).

Overall, these achievements not only improve on the preceding financial year but also continue the upward trajectory established since 2021/22, signalling that PRASA's recovery and rebuild programme is delivering tangible results for commuters and the economy.

As a part of its strategy to stabilize its leadership PRASA welcomed two new executives - Ms. Nwabisa Gqamane-Ntiyane, who leads our Rail division, the heart of PRASA's operations and Mr. Themba Mosia, who heads the Group Capital division. PRASA also welcomed the appointment of Ms. Annette Lindeque as the CEO of our newly formed subsidiary, Intersite Asset Investments. Ms. Lindeque, who had been at PRASA for many years, served as the Acting CEO for the Corporate Real Estate Solutions (CRES) division.

These executive appointments demonstrate PRASA's commitment to women empowerment, showing a 66% women representation in the recent executive appointments.

At PRASA currently, women constitute **38.53%** of the total workforce, with management sitting at a 41.14% women representation. Although small, these numbers reflect growth in what was a previously male-dominated industry.

Looking at PRASA's performance and its growth in women representation across all operations, this depicts an exciting future for women in rail.

**"Our overall performance is aligned with our key strategic focus to deliver an excellent passenger service, grow gross commercial revenue, modernise operational assets, and expand the business by exploring other business opportunities."**

## Key Performance Highlights Contributing to the 93% Annual Performance Achievement:



Isitimela Sabantu, the People's Train, moving sports spectators from Durban Station to Moses Mabhida Stadium for the Nedbank Cup Final.



Department of Transport Deputy Minister, Hon. Mkhuleko Hlengwa with newly appointed PRASA Rail CEO, Ms. Nwabisa Gqamane-Ntiyane

**New lines:** 35 of the 40 service lines/corridors recovered and restored, to date since 2021/22 FY. 6 (six) lines recovered in the period under review

**Modernised fleet:** 268 EMUs accepted cumulatively under the fleet renewal and modernisation programme (60 in 2024/25).

**Point of entry/Access:** 46 stations revitalised, surpassing the target of 40, bringing the total of recovered and operational stations to 313 out of 468 commuter stations.

**Frequent Services:** New signalling infrastructure commissioned on three priority lines in KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape, improving train frequencies and headways between trains to deliver reliable and **efficient** services.

**Signalling Commissioned lines include:**

- Langa - Nyanga, and Nyanga - Sarepta (Western Cape)
- Durban - Merebank (KwaZulu-Natal).
- Cape Town to Simonstown (Completed in 2023/24 FY)
- Pretoria to Mabopane (Completed in 2023/24 FY)

## PRASA Rail Division: Delivering on our mandate, driven by commitment

**The PRASA Rail Division is the heart/cornerstone of our operations and the reason why we exist - to move people, efficiently and affordably.**

PRASA announced that the commuter service exceeded expectations, recording 77 million passenger/commuter trips against a target of 64 million. These commuter trips constitute a total of 208,000 train trips were scheduled to run on all 35 open corridors. The organization was proud to announce that with the 208 000

scheduled train trips, it achieved a 91% on-time performance outcome whilst managing to limit cancellations to just 3%. Understanding the pivotal role that rail plays in ensuring that people reach their various regions of economic activity, these achievements again highlight the importance of the completion of the recovery of rail as commenced in 2021.

By the end of March 2025, PRASA had received a total of 268 new trains, with 60 trains delivered in the 2024/25 financial year and over 70% of these deployed in the regions. The new, Isitimela Sabantu is PRASA's ultimate pride, not only does it boast features for enhanced comfort and safety, it is also locally produced in Dunnottar, Nigel. Through the consortium Gibela, which is contracted for the roll out of PRASA's fleet renewal programme, thousands of jobs, job opportunities and entrepreneurial opportunities have been created in Ekurhuleni for women and youth.

**PRASA's Commitment to Safety and Security**

PRASA announced that it recorded 259 safety occurrences, far below the target of 372, translating to 0.34 incidents per 100,000 passenger trips compared to the 0.58 threshold. Their security-related incidents also declined, with 929 cases reported, well under the limit of 1,450. The modern Isitimela Sabantu, has significantly elevated the commuter experience, while visible onboard security continues to boost commuter safety.

## Group Capital Programme: Driving Jobs and Economic Impact

**21 billion in capital investments, resulting in over 84 000 jobs created and job opportunities, contributing towards economic stimulation.**

PRASA was pleased to announce that they have successfully spent on their full capital allocation, breaking away from a history of underspending and slow project execution.

PRASA's capital spending for the period under review is at R21 billion, exceeding the annual budget allocation of R11.6 billion by R9 billion.

Not only did their capital investment help accelerate their recovery and modernisation programme, but also created and sustained 12,988 direct jobs. More importantly, this investment induced 71,730 additional job opportunities across the economy, bringing the total job impact to 84,718 jobs created and job opportunities during the year, contribut-



PRASA Women staff members commemorating Heritage Day (23 September 2025)

ing towards economic stimulation.

## Commercial Revenue Growth

**Our Rail + Property Strategy is the cornerstone of our diversified revenue for long-term financial sustainability, expected to grow revenue from our property portfolio to R2,5 billion.**

PRASA's diversified revenue streams and commercialisation drive, now positioned in their subsidiary, Intersite Asset Investments (from 1 April 2025), is central to delivering long-term financial sustainability through their property portfolio under the secondary mandate.

The Rail and Property strategy aims to grow revenue to R2.5 billion by 2035, anchored in property development, co-investments, lease buybacks, station precinct modernisation, fibre commercialisation, and commercial projects. In 2024/25, commercial income reached R708 million, surpassing the budget of R675 million by 5%. Flagship achievements include the Cape Town Station Mixed-Use Development, The Lab on Park Student Accommodation in Braamfontein, Goodwood Social Housing in Cape Town, Dieprivier affordable housing.

PRASA's Transit Oriented Development approach to property developments with their partners will continue to be a significant driver of growth and future revenues.

## Audit Findings

PRASA has achieved a significant governance milestone, receiving an unqualified audit opinion for the first time in nine years. This outcome reflects the organisation's progress in strengthening financial management, governance and accountability, while improving on consequence management to improve our audit outcomes.

PRASA is now focused on closing remaining audit findings, strengthening supply chain controls, and fully embedding consequence management systems to ensure sustainable governance standards

that stand the test of time. Collectively, these measures demonstrate PRASA's determined trajectory of reform and commitment to restoring trust and delivering on its mandate.

The PRASA Board of Control welcomed the performance report and the Unqualified Audit Opinion. "These milestone reflect visible year-on-year improvements over the last three financial years, stronger consequence management, and the oversight role we played diligently in line with our fiduciary duties", said Board Chairperson, Nosizwe Nokwe-Macamo.

"Achieving 93% performance is not just a number, nor a small feat. It is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our employees across every region and division. It reflects the discipline, resilience, and teamwork that have gone into turning the tide at PRASA", said Group CEO Hishaam Emeran.

**Looking Ahead**

PRASA is entering the next phase of its turnaround journey with a renewed focus on optimising services to enhance the commuter experience.

Over the coming years, the agency will prioritise expanding train services to improve access, continue upgrading track quality to enable faster journeys, and installing modern signalling systems to cut waiting times from an hour to as little as 10 minutes on high-demand corridors.

The reopening of remaining metro stations, the introduction of modernised ticketing solutions such as tap-and-go payments, and the continued growth of the EMU fleet, including the much-anticipated milestone delivery of Train 300, marking the halfway point of the 600-train target by 2035, will further expand our services, improve convenience, and strengthen PRASA's commitment to safe, reliable, and accessible rail transport for all South Africans.

"This has been a defining year for PRASA. We did not just deliver on our promises, we exceeded them," concluded Emeran.



**prasa**

PASSENGER RAIL AGENCY OF SOUTH AFRICA



# PRASA's Annual Performance AT A GLANCE



## 77 MILLION

Successfully delivered passenger trips during the year, a **significant increase from 39.4 million** in the 2023/24 financial year



## 93%

Performance achieved against the Annual Performance Plan (APP), which is the strongest result in over a decade



PRASA's operating context showed disciplined execution, with

## 35 of 40 service lines restored



Commercial income exceeded its target of R675 million, generating

## R707.82 million in revenue



PRASA received an **unqualified audit opinion** from the Auditor-General, demonstrating a stronger governance foundation and improved audit outcomes



## 84,718 jobs

were created through R21.1 billion capital spending. Of the direct jobs, 67% were male, 33% were female, 47% were youth, and 2% were PLD



## 60 new EMU trains were delivered,

surpassing the annual target of 41. The cumulative total of new trains received since the start of the modernisation programme is

## 268



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OF SOUTH AFRICA

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**Keolebogile Motaung**  
**Founder and chief executive, Global Health Biotech | Research chair in Entrepreneurship and Financial Inclusion, Nelson Mandela University**

**K**eolebogile Motaung holds a Doctor Technologiae (DTech) in Biomedical Technology from Tshwane University of Technology, in collaboration with the University of California, Davis, USA. She is a professor and the research chair in Entrepreneurship and Financial Inclusion at Nelson Mandela University. Prof Keo balances academic leadership with entrepreneurial innovation. At the university, she mentors students, fosters interdisciplinary collaborations, and ensures that research has a tangible impact in the real world, often supporting projects that evolve into start-ups and spin-offs. As chief executive and founder of Global Health

Biotech, she develops plant-based medicinal technologies for musculoskeletal health, including the La-Africa Soother anti-inflammatory ointment, overseeing research, regulatory processes, and commercialisation. Her work is deeply personal. Witnessing her mother's struggle with osteoarthritis and observing traditional medicinal plants heal a fractured arm inspired her to bridge indigenous knowledge with modern science. She is particularly passionate about empowering women in STEAMI fields, a cause that she champions with unwavering dedication. She finds balance in gardening and connecting with the natural world. Her achievements include Erasmus+ KA171 grant funding, the Chancellor's Award for Impactful Collaborative Entrepreneurial Project, TIA funding for tissue engineering research, the Shining Light Award for Science and Technology, IPM Business Leader of the Year, and multiple patents. Her guiding lesson: perseverance, curiosity, and collaboration create meaningful impact, with the best advice being to focus on effects rather than recognition.

**Kgopotso Pearl Sekwati**  
**Founder and managing director, STEAM Ambassadors Hub**

**K**gopotso Pearl Sekwati, the founder and managing director of STEAM Ambassadors Hub, is deeply committed to community development. She champions STEAM (science, technology, engineering, aviation, and mathematics) education for youth, women, and people with disabilities in rural communities. She holds a National Diploma in Analytical Chemistry from the Tshwane University of Technology, complemented by certificates in Digital Literacy from DigifyAfrica and Environmental Management from the University of South Africa. A typical day for Kgopotso begins with facilitating digital literacy training for learners and elders until midday. She then collects



children from schools for her after-school program, where she assists with homework, teaches digital skills, and hosts tech camps during school holidays. She also equips youth and women with skills such as upcycling, recycling, entrepreneurship, and social media management. Inspired by her own children and the community's youth, Kgopotso established the STEAM Ambassadors Hub to ensure children gain exposure, hope, and the tools to become key contributors to the economy. She describes herself as action-oriented and values learning from others through travel and experiences. Her proudest achievements include publishing "Kick Start Your Future" and "#CodingWithKganya," as well as receiving multiple accolades, such as the Climate Media Award, Activate Active Citizen Award, NYDA Trailblazer, Sunday World Unsung Heroes, Top 100 Young Mandela, and Sita GovTech Digital Women. The most valuable lesson she has learned is that self-development is key, and the advice that guides her: "Work until your impact introduces you."

**Kolisa Yola Sinyanya**  
**Founder and director of Ulwazi Scientific Communications and STEM Research (Pty) Ltd,**

**K**olisa Yola Sinyanya holds a PhD in Ocean Biogeochemistry from the University of Cape Town. She is the founder and director of Ulwazi Scientific Communications and STEM Research (Pty) Ltd, where she works as an ocean biogeochemist, science communicator, and policy advisor. At Ulwazi, Kolisa leads a consultancy that supports researchers, institutions, and policymakers in research development, proposal writing, scientific storytelling, and evidence-based decision-making. A typical day may involve

reviewing a PhD thesis, consulting on a national blue economy policy, or delivering a webinar on science communication. She enjoys the diversity of her work, which allows her to be a scientist, communicator, entrepreneur, and changemaker all at once. Her inspiration comes from a deep curiosity about the ocean and the absence of African voices in global science. She founded Ulwazi to make research usable, visible, and impactful while empowering African researchers, students, and communities. Kolisa is also a spiritual healer (sangoma), a storyteller, a mentor, and a fashion designer. She created her clothing brand, M'Afrika by Kolisa, celebrating African heritage through style. Her achievements include being a Top 5 Finalist for the Springer Nature 2025 Inspiring Women in Science Award, receiving the SAIMI Imbokodo Maritime Pioneer in Research & Innovation Award, and being named STEM Voice of the Year by Quote This Woman+. Her guiding lesson: "You don't need to wait for permission to do what you were born to do."

**Leonora Tima**  
**Managing director, Gender Rights in Tech**

**L**eonora Tima, the managing director of Gender Rights in Tech (GRIT), is a pioneer in her field. Her role spans fundraising, strategic partnerships, governance, and overseeing operations, including managing a WhatsApp survivor support line and exploring strategic litigation to influence policy. She leads co-creation initiatives, ensuring that the voices of youth and survivors are central to technological solutions. Leonora's journey into advocacy and tech was deeply personal. Witnessing systemic failures following the GBV-related death of a young



woman in her community inspired her to act. She founded the GRIT app to provide access to justice, support, and empowerment for survivors, bridging gaps in the legal and tech ecosystems. Despite not completing traditional university pathways, Leonora pursued informal learning, the Mozilla Ethical AI Fellowship, and self-directed study in technology and gender rights. Her lived experience, emotional intelligence, and strategic insight have become her most significant assets, enabling her to shape innovative, community-centered solutions. Her accolades include the Africa Tech Festival AIConics Award, FNB App of the Year finalist, and recognition by the Paris Peace Forum and UNDP AI Trust & Safety Lab. Guided by the principle "shut up and listen," she leads by centering those most affected, creating solutions rooted in empathy, inclusion, and real-world impact.

**Stella Bvuma**  
**Director: The School of Consumer Intelligence and Information Systems, University of Johannesburg**

**S**tella Bvuma, a champion of equal access, holds a PhD in Information Technology and is the director of the School of Consumer Intelligence and Information Systems at the University of Johannesburg. She leads five departments spanning Applied Information Systems, Data Science, Knowledge Management, Technopreneurship, and Marketing Management, blending academic leadership, teaching, mentoring, and innovation. Stella co-founded the Technopreneurship Centre to empower

young women from rural areas, small businesses, and underrepresented communities, providing platforms such as South Africa's pioneering hackathons, where participants build sustainable businesses. Her belief that access to technology should never be limited by geography, gender, or social background is a testament to her commitment to inclusivity. Growing up in a rural area, Stella understands the importance of representation and intentionally mentors students and staff to strive for excellence. Her proudest achievements include winning the South African Women in Technology Award, the International Women in Higher Education Award, multiple mentorship recognitions, and being named among the 100 Most Influential Women in IT. The most valuable lesson she has learned is to "serve as if today is your last day," and the advice that guides her is: "Never forget where you come from, and use your success as a ladder for others to climb."

**Xolelwa Zulu-Magwenyane**  
**Chief executive, Female Academic Leaders Fellowship NPC**

**X**olelwa Zulu-Magwenyane is the chief executive of the Female Academic Leaders Fellowship (FALF), where she provides strategic leadership that instills confidence, oversees programme implementation, and drives partnerships that support women in academia. She holds a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Chemistry from the University of KwaZulu-Natal and a Master of Science in Technology and Innovation Management from the University of Pretoria. In her role, Xolelwa manages stakeholder engagement, programme oversight, and strategic planning — from coordinating the selection and support of Chancellor's Fellows to maintaining strong relationships with universities, donors, and govern-



ment partners. She thrives on witnessing the tangible impact of FALF's work, where even small interventions spark transformation in the academic and personal journeys of women scholars. Her passion lies in advancing gender equity, excellence, and innovation across Africa's higher education landscape. Inspired by the brilliance of women in her family, her village of eSheshegu, and the continent's academic community, Xolelwa is committed to creating spaces where women can lead authentically and shape knowledge rooted in their lived realities. Before joining FALF, Xolelwa held senior roles in South Africa's science and innovation ecosystem, including at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA). A soccer enthusiast at heart, she believes that purpose-driven leadership, grounded in authenticity and service, is the most powerful force for change, encouraging others to believe in the transformative power of small interventions.



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# Tourism & Hospitality



**Bonolo Ntsime**  
Founder and managing director, iXplore Africa Travel & Tours (Pty) Ltd

With over 20 years of experience in the tourism and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) industry, Bonolo Ntsime is the founder and managing director of iXplore Africa Travel & Tours (Pty) Ltd, a Johannesburg-based Destination Management Company. Her business specializes in tailor-made travel itineraries, corporate and holiday packages, hotel bookings, and guided tours across Africa. Before establishing iXplore Africa, Bonolo held key positions at the CSIR International Convention Center, the Constitutional Court (ConHill), the South

African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA), and the Coca-Cola Dome, gaining extensive experience in hospitality and event management. An Honours graduate in Strategic Communications from the University of Johannesburg, with qualifications in Public Relations Management from both the Tshwane University of Technology and the University of Johannesburg, Bonolo's expertise combines business strategy, brand development, and client engagement. She is a board member of the Small Tourism Enterprise Association and proudly represents her company at leading global trade events, including Africa Travel Indaba, Meetings Africa, and World Travel Market. Bonolo's belief in resilience and gratitude is a guiding principle in her life and work, inspiring her to say, "Every experience, good or bad, serves a purpose. Focus on what you have—shifting your perspective brings peace, even in the most difficult times."

**Dr Lombuso Precious Shabalala**  
Tourism lecturer, Department of Applied Management, University of South Africa

Dr. Lombuso Precious Shabalala holds a PhD from the University of the Witwatersrand and serves as a tourism lecturer in the Department of Applied Management at the University of South Africa (UNISA). Since joining the institution in 2023, she has taught Cultural Tourism I & II, engaging a diverse group of students — from working professionals and parents to incarcerated learners — with an inclusive and empathetic approach to teaching. Her work blends teaching, research, community engagement, and mentorship,

with a focus on cultural and heritage tourism in communities near protected areas. Her research explores how heritage custodians and residents can benefit from tourism, bridging academic insight with real-world impact. Shabalala's career is shaped by her extensive experience in administration and the tourism industry, instilling confidence in her expertise. Her daughter, who fuels her drive for excellence, and the support of mentors and colleagues have also played a significant role in shaping her career. Beyond academia, she celebrates heritage through music, performing in choirs and as a soloist. She has participated in the New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP), represented South Africa internationally in Austria, and conducted community-based research in Bushbuckridge. Her guiding philosophy: lifelong learning, humility, faith, and integrity — always believe in your dreams.



**Lucinda Zinyemba**  
Founder, Lucy's Magique (Pty) Ltd

Growing up in Pretoria, Lucinda dreamed of becoming a veterinarian, drawn by her deep love for animals. While surgery was not her calling, her curiosity and creativity led her into business and hospitality, where she has forged a unique path as a mixologist and entrepreneur. As founder of Lucy's Magique, Lucinda champions Bantu Mixology, crafting heritage-inspired cocktails that celebrate Southern African culture while mentoring emerging talent through her B.L.A.A.K. initiative (Bold Legacy of Artistry, Authenticity, and Knowledge). Her days blend creativity,

strategy, and education—developing cocktails with indigenous botanicals, guiding SADC partners, mentoring bartenders, and participating in networking and cultural events. She finds inspiration in her family's resilient women and the power of hospitality to connect people and tell stories. Lucinda's accomplishments include winning awards at Patrón Perfectionists and Diageo World Class, judging the Monin Cup International, and features in Eat Out Guide and Glamour Magazine. Beyond work, she enjoys playing the piano as a creative and healing outlet. Her journey has taught her the value of lifelong learning and embracing challenges as opportunities for growth. Her guiding advice: create from the depths of your soul, connect with those who uplift your craft, and forge a legacy of impact, pride, and possibility—leaving a mark that inspires and empowers others.

**Lucky Malahlela**  
Founder and manager, Bahlalerwa Royal Guesthouse | Real estate agent, RE/MAX

From the tranquil village of Ga Masemola in Limpopo to managing a thriving guesthouse and making a name in real estate, Lucky Malahlela embodies resilience, faith, and entrepreneurial drive. A graduate with a Postgraduate Diploma in Accounting Sciences, Lucky's initial dream of becoming an accountant took a different turn when she discovered her passion for the hospitality industry. Her journey began with managing a guesthouse in Limpopo,

where she found her true calling: creating spaces that feel like home. Today, as the founder and manager of Bahlalerwa Royal Guesthouse, she blends precision and passion to deliver what she terms "unreasonable hospitality" — service that surpasses expectations. Her meticulous attention to detail, warmth, and unwavering commitment to excellence have not only won her guests' admiration but also led to repeat visits from travellers worldwide. When she's not welcoming guests, Lucky dons another hat as a real estate agent with RE/MAX, helping people find homes that inspire and comfort them. A proud mother of three, she gracefully balances business and family, always guided by her faith. "I firmly believe that things work out for the best," she says, instilling a sense of reassurance and optimism. "Hospitality isn't just about rooms — it's about heart, hope, and creating unforgettable experiences for others."



**Makhosi Msimango**  
Founder & chief executive, Ndzenza Tours & Safaris (Pty) LTD

Makhosi Msimango is a fearless entrepreneur and cultural ambassador, recognised for her innovative contributions to South Africa's tourism sector. She holds a Certificate in Tourism Guiding, reflecting her expertise and commitment to delivering authentic cultural experiences. As founder and chief executive of Ndzenza Tours & Safaris (Pty) Ltd, Makhosi blends business acumen with storytelling, creating immersive tours that celebrate Zulu heritage and local communities. Her days begin by checking the weather and exchange rates, fol-

lowed by strategy and team motivation sessions over coffee. She oversees client experiences, ensuring seamless and culturally rich tours, and mentors youth and women through personal development and tourism training programs. Her dedication to culture is exemplified by her exclusive rights to guide tourists through the Zulu Royal Palaces during the reign of King Goodwill Zwelithini kaBhekuzulu, providing authentic insights into tradition and heritage. Beyond tourism, she pursues thrilling hobbies, such as shark swimming off Umkhomaas Beach, reflecting her fearless approach to life and business. Makhosi's proudest achievements lie in empowering young people and women in rural and township communities, amplifying their voices in the tourism and entrepreneurship sectors. Guided by the philosophy of "making friends with your failures" and her mother's wisdom that life isn't always about oneself, she shows that resilience, service, and vision are at the heart of meaningful impact.

**Princess Pulane Vallery Shayi**  
Chief executive, Mashishimale Game Lodge | Co-founder of Kgoshigadi Mashishimale Shayi Foundation

Princess Pulane Vallery Shayi, a proud native of Mashishimale, once harboured a dream of becoming a pilot. Today, she has translated her love for travel and culture into her roles as the chief executive of Mashishimale Game Lodge and the co-founder of the Kgoshigadi Mashishimale Shayi Foundation. At the lodge, Pulane oversees daily operations, including guest experiences, staff management, financial performance, and innovation in accommodations, cultural experiences, and wildlife activities. She is energised by the opportunity to welcome visitors from around the world and see them connect

with the local environment and culture. Through her foundation, she is dedicated to driving youth empowerment, education, and cultural preservation, launching initiatives such as the Phalaborwa Career Expo 2025 and a Youth Learnership & Mentorship Programme. Pulane also serves as Secretary of the Ba-Phalaborwa Traditional Authorities, supporting governance and safeguarding heritage while addressing modern community needs. Inspired by her community and the legacy of Chief Mashishimale, her work merges heritage, tourism, and social impact. She is passionate about storytelling, sharing cultural history, and adapting global hospitality practices to create an authentic African experience. Her proudest achievements include empowering young people, preserving cultural traditions, and promoting economic development. The most valuable lessons she has learned are resilience, patience, and leading through service. Her guiding advice: "Never forget where you come from, because your roots will always guide your path."



**Wania Malik**  
Assistant general manager, City Lodge Hotels

Growing up in Johannesburg, Wania Malik once imagined herself as a lawyer or even a chef—careers that seemed worlds apart but shared a common thread: a passion for people. "Hospitality became the perfect platform," she says. "It allows me to advocate for people while creating memorable experiences." She holds a Master's degree in Tourism & Hospitality Management from the University of Johannesburg. Wania is assistant general manager at City Lodge Hotels' flagship 205-bedroom property, where she leads the Food & Beverage department, manages suppliers, ensures

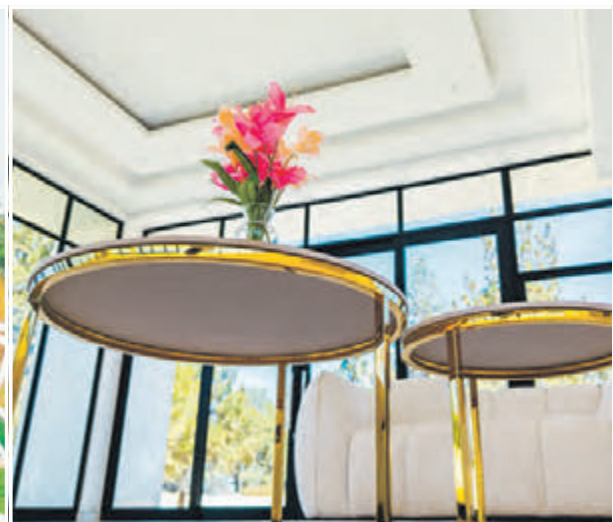
audit compliance, and drives innovation and commercial growth. She thrives on the complexity and camaraderie of the industry, viewing hospitality less as a job and more as a way of life, where colleagues become family and every day presents opportunities to learn, adapt, and grow. Beyond her professional life, Wania channels her energy into the gym, cultivating the resilience required to lead in a fast-paced environment. Her proudest achievements include completing her Master's while managing a full-time career, receiving the prestigious UJ Rising Star Award in 2024, which recognizes outstanding young professionals in the hospitality industry, and mentoring emerging talent. The biggest lesson she has learned: you can't control chaos, only your response to it. Her guiding advice: "Lead from where you are, not where you think you should be," a principle that shapes both her professional and personal life.





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