



Trailblazers are creative and courageous pioneers reaching out to break new ground and to seek new solutions. They are innovators who are fired by an unrelenting passion for human development.

South Africa: Women in Power

Women are the heartbeat of any nation, they give life to all mankind. In South Africa it was women who acted against pass laws in 1956, an act illustrating the bravery and strength of South African women and the reason for August the 9th being recognised as National Women's Day.



South Africa still faces various challenges, such as the marginalisation of women in the workplace, domestic violence, rape and other social problems directed at women. However, the country has shown signs of progress in protecting and treating women as equal human beings. Before the dawn of democracy in South Africa, women only made 2.7% of representation in Parliament. Leadership positions in politics have been dominated by men, however, now women ministers comprise 41% of the cabinet in South Africa. While women deputy ministers make up 47% of the total number of deputy ministers. The South African National Assembly consists of 41% women representation. Though this number might be small considering the fact that women make 52% of the total population in South Africa, it is more progressive in comparison to countries like the USA and Britain who have enjoyed democracy way before South Africans thought they would ever witness it. Women are the pillars of South African society, with most families being headed by women.

South Africa was the first country in Africa to have a female Deputy President, this shows the country's positive attitude in realising the talent and potential of every human being regardless of gender. Though there are some positives regarding women empowerment in leadership positions, only 4% of JCE listed companies have women in leadership positions. Research has found that companies with the highest percentage of women on boards also tend to outperform those with lower percentages of women. This includes higher returns in sales, a greater return on invested capital, and a higher return on equity. Thus, it is important that South Africa uses all its resources in order to realise its full potential. *BY Phathutshedzo Munaka*

If you would like to share your views and opinions with TRAILBLAZERS or would like to learn more about TRAILBLAZERS, browse through our new website <http://mokwena.com/>



Women on Boards Boost Bottom Lines



Image ISTOCK

A NEW study on women in board and management positions in Africa has found that those companies that do best on gender diversity also do better financially.

The study by global management consultancy McKinsey finds that profit margins at those companies that rank in the top quartile when it comes to the share of women in board positions were 20% higher than the industry average.

The study adds to a growing body of research internationally on the "diversity dividend" that companies can reap.

"The research indicates that it brings a diversity of viewpoints that leads to more robust decision making," said McKinsey's Lohini Moodley.

But McKinsey warns that although Africa comes in above average on measures of women in corporate and government leadership, the continent still has a very long way to go to attain gender equality.

"Numbers do not equal influence," say the authors of the survey, which the consultancy has conducted in Africa for the first time in its annual Women Matter series.

It also looked at government leadership for the first time, finding that the proportion of female parliamentarians in Africa has almost doubled since 2000 to reach 24%, while 22% of cabinet ministers are women — but more than half of those are in social welfare-type portfolios, rather than in the more influential portfolios that could see them get to the top.

The same goes for the private sector, where Moodley said only 44% of the women in senior management positions were actually in line roles, rather than in staff roles such as human resources or legal.

African women hold 14% of board seats, with an even higher 20% in southern Africa, against a global average of 13%. At executive committee level, women account for 23% against the global average of 20%.

But only a third of the organisations said that gender diversity was a CEO priority. *BY HILARY JOFFE*

[READ MORE:](#)

Corporate Motherhood

On the 9 August, we celebrate Women's Day, which commemorates the Women who protested in 1956, against an oppressive apartheid government. In this era, people of colour, let alone women had very limited access to opportunities.



Women in particular were confined to the domestic domain where they child minded and raised kids. We have indeed come a long way since then. The South African Constitution promotes gender equality, and women empowerment.

The role of women only being idealized in the kitchen has become more progressive. Women in South Africa now have opportunities to study, have careers they are passionate about and also raise children. In 2016,

women can and are afforded the opportunity to be prime multi-taskers.

Navigating the workplace requires our time, attention and focus. Deadlines need to be met, demanding bosses often require overtime at the office and tasks need to be completed. Motherhood on the other hand also requires a great deal of devotion and child-minding. While work demands 24-hour contact and attention... so does motherhood. As a woman in the workplace, how does one juggle between being 'supermom' as well as a successful and driven career woman?

This is what some corporate mothers had to say:

Hlezphi Matseke • Human Resources Manager at the Leago Group

“When you’ve got a young child who goes to school, you have to give him 100% of your attention in terms of, you need to know their experiences at school and home as well, while you also need to be on top of your game at work”

Lethabo Mashamaite • Managing Director of Leago Lifestyle at the Leago Group

“Planning is key, I ensure that my diary is kept up to date with work and all the kids activities way in advance so that I can make plan B on time if necessary”

I am sure that the women who fought tirelessly for more equal rights in 1956 would be proud of corporate women in 2016.

BY Tatum Tahneé Kok

