

Blue SHEroes WOMEN'S MONTH Supplement

**Invest in Women,
Accelerate Progress:
Celebrating the efforts
and accomplishments
of women in Eswatini.**

March 2024

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2024 BLUE SHERoes:



**Honourable
Thuli Dladla uLaMotsa**
Deputy Prime Minister



Margaret Thwala-Tembe
Head of Office - UNFPA



Thobile Dlamini
Chief Financial Officer:
Eswatini Revenue Services & Standard
Bank Eswatini Board Member



Lomkhosi Magagula
Executive Director: CMAC



Mbali Sibanyoni
Managing Director:
Swaziland Building Society



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Ndlangamandla-Dlamini**
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Geo Solutions (Pty) Ltd



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Omny Media Group



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Executive Director: Baylor Clinic



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Research & Renewables Engineer:
Eswatini Electricity Company



Andile Mtetwa-Amaeshi
Director General:
Eswatini Civil Aviation Authority



Thandile Nxumalo
CEO: AlphSZ



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Group Human Capital Manager
Royal Eswatini Sugar Corporation



Nobuhle Nkambule
Head Brewer: Eswatini Beverages



Julie Nixon
Founder & Director: Fair & Square



Velemseni Ndzimandze
Musician & Lecturer



Neliswa Nkala-Maseko
Founder: Mrs M Decedent Pleasures



Carol Mkhathshwa
Entrepreneur & Founder:
Mantsholo Leather Creations



Philile Mdluli
Woman Farmer & Produce Exporter



Joyce Nunn
Fountain of Life
People with Disability



Pitso Qwabe
Chef & Founder: Jazz Friends



Letticia Viana
FIFA Accredited Referee

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Invest in Women Accelerate Progress

FOREWORD: Mvuselelo Fakudze
Standard Bank Eswatini, Chief Executive



BLUE SHEroes - Celebrating the achievements of women in the country who are driving positive change in all spheres of society in Eswatini

As an executive in today's world, I find myself increasingly aware of the critical need for a more inclusive and equitable society. As a Bank, we are aligning ourselves with the UN's theme for this year's International Women's Day. We believe that it is a timely call to action for all of Eswatini: Investing in women is indeed the key to accelerating the country's progress.

For far too long, the potential of women has been undervalued by society, their voices unheard and their contributions diminished. This pervasive underinvestment in women and the girl child has not only stifled their individual growth but has also limited the collective progress of our communities and businesses.

Internationally and more importantly, nationally, we are seeing that the tide is turning. We are witnessing a welcomed surge of women leaders and changemakers who are breaking down the barriers to access and driving positive change across all facets of society. At Standard Bank, we want to be at the forefront of empowering women to continue to shatter the proverbial glass ceilings and lead advancement in the Kingdom. That is why this Blue Sheroes supplement is such an important part of our commemoration of International Women's Day 2024. It celebrates, encourages and represents the women

across Eswatini who are leading this transformative impact. These women are entrepreneurs, executives, scientists, artists, and activists, they epitomise the wisdom, resilience and leadership of our very own Queen Gwamile.

It is my sincere hope that by showcasing these diverse and inspiring individuals, we can collectively commit to investing in women in every aspect of their lives. We must put forth the necessary resources that will ensure equitable access to education, healthcare, employment opportunities and safety. Recently, we have unfortunately seen an increase in the violation of women's rights with the plague of gender-based violence rooted in harmful power imbalances that threaten our society. We condemn all forms of violence against women in the workplace and at home. We want women to have the freedom and psychological safety to flourish and contribute meaningful to our societal development.



Over the years, we have invested significantly in partnerships and projects that align with our hope for women in Eswatini. We, alongside several strategic partners, refurbished the Raleigh Fitkin Memorial Female Ward to contribute towards better healthcare for women. We installed a 335kW solar electrification project at the Elusitweni Women's Centre. We finalised an agreement with USAID to empower over 50 young women with work-readiness skills as part of the DREAMS project. As a Bank, we are fully committed to the He for She solidarity movement.

This publication is just one of the ways we reiterate this commitment. We are intentional about shining a light on the remarkable stories of women in Eswatini, celebrating their achievements and also inspiring future generations of women to see themselves in these pages and leverage the infinite possibilities available to them. We also want to hold ourselves accountable for creating a future where equality truly reigns.

Leadership Dedicated to Social Cohesion

“I will not just sit in the DPM’s office that is not my office, the office is with the people...”

Honourable Thulisile Dladla uLaMotsa
Deputy Prime Minister



Thulisile Dladla uLaMotsa is no stranger to the halls of leadership - She began her career as a teacher at Evelyn Baring as the Head of Social Studies after completing a degree in Humanities and CDE at the University of Botswana and Swaziland in 1981. In the following years she held the roles of Deputy Principal at Swazi National High School and eventually held the position of Head Teacher at St Marks High School. Her rich experience in education later paved the way for her to take up the role of CEO at the Sebenta National Institute; a role she executed with passion and dedication. During her time at Sebenta she launched the Institute's skills based Non-Formal Education Programs. These Programs made it possible for orphaned and marginalized children who could not write their Standard Five exams to complete and obtain their certificates and gain access to both a vocational and academic education. Her years at the Sebenta National Institute signaled the end of her time as a professional in education. In 2008 she was appointed as a member of parliament by His Majesty King Mswati III and began an illustrious career in politics after 27 years in the sector.

Her commitment to developing Eswatini's education system continues to be visible in her role as Deputy Prime Minister. She has joined hands with the Minister of Education and Training, Owen Nxumalo, to launch a project to further support early childhood development (ECD) and basic education in Eswatini. Spending close to three decades in the sector has given her a solid

understanding of the critical nature of ECD and basic education and how it influences the whole academic trajectory of learners. The insight she holds in education can be understood as she has also completed a Masters Degree in Educational Administration from Saint Mary's University in Canada which she obtained in 1994. While at Saint Mary's University she was awarded a Gold Medal for her outstanding academic performance and contribution.

In 2018 the now Honourable DPM made history after she was appointed as the first female Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation in Eswatini. She received this appointment after being a parliamentarian since 2008 and making meaningful contributions in parliament and in the communities which she served.

As Minister of Foreign Affairs, she demonstrated her finesse at understanding and carrying out her diplomatic duties in representing Eswatini to the world. She travelled the globe strengthening Eswatini's bilateral ties and influencing foreign policy for the good of all emaSwati. One of her most notable assignments was meeting with President Tsai of Taiwan who congratulated the Honourable Dladla for being Eswatini's first female to be appointed in the role of Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. The President of Taiwan was quoted as saying that as a female leader herself she appreciates that this is no simple achievement for Dladla, and believes that with the Minister's assistance, Taiwan and Eswatini's

partnership will certainly grow closer than ever. One of the purposes of her meeting with President Tsai was to secure funding requested by Indlovukazi for women in Eswatini to gain access to business funding. This request has come to fruition as a \$1 million US Dollars fund, coupled with three years training and has been set up for our country's women. This opportunity that was birthed by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Eswatini and the Government of Taiwan through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. This announcement was made by President Tsai during her visit to Eswatini in 2023.

In her short time as DPM, Hon. Dladla has clearly drawn battle lines in the fight against GBV. She is passionate about rooting this scourge out of society and empowering communities in Eswatini to speak out and break the cycle. She has challenged all, from leaders in public service to leaders in the private sector to play their part in ending GBV; a challenge which she by no means takes lightly. Her strong voice can also be heard campaigning for the rights of children of all ages all over Eswatini. Recently, she has been particularly vocal about children who do not have access to education or are homeless due to their unfortunate circumstances or adults who have abandoned their parental or guardianship responsibilities.

As the second woman to serve in the role of Deputy Prime Minister in Eswatini, she is certainly making her presence felt and progressing well in her journey.



“If you appreciate who you are, you will be confident in your purpose.”

Margaret Thwala-Tembe
Head of Office - United Nations Population Fund



Head of Office - UNFPA Margaret Thwala-Tembe is a strong voice for women's interests in the region. Originally trained in Community Nursing and Midwifery, she is the first **liSwati** to head a Country Office at the UNFPA. She believes that women need to know and understand that they are indispensable in society. “Women play a critical role that cannot be duplicated in our population. We are not only mothers and nurturers but leaders in sustainable development. You need not look far for women who support families on a very limited income. With the little they have, these women can send their children to school, build houses, and more.”

Margaret speaks of how she also came from humble beginnings and the part her mother played in who she is today. “My father passed on when I was in Grade 1. This meant that my mother had to support us with close to nothing. Often, I did not have shoes and wore a thread-bare uniform but despite this, I persevered. Watching my mother was my first lesson on the value of taking yourself seriously as a woman. She

raised me into who I am today.”

The quality of sexual reproductive healthcare and the availability of family planning for women is another issue close to Margaret's heart. As a population specialist, she has seen the challenges women face where these are lacking. “Physical wellness is vital. If we are not well, we cannot enjoy the rights and liberties we fight to enjoy in society. Women should prioritize regular checkups to avoid detecting illnesses when it's too late.”

It is often said that the appreciation of what is around us begins with appreciating ourselves. “If you appreciate who you are, you will be confident in your purpose.” says Margaret. “Linked with a passion to read and learn, confidence and believing in your abilities will make you unstoppable. Women in Eswatini need to understand the relationship between knowledge and confidence and stand up with courage to air their views. Our women must know that there is no pride in being timid or too shy to speak up. This is why we need to empower ourselves intentionally and repeatedly until we understand our power.”

Mental health is an important health indicator and Margaret is no stranger to the pressures that senior management often faces. Her consistency at the gym keeps her physically and mentally strong. Margaret has also met good friends where she works out. “The people I connect with at the gym really make the experience all the more pleasurable. You leave relaxed and renewed after a good sweat and a good chat with the other members.”

As a professional herself, Margaret enjoys working with her team. “I value every individual that I work with and lead a great deal. In our daily work we are fueled by integrity, accountability, communication, respect, and empathy; all critical values for success. In 2016, 2018, and 2022, we won awards for our service excellence to the UNFPA Regional Office; a testament to the talent I have the honor of leading. In closing and in light of my achievements, I want to encourage women and girls to never look down on their humble beginnings. Big achievements start as small things; as you do good, God is watching. Your reward will surely come.”



An Advocate for Impactful Leadership

“In everything I do, I want to give my best while allowing my success to benefit others. After all, leaders create leaders.”

Thobile Dlamini

CFO - Eswatini Revenue Service & Standard Bank Board Member

Africa's Public Sector Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of the Year - Pioneering, passionate, and resourceful are the first three words that come to mind when referring to Thobile Dlamini, the CFO of the Eswatini Revenue Service (ERS) and a non-executive Director on the Standard Bank Eswatini Board. She begins narrating her story by sharing how her career in auditing set her apart and prepared her for the influential position she holds today. Not only did it give her exposure to the cultural nuances of the corporate world in other

African markets, but it also sharpened her propensity to approach high amounts of pressure and sizable volumes of work with tact and composure.

“My time in private practice was spent in Botswana, Mozambique, and Eswatini. Besides gaining the benefits of having my skills increased and sharpened by being exposed to diversity at work, I made sure I was always intentional about my personal development. I quickly realised that being academically qualified was important but only amounted to half of what I would need to succeed in the way that I wanted to. I already had a passion for reading so I decided to capitalise on that for self-development by selecting reading material that covers a range of different topics,” she says.

This translates to the staunch belief that Thobile holds regarding owning your development. Besides finding material of interest to upskill herself, she also shares this knowledge with her team at work. “Whenever I find something that makes an impact on me I make sure I share that knowledge with someone else, especially the team I manage. Sharing knowledge and skills is important to me. I find it important to enjoy the journey to success with others and not alone.”

Thobile's illustrious career has seen her being awarded the Africa Public Sector CFO of the Year Award by ACCA Africa.

She also led the fundraising drive for the construction of the ERS Headquarters in Ezulwini. Before being appointed CFO,

her pioneering spirit also came to the fore when she successfully established and headed the Large Taxpayer Unit of the then-Swaziland Revenue Authority (SRA). All of these accolades highlight the importance she places on focus and self-development.

Thobile continues, “I loved the latitude that came with building a division from the ground up. I am proud of the work I did there, and most memorable to me are the people I was allowed to lead and develop. That role was a natural progression to leading one of the ERS' key projects currently, which is Digitalisation. In our bid to move away from being an authority and becoming a service, we are constantly looking for ways of making tax compliance easy for the citizens of our country. Digitizing our processes is one of these ways.”

The ERS CFO does not limit her finance role within the organisation. She has launched a Leadership Development Programme for staff. Coupled with her passion for developing leadership skills, she also holds a conviction to educate the populace and her colleagues about personal finance management. A passion she actualizes through her brainchild Refined Consultants, which trains individuals and corporates in Personal Finance Management. “The issue of personal finance is a sensitive one. A large percentage of people across the world are heavily indebted, and Eswatini is no different. I have managed to formalise this program for staff within the ERS and continue to share it with individuals and other organisations who approach me in my private capacity.”

The sum total of Thobile's story is one of integrity and respect, “I could never have come this far without watching my attitude and treating others well. Of all the things I do, I want to give my best while allowing my success to benefit others. After all, leaders create leaders”





“An engaged workforce drives the success of any organisation”

Creating a culture of accountability and avoiding disputes is just one of the many fascinating insights that the Executive Director at CMAC Lomkhosi Magagula wishes to impart. With entrepreneurial experience she knows that quiet leadership is a treasured value that is often undervalued. Magagula tells us why she values knowledge with context and creativity, and how these traits will transform anybody into a solution driven individual that is a value-contributor.

Lomkhosi Magagula

Executive Director - Conciliation Mediation and Arbitration Commission (CMAC)

You have extensive experience in the HR space. Tell us how you believe the right people drive an organisation's success?

An engaged workforce drives the success of any organisation. Individual employees and teams need to see the bigger picture, understand the organisation's reason for being and how their role contributes towards that existence. This kind of thinking breeds three things in the organisation. Firstly, it cultivates purpose in people. Secondly, it allows them to make a meaningful contribution to the organisation and thirdly, it creates a culture of accountability.

It is well known that passion drives the best careers. What other qualities should women wishing to grow into senior management cultivate to stay motivated?

I always place high value on knowledge and skills. Beyond that, you need to be able to apply context in everything you do. Take the time to think through matters and analyse the facts before responding. Once you have done that, don't be afraid to be creative in how you approach things. Knowledge with context and creativity will transform you into a solution driven individual that is a value-contributor.

If you could have a conversation with your younger self during your very first day in your first job, what three pieces of advice would you give her?

I found myself in a working environment where the model employee had to be outspoken and it was criteria for recognition. I would remind my younger self that quiet leadership is a treasured value that is often undervalued. I would

tell her that she does not always have to be right, and that not every battle is to be fought. In knowing this, it would also be important to tell her to spend time learning about the dynamics and politics, good and bad, that exist in the organisation and not to take these personally at any point. I would encourage her to quietly and confidently be herself and believe in the value of developing her Emotional Intelligence.

You have ventured into the world of entrepreneurship before. How would you describe the ways in which it helped you grow into the professional you are today?

This experience has been challenging yet rewarding. It has given me exposure to different industries such as public sector, construction, agriculture, financial services and technology; context I still use in my current role. As a result, it has enhanced how I innovate and find solutions. It has strengthened my resilience and networking as in often times entrepreneurship requires starting from zero and making something of it. It has strengthened my agility and developed a solution driven mindset. I am fortunate to have a husband who is an avid entrepreneur with a can-do attitude. The support we give each other has made the things we have achieved possible. I also built meaningful networks. My approach is that no one has a monopoly of knowledge therefore being open to learn from others and finding areas of common interest opens doors to valuable insights gained from every conversation you have.

What do you find most rewarding about your current role?

CMAC plays an important role in our economy. Our strategic mandate of dispute prevention and resolution is vital as a value-contributor to industrial harmony. Being able to strive for service excellence means we are able to directly impact our stakeholders. This also means we need to be efficient and assure we handle cases within set standards while empowering staff with the right tools to do so.



Breaking Ground

Navigating the Geology Industry as a Woman

Mankayane native Ntombifuthi Ndlangamandla-Dlamini's life is a picture of how being surrounded by a loving family coupled with hard work can accelerate one's growth into any field of their choosing. However, the lack of exposure still hinders career exploration in Eswatini especially for young girls.

Ntombifuthi Ndlangamandla-Dlamini
Founder & Director - Geo Solutions



Speaking to this special supplement, Dlamini said that she didn't even know there was a profession called 'Geology' and she wished to provide early exposure to geosciences in schools to pique interest among young girls.

Briefly tell us about yourself, and about the work you do, as an engineering geologist.

I was born and raised in Mankayane, surrounded by love from my parents and siblings. I've been happily married for 18 years and have 2 kids. These personal connections have shaped my values and they drive me to make a positive impact in both my personal and professional life.

I hold an MSc (Geology), a BSc (Hons) in Geology, and a BSc Degree (Chemistry & Biology). I own and run Geo Solutions, a consultancy company with expertise in geology, geotechnical investigations, and environmental management services, where I work as a Professional Engineering Geologist.

“Accelerating progress through investing in women also means addressing systemic barriers and inequalities that have hindered women's advancement and empowerment.”

As an Engineering Geologist, I specialize in assessing geological factors that can affect construction projects, such as soil characteristics, slope stability, rock formations, and groundwater conditions. By analyzing these risks, I help engineers design projects that are

safe, cost-effective, and sustainable.

How did you get into this career path? Did you always want to be a geologist whilst growing up?

I did not always want to be a Geologist whilst growing up. I didn't even know there was a profession called 'Geology'. My original academic background was Biology and Chemistry, and it was only after working in the government's Geological Survey and Mines Department that I discovered my interest in Geology. This experience led me to pursue further studies in Geology and ultimately transition into a career in the field.

Women have been a part of the story of geology from the beginning of time, but they have often struggled to gain professional opportunities, equal pay, and respect as geoscientists. What do you think needs to be done to address this anomaly, and especially, in the local context, how can geology become an attractive career option for young women?

Promoting equality and inclusivity in geosciences and making it more enticing for young women in Eswatini can be achieved through:

- Providing early exposure to geosciences in schools to pique interest among young girls. Educational campaigns about Geology, its importance, and the potential career opportunities for women can help break stereotypes..
- Establishing mentorship programs where experienced female geoscientists guide and support

aspiring young women. Seeing successful women in the field can inspire others to pursue similar paths.

- Ensuring equal access to educational and professional opportunities for both genders. Encouraging recruitment and retention of female Geologists in academic and industry roles can help balance the representation.

What does the International Women's Month theme, “Invest In Women: Accelerate Progress” mean to you

This theme highlights the importance of empowering and supporting women to drive positive change and progress in various aspects of society. To me, it signifies the recognition of the immense potential and contributions that women can make when given equal opportunities, resources, and support.

Investing in women involves providing them with the necessary tools, education, mentorship, and opportunities to thrive in their chosen fields. This can unlock their full potential, foster their leadership abilities, and enable them to make significant contributions to their communities and the world at large.

Accelerating progress through investing in women also means addressing systemic barriers and inequalities that have hindered women's advancement and empowerment. It involves promoting gender equality, advocating for women's rights, and creating a supportive environment that values and respects women's voices, perspectives, and achievements.



Inspiring Future Female Entrepreneurs:

Insights from a Pastry Chef

Neliswa Nkala-Maseko

Founder - Mrs M Decadent Pleasures

Coming from nothing, Neliswa Nkala-Maseko says she has always been driven to “Become.” Become something that matters, do things that matter, do things that make her stand out. She says she is always looking for ways to better herself, and stay relevant as a businesswoman by taking on feedback, conducting research, and correcting her mistakes. Starting her baking confectionery business, Mrs. M Decadent Pleasures- has been an extension of that mindset and drive.

Neliswa describes her business as her first child. She feels it is an avenue to express herself and spread her wings. The brand represents the things she holds dear: quality, innovation, and relevance. Her beautiful packaging, attention to detail, and keen eye have given her quite the name in her industry.

She believes every woman entrepreneur needs a strong backbone, a voice, talent, and a deep level of perseverance. She says these are qualities that served her well whenever she had to stand up for herself, negotiate better business deals, and take up opportunities. She says it is in such situations where the battle of the sexes is most evident. This is because often women have to work harder to prove themselves, especially when pitted against their male counterparts who are more readily viewed as leaders.

Neliswa has proved herself as a businesswoman and brand. She attributes much of this success to the work she puts into marketing her business. A quick trip to her Instagram page tells the whole story. Neliswa remarked on how visibility in her industry directly translates into new business. She says it draws people in and sparks their curiosity and creates a following of people who have an interest. She believes investing back into her business

has ensured her growth.

Her business growth is seen in the platforms Neliswa has accessed through Mrs. M Decadent Pleasures. She enthuses about how being a food headliner at the Standard Bank Luju Food & Lifestyle Festival in the Culinary Program in 2023 is one of her greatest milestones. Neliswa had the opportunity to conduct her first dessert-making Masterclass on a grand stage of note. The Masterclass was packaged to help aspiring business persons with a desire to enter the cake and dessert-making space and develop strong businesses.

She not only shares her culinary prowess on live stages but also in the digital space. She shares how launching a food and lifestyle blog, @neliswadaily.com, is another achievement she holds dear. Having cooked her way into many people's hearts, she also looks forward to cooking her way into our homes and television screens with her new cooking show, 'Cooking with Mrs M.'

With all these exciting developments she's seen of late, Neliswa shows no sign of slowing down or plateauing any time soon. She sees her business and brand growing beyond the borders of Eswatini to take up space in the international arena. She looks to become a household brand name and attract recognition on bigger platforms. It is safe to say we need to keep up with the Maseko's, because her journey is still one to look out for. She wants to be remembered for being a woman who dreamt of it and then achieved it.



ONE ON ONE WITH MRS M.

Best Advice Ever Received

Business is about Relationships and not money, once you operate a business in that manner, the money will naturally flow in your direction.

3 Words To Describe Yourself

Bold. Fierce. Unapologetic

3 Things You Cannot Live Without

Food. Family. Love

3 Women Who Have Inspired You The Most

Joyce Mdluli (My late mother), JJ Smith (Nutritionist and Author), Siba Mtongana (Celebrated Chef)



Brewing Keeps Me on Top of My Game

Nobuhle Nkambule

Head Brewer - Eswatini Beverages

In an industry traditionally dominated by men, the presence of women in the brewing profession is a rising trend that brings a fresh perspective and innovation to the world of brewing. Across the globe more women are finding their place as brewers, challenging stereotypes and breaking barriers in what was once considered a male-dominated field - Nobuhle Nkambule is one such brewer leaving her mark in the local industry. She shares on her professional journey with us.

How did you start your career in brewing?

I did not go the traditional route, which is typically a qualification in brewing, and going through brewing traineeship. I found myself in brewing through my curiosity and willingness to learn and take on new challenges. When I saw the job advert I knew it was a long shot but I was confident that with my work experience in the manufacturing industry and my qualification as a food scientist, I stood a good chance. I have worked in the manufacturing industry for over 10 years, starting my career at the Swaziland Standards Authority, then had a short stint at Ngwane Mills as a Laboratory supervisor. I then proceeded to work at DD Williamson, a caramel manufacturing company for about 7 years as the quality manager where my passion for the industry grew and I knew I was on the right career path. This role

shaped the person that I am today through exposure to leadership and supply chain management responsibilities and accelerated my growth, which I believe prepared me for my current role. So when the brewing opportunity came along, I could not miss the chance to further expand my experience in production and take on new challenges.

Are people surprised when you tell them what you do for a living?

Most people are intrigued and are always interested in hearing more about how I got into brewing, how I manage the dynamics of being a female leader in a male-dominated industry, and mostly if I indulge in the product.

Well, do you?

I do, my favorite being our local Sibebe premium lager, which is brewed to perfection.

What do you love the most about your job?

What is not to love, should be the question! I get to head a very critical component of the organization and more than anything, put together a product that brings people happiness when consumed right. I also enjoy the challenges that come with the job daily, ensuring we maintain the brand integrity for consumer experience. The Beer market is highly competitive and this always keeps me on top of my game to ensure we maintain consistent high quality products. I am also proud to be part of a global company with over 500 brands in the market that touches millions of people

and contributes to people's happiness, like our global mantra says, 'We dream big to create a future with more cheers!' All in all, I love that my personal goals align with those of the organization as a person who dreams the impossible and always strives to take on the next challenge in life.

What do you think can be done to get more women into the brewing industry, and the STEM fields, by extension?

I think we need to raise awareness early on in girls' lives, so that they are aware of all opportunities available to them. This means we start building awareness at primary school level through to high school, when the time to choose subjects happens, to ensure they are well informed. Early exposure through field visits and career fairs where women in brewing or STEM address the girl child so they see that indeed it is possible. I believe this will enhance their confidence when choosing careers in STEM fields.

Have you drawn professional inspiration from other women? Tell us about someone who has inspired you.

Yes, of course, women are doing great things and are taking up spaces in different industries and I love it for us. I am largely inspired by all women in all spheres because I am generally exposed to the challenges they face in life, the expectations from families and society and the demands of the work environment. This is also true for women running their businesses including those who make a living through selling their wares on the streets.

I draw professional inspiration from a lot of women, but, if I must name one, I will go with my good friend, Gciniwe Fakudze. I love that she continues to show us that with determination, hard work, commitment, and the right attitude you can excel in any field you find yourself in.





Soaring High

The Rise of Women in Aviation



Andile Mtetwa-Amaeshi

Director General - Eswatini Civil Aviation Authority

Andile Mtetwa Amaeshi is a picture of technical knowledge coupled with attention to detail and quick decision making. After starting her professional journey in HR, she was 'found' by her career in aviation, leading to her appointment as Director General of the Eswatini Civil Aviation Authority and first woman in the Bureau at the African Civil Aviation Commission. Andile shares with us her experiences in the aviation industry and how every woman should follow the 'three C's' to achieve success.

Tell us about how your journey started and how you ventured into aviation.

I never set out to go into aviation. I always say aviation found me. When I graduated I worked at Coca-Cola as an HR Generalist on a contract basis. After the contract came to an end, an opportunity opened up at South African Airways (SAA) in the Operations Division. Little did I know that this job would unlock an entire career in aviation that I would look back on with pride today. Soon after joining SAA I became a trainer on Safety and Emergency procedures for flight crew and cabin crew. From there I joined the South African Civil Aviation Authority as an Inspector of Airports and Airlines

in Aviation Security. After six years, I joined a start-up airline called Fly Blue Crane as Manager Aviation Security. This was a fantastic opportunity because it was a new airline, which meant a new learning opportunity. Soon after that, opportunity knocked at SAA and I rejoined my earlier employer as Head of Risk Management, later becoming Head of Quality Assurance. I then joined ESWACAA as Director General and would go on to be the first woman Bureau Member at the African Civil Aviation Commission.

What have you learnt from being a pioneering leader in a steadily developing industry in Eswatini?

Air transport is a critical industry as it is a socio-economic enabler. It not only moves people but it also moves goods both of which are part of what grows an economy. As a landlocked country Eswatini has the opportunity to use air travel for its import and export activities as well as attracting further investors into our borders by providing ease of access into the country. Investors, with limited time, often don't drive to scout prospective places to do business, they prefer to fly. This means that a country's ability to correctly utilise and develop its aviation industry is not a 'nice to have' but a must.

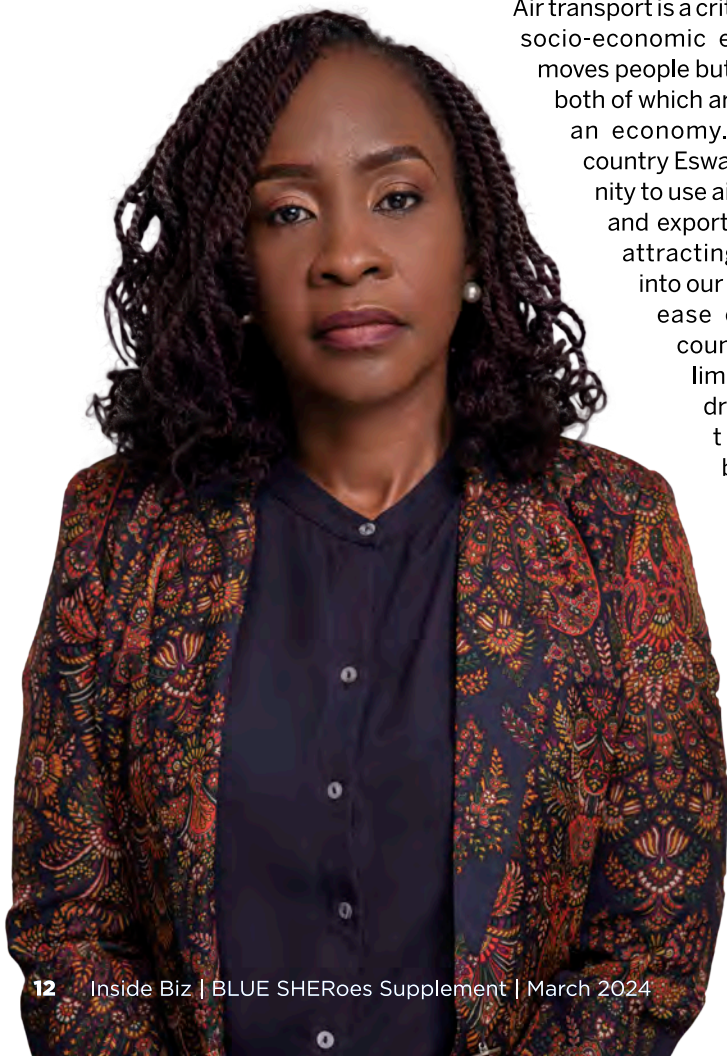
What are some of the qualities people in the aviation industry need to possess?

Aviation is a huge industry with many focus areas. There are, however, general qualities that are needed to become successful. The first and most critical is technical knowledge coupled with attention to detail. If you fail to play your part in making sure a flight can safely take-off and land at its destination, you could put people's lives at risk. It goes without saying how important it is to value safety and security in light of this. Secondly, you need to be eager for knowledge and keep abreast with emerging technology. Each technological change requires relearning a skill. I have numerous certifications as a result and am yet to gather more. Equally important is your ability to make quick decisions that are informed and timely whether in a crisis or in your daily duties.

What wisdom should every woman carry with her on her daily career path?

I encourage women to work on what I call the three C's; Confidence, which will allow you to speak with conviction on issues, Competence, to back up your confidence with knowledge, and Capital, which is your intellectual and brand capital as a person. If you can speak with authority and insight and represent yourself well, not even the sky will be your limit.

"If you can speak with authority and insight and represent yourself well, not even the sky will be your limit."





Raising the Bar in Banking Leadership

Mbali Sibanyoni

Managing Director - Swaziland Building Society

Mbali Sibanyoni is the Managing Director (MD) of Swaziland Building Society (SBS), having held the position since July 2020, after being promoted from General Manager of the Society. She is currently at the forefront of SBS's digital innovation charge and the Society's efforts to convert into a fully-fledged bank.

Sibanyoni tells us about her fondest career achievements, her greatest leadership lessons and importance of goal setting for personal and professional development.

What made you venture into the world of banking as a young woman?

I got into banking by chance since in my first degree I majored in Public Administration and Political Science. Just after I graduated, a neighbour told me about a vacancy at Standard Chartered. I got the job but wasn't sure if banking was for me. This changed when I moved into the Credit Department. This side of banking challenged me and unlocked an enriching career in financial services. I pushed myself to keep up with its technicalities and produced work I could be proud of. This, coupled with my determination to stay focused, saw me being appointed as Head of Credit. After more than 20 years in the Credit space, the then MD of Swaziland Building Society (SBS) head hunted me for the position of General Manager (GM); a role reporting directly to him. From GM I was appointed Managing Director of SBS.

What are some of your fondest career achievements?

Shortly after being appointed GM, we were tasked with selecting a vendor to provide us with a Banking System. It was an arduous process because the Society's focus was not on core banking. As a team we were able to implement the system with minimal challenges; a great accolade for our team. Another achievement was the launch of the SBS Debit Card. We managed to do this during the

height of Covid-19 pandemic. This offered our customers a digital alternative to physically withdrawing funds at the branch during a time when movement was restricted. The launch of our Internet Banking Platform and ePocket were also milestones for our team and are yet another value add we now offer our customers.

What are some of the greatest leadership lessons you have learnt over the past few years?

An important lesson that I learnt from my previous boss was the importance of visionary leadership. He shared the SBS vision in vivid detail and in so doing, shared information about projects and daily tasks with his team. We were never left clueless and this made us driven and loyal. I have employed this ethos in my management style and value the opportunity to lead the people I work with.

I also place importance on resilience as a leader. During the early days of my tenure as MD, we were grieving the loss of our late MD and leader, whilst also going through our yearly audit and grappling effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. It was tough to stay positive, but through the support of my team and our will to see things through, we were able to keep SBS afloat.

Finally, I encourage women to support and elevate each other socially and professionally, as well as being receptive to the constructive criticism they receive in the process. Women should also know that they are enough as they are. There is no need to feel like you need favors to get to the top. Just put in the work and know that you are powerful.

How important is goal setting for personal and professional development?

I liken goal setting to planning one's life. I decided at a young age that I wanted to work in a field that required my brain power more than my physical strength. This was a point of departure for all the decisions I made including acquiring a degree and ultimately my MBA. I understand that I cannot be complacent with my achievements and that there is always more to be done.

"There is no need to feel like you need favors to get ahead. Just put in the work and know you are powerful."





Standard Bank

MAKING A DIFFERENCE: Enhancing and empowering the lives of women through CSI Initiatives



Over the years Standard Bank has continued to reiterate its commitment to women empowerment. The Bank has partnered with relevant stakeholders across various economic sectors to address the prevailing challenges that face women in the country. The Bank is committed to celebrating women's achievements, raising awareness against gender-based violence, biases that disenfranchise women, and calling for a united stand for equality. The Bank is intentional about promoting inclusivity and gender equality because it believes that the empowerment of women is not only morally right, but also essential for sustainable economic development and advancing social progress.



As part of the Bank's involvement in the HeForShe movement, the Bank has undertaken several initiatives and invested over E2 million in the past 4 years to projects that protect women and their rights, empowers and uplifts women in the country. This contribution is part of the ways that the Bank has actively participated in the HeForShe movement, a global solidarity movement launched by UN Women in 2014 to engage men and boys as allies and advocates in the fight for gender equality.



The Bank's HeForShe initiatives have had a significant impact on communities around the country spanning across sectors such as health, financial inclusion, education and skills development. Standard Bank Eswatini contributed E1.5 million towards the rehabilitation of the RFM Female Ward. The sponsorship came after local media reports of the female ward being forced to close due to its dilapidated state in 2019. The Bank committed funds to rehabilitate the structure in line with its commitment towards contributing to improved access to health for women. In 2020, the rehabilitation of the female ward commenced with the assistance and project management from Microprojects who was selected as the project coordinator on behalf of the various stakeholders involved to ensure the success of this project. The project was completed in early 2021 with the financial collaboration with the National Resources Mobilisation Committee. The fully refurbished ward was handed over on the 8th of March 2021.



On the 8th March 2022, Standard Bank Eswatini commemorated the day by donating a 335kW solar electrification project worth E298 000.00 to the Elusitweni Women's Centre in Ezulwini. The Elusitweni Women's Centre is a residential care shelter for women who have endured various forms of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. The Centre provides physical and spiritual recovery for women who desire freedom from life-controlling habits, substance abuse, or trauma associated with gender-based and domestic violence or abuse. Additionally, the Teen Challenge Programme facilitated by Elusitweni provides mentoring, training, and spiritual direction for the young women. The Centre also empowers the young women with practical skills such as sewing, making soap and cleaning products as well as subsistence farming. The solar electrification project was embarked on with the aim of reducing the Centre's electricity costs and enable the Centre to help more women

and girls break free from the hurt of abuse and life-controlling habits. The use of renewable energy further contributes to the country's Sustainable Development Goal number 7 which is to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable green energy for all.

Once again, on the 8th March 2023, the Bank signed a three-year MOU with United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and its implementing partners on the DREAMS Project. The partnership between USAID and Standard Bank focuses on the paid internship and entrepreneurial start-ups components of the programme. Over the three years of the agreement, the Bank will invest E500 000 to empower over 50 young women. To date, a total of 32 young women have benefitted from the internships which have included, on-the-job training, work experience and mentorship. Additionally, a total of 14 young women have benefitted from the paid internships



In Eswatini, women and children continue to experience high rates of socio-economic challenges and are often lagging behind in key development initiatives. This hinders the country's progress in achieving its Sustainable Development Goals. To address these challenges and achieve collective advancement, the Bank is looking to roll-out innovative programmes to support young women by equipping them with in-demand skills and knowledge to qualify for and excel in the various sectors of the economy. The Bank envisages that it will continue to contribute resources and leverage partnerships to make a real difference in the lives of women and girls, paving Eswatini's way to a just and equitable future for all.





Passionate, Impactful Change

Makhosazana Dlamini

Executive Director - Baylor College of Medicine

Makhosazana Dlamini's career in the non-governmental sector spans over 15 years, covering many managerial roles along the way. As the incumbent Executive Director of Baylor College of Medicine Children's Foundation Eswatini, she has merged her passion for healthcare and leadership to drive impactful change. She is guided by a deep-rooted commitment to improving healthcare access and outcomes, particularly for vulnerable populations. This has not been a small act, earning her a role among this years #BlueSheroes2024.

In her role that predominantly encompasses setting strategic direction, fostering partnerships and ensuring operational excellence to fulfil their mandate, Makhosazana's greatest achievement has been to secure funding in the realm of advocating for the health, nutrition, and livelihood of children and adolescents who cannot speak for themselves. This achievement is best understood by those in the civil society space who know about the challenges presented by the shrinking donor space and heavy reliance on sourcing external funding placed on civil society organisations to survive. Through the funding and sponsorship she secures, she feels joy in getting to witness the tangible transformations their clients undergo.

Makhosazana has mastered the art of leading diverse teams, and spearheading initiatives aimed at addressing critical healthcare needs in communities. She attributes her success to an unwavering commitment to hard work. Since early on in her career, Makhosazana says she has never been afraid to face a challenge

head on. In the face of adversity, she learned to adapt, grow, and emerge stronger, turning challenges into opportunities.

To do this, Makhosazana describes how she has had to contend with the gender stereotypes which continuously try to put a question mark to women's leadership potential. She describes how being the sole woman in a predominantly male setting can feel isolating at times. However, it taught her to embrace her unique perspective and voice. To combat the external noise, Makhosazana says she has learned to prioritize building authentic relationships and networking strategically. She considers the strong personal relationships and support systems she has built for herself as a major accomplishment for herself as a person. The belief and support she gets from her community is a source of motivation and bring balance to her life.

Dlamini encourages her fellow emerging women to stay focused on their goals and dreams, and to uplift each other. She believes in the power of unity and collaborations. Makhosazana says their voices have the potential to spark change and make a difference, hence more reason to speak out and stand up for themselves and each other.

One such woman who has used her voice to spark change and inspire the Executive Director has been the Deputy Prime Minister. Makhosazana commends the Hon. Thulisile Dladla for being the second woman Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) in Eswatini and the country's first female Foreign Affairs Minister. She further highlights how the DPM has defied gender stereotypes and broken barriers in the political arena. Makhosazana is also inspired by

Africa's first female head of state in contemporary history and former president of Liberia, Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson. Dlamini highlights how Sirleaf-Johnson's historic presidency marked a turning point for gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa - inspiring women across the continent to pursue leadership roles and challenge the status quo.

The type of women Makhosazana looks up to is telling of her own character and leadership style - one which has set her on the path of being a #Shero of note. Dlamini desires to be remembered for her persevering spirit which is helpful, determined, and authentic. She hopes to leave behind a legacy characterized by the transformation she brought into people's lives.

In closing she shares a message of empowerment, solidarity, and inspiration for the women of Eswatini this women's month. She reminds women across the Kingdom of their unique talents and aspirations, encouraging all to celebrate their strength, resilience, and achievements.

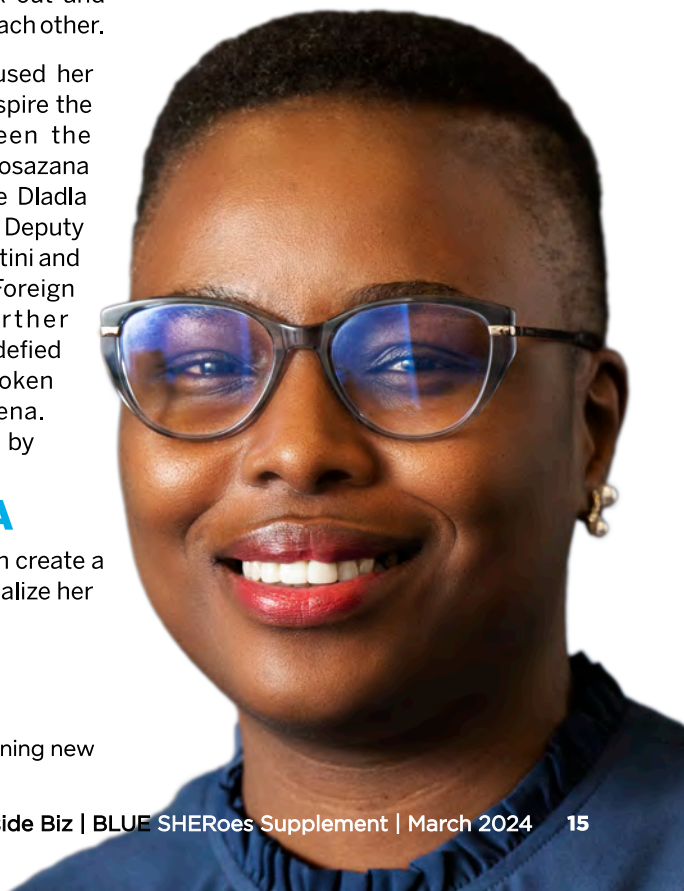
ONE ON ONE WITH MAKHOSAZANA

Message for women in Eswatini this Women's Month? Together, we can create a future where every woman and girl in Eswatini can thrive, prosper, and realize her full potential. Happy Women's Month!

3 words that best describe you: Focused; Assertive; Driven

3 things you cannot live without: Water; Phone; Family

3 things you enjoy doing outside work: Spending time with family; Learning new skills • Meditating





Never Stop Learning

“Relevance is everything. The theory you get in the classroom is important, but you cannot survive in the working world without responding to the needs of your environment...”

Bonisiwe Masuku

Group Human Capital Manager - Royal Eswatini Sugar Corporation

Bonisiwe Masuku is currently the Group Human Capital Manager at Royal Eswatini Sugar Corporation (RES), having joined the corporation in July 2020. She has almost 20 years Human Resources (HR) experience and has worked for organizations such as the Central Bank of Eswatini, Standard Bank Eswatini, FSE (now Business Eswatini), EPTC, Peak Timbers, ENPF, and ESWADE.

Having started her career with a one-year stint in teaching, Bonisiwe Masuku always thought she would have a marketing career and put her sales

talent to use. It turns out her ability to give a great sales pitch became one of the strengths she would need to become one of our country's most sought-after HR professionals. “During my tertiary years, one of my lecturers would always tell me that I should have persisted and gone into marketing, but I realised that my ability to sell ideas could be handy in selling the vision of the organisation I choose to work for. I knew that HR is a thankless job and that the work you do behind the scenes can be overlooked, but one cannot deny the value it holds in attracting the right talent into an organisation's workforce and retaining the talent you already have,” she says.

While cultivating her skills Bonisiwe saw the value of people, and the uniqueness they hold, as fascinating and special. She has come to be driven by what she is able to learn from others and uses these perspectives as a way of enhancing her effectiveness as an HR professional. This eagerness to connect with others is what has helped her stay relevant in her field.

“Relevance is everything. The theory you get in the classroom is important, but you cannot survive in the working world without responding to the needs of your environment and arming yourself with the right context on issues,” says Bonisiwe.

The ability to stay relevant is what has kept Bonisiwe afloat in the two decades she has operated in the HR space. She has worked in a

myriad of different industries spanning agriculture, manufacturing, and financial services, and now for the Royal Eswatini Sugar Corporation. The proof of her mental resilience really is in the pudding as she is also a Board Member at the Eswatini Petroleum Company (ENPC) and the Financial Services Regulatory Authority (FSRA); two parastatals with completely different mandates. “As the Chairperson of the Remuneration Committees in both entities, continuous learning is key to providing relevant advice in her capacity as a board member. “These directorships are a reminder that we can never know it all and that learning, and development are a continuous process throughout one's career and life,” she says.

Bonisiwe has recently been selected as a recipient of the Mark Le Page Scholarship to Oxford University. This prestigious scholarship is granted to Executive Management who have shown outstanding career growth and performance. This is an honour she does not take lightly, and she certainly plans on making the most of it. “One thing I will openly admit about my journey is that I did not make it to where I am on my sole effort. I take the time to build meaningful networks. The opportunity to study with professionals around the world has made me realise that even though we are as diverse as we are, we face similar challenges.”

This rings true to how Bonisiwe handles matters in her own life daily. She is a praying woman who never leaves anything up to chance. She is intentional about what she wants to achieve and never looks at any negative situation as final, “there is always a way out,” she says “you just need to open your eyes to it and trust the process.”

“...take the time to build meaningful networks.”



Embrace the Fear - Chase Your Dreams!

“Take that leap of faith, chase your dreams with everything you've got, and trust that you have the resilience and resourcefulness to navigate whatever challenges come your way...”

Simone DuPont

Co-Founder & CEO - Omny Media Group (OMG)

These are just some of powerful words echoed by Simone DuPont, Co-Founder and CEO of one of the Kingdom's leading creative agencies, Omny Media Group (OMG). In this compelling interview Simone shares views on how we can transform challenges into opportunities and shape a better future for all!

Have you faced any barriers in business as a woman, if so, how did you overcome them?

Absolutely, it's undeniable that we face unique hurdles in the business world, whether it's securing funding, expanding professional networks, or earning credibility in the industry.

I believe nothing amazing comes easy. Sometimes having relentless determination (even when things look impossible) has kept me going. Also, seeking mentorship and coaching has played a big role in my career and business growth over the years.

With every challenge comes the chance to do great things, and at OMG, we're seizing those opportunities with optimism and enthusiasm.

Looking back now, what advice would you offer to your 25-year-old self?

If I could offer advice to my 25-year-old self, it would be simple yet powerful: Do it!

Do it scared, do it anyway. At that age, there were so many opportunities I hesitated to pursue because of fear—fear of failure, fear of the unknown, fear of not being good enough.

But looking back, I realize that taking risks, even when you're uncertain, is essential for growth and success.

So, to my younger self and to anyone facing similar hesitations, I would say: Embrace the fear, but don't let it hold you back. Take that leap of faith, chase your dreams with everything you've got, and trust that you have the resilience and resourcefulness to navigate whatever challenges come your way. In the end, it's the courage to act despite fear that leads to the most fulfilling and meaningful experiences in life and also the biggest growth for your business.

What advice would you give to the next generation of female leaders?

Firstly, your spiritual and personal development is key to the growth of so many things- including your business growth. Take it seriously. Make the time to invest in yourself daily. Secondly, make your voice heard because your voice matters.

Also, act on what you say you are going to do. There's no better way to get ahead than to take action on your goals and dreams. Start small, but make sure you start.

And lastly, be grounded in your core values. If it feels right for you, stay in your integrity and say it.

What does it mean to you to be recognized as a Standard Bank Blue SHERoe?

Being recognized as a Standard Bank Blue SHERoe is an immense honour. It serves as a reminder that progress is possible when we come together, support one another, and strive for a more equitable society. I see this recognition as a testament to the collective efforts of everyone at OMG, working tirelessly to break barriers, inspire others, and advocate for gender equality in the business world. Ultimately, being recognized as a Standard Bank SHERoe is not just about me—it's about celebrating the strength, resilience, and contributions of women in Eswatini and the globe, and it motivates me to continue pushing boundaries, challenging norms, and making a positive difference in the lives of others.





A Gem in STEM

Nosipho Simelane-Dlamini

Research & Renewables Engineer - Eswatini Electricity Company

A Research & Renewables Engineer, Project Coordinator, Sustainable Development Enthusiast, Board Member, Public Speaker - These are some of the hats and talents of leading (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) professional Nosipho Simelane-Dlamini. A passionate individual, Nosipho shares on how she has paved her way to success through self-belief, graciously celebrating her achievements and being her own cheerleader.

Tell us about your early days and the subjects you gravitated towards in High School.

Mathematics and Science were always my favourite subjects at school. I decided early on that I wanted to be an engineer, although I didn't know which type of engineer I wanted to be. I had a fascination for the built environment and would ask myself how different structures are built and how engineering principles are applied in creating a complete structure. After High School, electrical engineering found me. I got selected for the Eswatini Electricity Company (EEC) Traineeship Program. Through this program, I got practical training on electrical engineering and proceeded to study an electrical engineering degree. After that, I led a distribution depot at EEC, then transitioned to do my Masters in Mechanical Engineering, specialising in Renewables. This is how I became a Renewables Engineer, the position I currently hold.

What are some of the difficulties you have faced in your career journey?

Being one of the first few females in leadership in a male dominated field meant I had few female role models to relate to and gain support from. I constantly felt I had to prove myself and

at times suffered from imposter syndrome; often doubting the validity of my accomplishments and successes. Later, without knowing it, this challenge would strengthen me and make me look within for motivation. I realised that there is no flaw in being your own role model and celebrating your own achievements. As a result, I let go of the need to constantly prove myself. I gained confidence in my skills, the standard of my delivery and allowed myself to focus on being a good engineer and leader.

The world is moving more towards green and sustainable ways of consuming energy. How will a green future assist in empowering women at different levels of society?

For me the Green Economy or the Green Future forms one of the core pillars of sustainable development. Sustainability has a strong emphasis on the social aspects of diversity and inclusion. The renewable energy sector has opened the door for new streams of business opportunities for women to take advantage of. Women can now become Independent Power Producers or sell and service renewable energy equipment for example. The industry is open and encourages participation from women. Additionally, renewable energy can improve the lives of women in rural

communities where there was previously no clean water or sustainable fuel for cooking. Electrifying their communities and taking away the need to walk miles for water or breathing in unhealthy fumes makes all the difference. The possibilities are endless with renewables and women are certainly one of the groups to benefit.

What do individuals and businesses need to know about the importance of efficient energy consumption?

It is important to understand why we need to be energy efficient. Firstly, electricity generation infrastructure is expensive. Secondly, we need to conserve our natural resources and reduce pollution to enable sustainable development. In business and the home, being energy efficient provides some of the quickest and most cost-effective options for optimising energy usage whilst lowering your bill, your carbon footprint and aiding energy transition. Energy transition is the shift from fossil-based forms of energy production and consumption to renewable energy sources like, but not limited to, hydro-electric power and solar power, which Eswatini is currently working on expanding, and others which can be found in other parts of the world.



Success - A Meal Best Served with Passion

Pitso Qwabe

Chef, Bread and Chocolate Artisan & Director - Jazz Friends



Pitso Qwabe, the visionary owner of Jazz Friends restaurant, stands as a beacon of inspiration in the world of hospitality. Her journey to success is a testament of resilience, passion, and commitment - empowering figure to women and men in the industry.

Pitso is a self-taught Chef from Eswatini who has been in the field for 25 years. "I did not have a privileged upbringing in the financial sense but I was lucky to have a family who supported my dreams. I was an avid reader and would collect old magazines from relatives as a child. I would cut out recipes and stick them in an exercise book to create my own recipe book. I used any recipe source I could get including the recipes on the back of condensed milk tin labels in those days. I tried any and every recipe with whatever ingredients my family could afford to let me use. I was passionate and I loved experimenting. When I started working, I then had my own little money and was able to try more elaborate recipes. From there I started cooking for friends and family and also catered for their functions. This is how my business was born."

Since then Pitso, the Director of Jazz Friends, has come a long way. She has done catering for numerous weddings, parties, and corporate events. Among her highlights was catering for the Metro FM crew on GRAB A BITE at the SABC Studios. She has also catered for high-level executives having catered for the Standard Bank Luju Food & Lifestyle Festival CE's Premium Lounge in 2022 and 2023. Corporates all around the country are on the list of clients she has

created delicious menus for; a testament to her high standard of catering and the attention to detail she takes pride in. "I am honoured to have been selected as one of the SHERoes being covered as part of this feature. Standard Bank is one of the corporations in Eswatini that has supported my business and I am thankful for that."

The International culinary scene is a wonderland of inspiration for any chef and Pitso has also begun to take her place in its ranks. Earlier this year, she completed the Bread and Chocolate Artisan Course at the Prestigious International Centre for Culinary Arts (ICCA) in Dubai "It was a fantastic experience. The standards you get exposed to are extremely high and you have to put your best foot forward. We were trained by Michelin Star Chefs which is something few get to experience."

Pitso continues, "This year I am headed to the World Chefs Congress in Singapore. I will be one of 5000 chefs from 110 countries. I want to take in as much knowledge as I can and bring the skills back to expand my business. Every time I travel, I make sure to learn something about that destination's food. I recently went on a trip to Italy and I made sure I came back having attended a course on how to make authentic Italian pasta and tiramisu. I advise every

chef to push themselves and never take the opportunity to expand their skills for granted. Your adaptability is up to you."

Besides producing excellent food, this chef is a stickler for detail. She is known for her extravagant harvest and nibbling tables and also using the best cutlery and crockery for her clients. "I make sure to use quality ingredients and use the right food safety equipment for my business. I absolutely enjoy what I do. I encourage everyone reading my story to take pride in how they present themselves and their brand. People will always respond well to a product that is worth their time and money."

Push yourself and never take the opportunity to expand your skills for granted. Your adaptability is up to you...



“We Have Created 1000 New Jobs...”

Julie Nixon, Country Director at Fair and Square says that her organization has helped 54 micro enterprises reach the gold standard of becoming exporters. Some of her MSME's have even installed clean water systems for over 11,000 rural people as well as paying school fees for vulnerable children. We sit with Nixon to see what inspires her vision to seek a voice for the female breadwinner as well as what women's month means to her.

Julie Nixon

Founder & Director - Fair & Square

Please briefly take us through some of the impactful work being done by Fair and Square?

Swaziland Fair Trade, now rebranded as Fair & Square, started in 2007 to build the capacity of artisanal enterprises in Eswatini through training, mentoring and coaching while linking them directly to markets, ensuring start-ups, micro and small enterprises (MSME's) earn while they learn. Our vision is to make poverty history in Eswatini.

Fair & Square currently works with 143 MSME's, 87% of whom are female owned or led and we are proud to have helped 54 micro enterprises to reach the gold standard of becoming exporters.

Fair & Square has facilitated an average sales increase of 49% across the enterprises with a corresponding 47% increase in take-home pay for staff teams and producers, in the process helping to create over 1000 new jobs.

You've been credited with being dedicated to changing the conventional for-profit business model in favour of a one that prioritizes social enterprises. Why is this important to you?

While the world needs free trading practices to thrive, Fair Trade offers an alternative to the classic capitalist model which benefits the few at the expense of the many.

We advocate for the establishment of social enterprises, those that seek to make profit but use that income to make a difference for others. We have

MSME's that use profits to pay school fees for vulnerable children, have installed clean water systems for over 11,000 rural people, support people living with disabilities, train and develop rural communities, mentor and coach young people and others even use solar power and catch rainwater to produce their products.

Consumer spending powers the global economy and consumers now understand their buying power, turning to products that make a difference, whether to people, artisans or in protecting the environment. This positions artisanal, handmade products, natural cosmetics and locally produced condiments well within current global market trends.

The 2024 International Women's Month theme is: “Invest in Women – Accelerate Progress”. In practical terms, what does this look like to you?

We believe the only way to truly elevate the status of women in society is through economic empowerment. Female breadwinners have autonomy in decision making, an elevated social status and more of a voice in their home as well as in their communities. Economic empowerment brings higher levels of education as women use their income to educate their children. Education helps young women to marry later in life and make better choices around family planning.

The Fairtrade approach seeks to tackle unequal power relations in order to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. This will be achieved by strengthening women's human, social, financial, and physical well-being guided by the Fair Trade Theory of Change.

Fair & Square is largely and regularly involved in uplifting and the growth of women. Women artisans and producers are given a special focus. We advocate to promote the voice, visibility and validity of working women. Fair & Square participates in social advocacy and activities promoting gender equality and denouncing the high rates of gender based violence in the country.





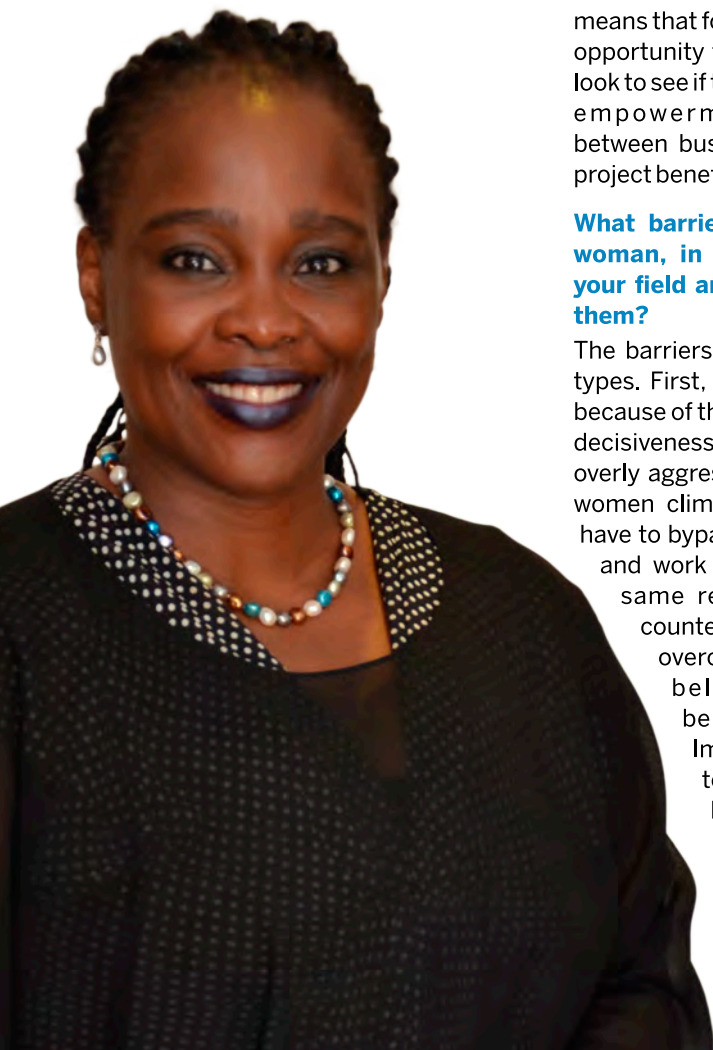
“Wathint' Abafazi, Wathint' Imbokodo Applies to the World of Business and Investing Too”

Thandile Nxumalo

Group Chief Executive Officer - AlphSZ

Thandile Nxumalo is a lawyer turned project financier and entrepreneur. She is AlphSZ Group Chief Executive Officer working in asset management (AlphSZ), project finance/property development (Ebenez), and stockbroking (AlphSZ Securities).

Thandile is also the Chairperson of the Eswatini End Malaria Fund fighting to eradicate Malaria in the Kingdom. In the establishment of Sanlam Investment Management Swaziland, Thandile was the empowerment partner to the Sanlam Group. She spearheaded the local management buyout which saw Sanlam Investment Management Swaziland become AlphSZ. As head of AlphSZ, she has grown assets under management from zero to over E2,5 billion.



What does the International Women's Day theme, “Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress” mean for your work life?

The basic premise of investing is the notion of putting something in, expecting to get something greater in return. For far too long, profitable investment and substantial impact were thought to be mutually exclusive. Today, most recognize that all investing should be impact investing. We all should be working to make sure that the returns on our investments are not only transformative for ourselves but also for the communities we call home. Investing in women is one of the simplest yet most powerful ways we can achieve this. The widely celebrated South African women's chant “wathint' abafazi, wathint' imbokodo” applies to the world of business and investing too. Women are the cornerstones of our communities. Investing in women has ripple effects far beyond what we imagine. This means that for any project or investment opportunity that comes my way, I must look to see if there's an avenue for female empowerment. Collaboration is between business partners, managers, project beneficiaries etc.

What barriers have you faced, as a woman, in becoming successful in your field and how did you overcome them?

The barriers mostly stem from stereotypes. First, women are emotional and because of that our assertiveness and our decisiveness can often be read as being overly aggressive. On top of that, many women climbing the corporate ladder have to bypass inappropriate advances and work twice as hard to gain the same recognition as their male counterparts. However, this can be overcome by belief in oneself, belief in your vision, and believing in the God of the Impossible. I learned quickly to have strong faith, set firm boundaries, and refuse to take “no” for an answer. I learned to harness the power of womanhood to

make me a better leader. This makes taking the risk all the more rewarding. When you do find fantastic allies- be it men or women- keep them close.

How important is it for women to lift each other and what does that mean to you?

Women have played a monumental role in my journey. Starting with my late Beloved mother, Nodumo Dora Nxumalo, they've been role models, mentors, confidants, and partners. I've found I can talk to them about a myriad of things- both in my professional and personal life. This type of sisterhood is priceless and has been something I cherish more and more as I continue to grow into the person God has called me to be. I want that for every woman. It can't happen unless we make an effort to hold space for one another at every opportunity. Some of my biggest opportunities have come for other women opening the door for me. That said, some of my greatest opposition has come from women as well. This is a natural part of career growth and reminds me to look at any person- male or female- with an open mind; while still paying special/extra attention to sisterhood. They are who I am. An injury to one must at times be an injury to all. The doors I help other women open are the very same doors I can follow them through.

What is something you'd like the next generation of women leaders to know?

“You're enough”. It's a simple statement but one that we too often forget. Success demands that you value yourself and your ability. You need to have the self-awareness to ask for help when necessary and the bravery to step out when needed. You may have to lose a few battles to win the war, but it'll all be worth it once you get to the Promised Land. Dare to dream and make the impossible possible. This can all be beautifully summarised in the serenity prayer: “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”



A Story of Discovery

From unemployment to finding passion and purpose fit for the world stage

Carol Mkhathshwa

Entrepreneur / Founder - Mantsholo Leather Creations

Rising from retrenchment and a need to find a new direction in life, Carol Mkhathshwa's entrepreneurship journey can be described as a result of sheer determination and a bit of serendipity. Before starting her business, Carol worked as an HR Manager for 15 years. Suddenly finding herself unemployed, Carol shared how she felt the need to search for new meaning to stitch her life back together. She described how she felt compelled to discover her purpose and passion. It was when a friend showed her a beautiful handmade leather bag that Carol had her "aha moment." Having always loved leather, Carol says she was immediately inspired to delve into making her creations.

Thus was the birth of Carol's brand, Mantjolo Creations, a 100% woman-owned producer of quality handmade, hand-stitched genuine leather goods that last a lifetime. She mentions how she started the brand without any fashion or business experience. She drew from her creativity and fashion trends to come up with her designs. Carol further shared how balancing her creativity with satisfying market demands was sometimes a bit of a challenge. Still, she believes that "the customer is key," and continuously scours the internet, social media, and other platforms to keep herself relevant and meet her clients' needs. The greatest challenges she faced as a female entrepreneur when starting her business were access to funding, achieving work-life balance, imposter syndrome, and contending with the sometimes unrealistic expectations she placed on herself.

Even so, her unique brand has garnered much attention in its 5 years of existence and includes a range of handbags, backpacks, laptop bags, wallets, satchels, belts, and other leather accessories. In the beginning, Carol would work from her garage with just a few tools. She had to learn how to market her goods in a way that would attract her target audience and still

cost-effectively produce her goods. This was a bit of a challenge in the early stages as she had to source the raw materials and accessories used for production from neighboring South Africa. Over time, Carol was able to develop strong relationships with suppliers, making the procurement process easier.

Since her time working from her garage, one of the key milestones Carol is most proud of is the ability to set up a workshop from which she can create her designs. Mantsholo Creations has become a widely recognised brand in Eswatini. Her hard work and creativity have propelled the business onto grand stages such as the Dar es Salaam International Trade Fair (Tanzania), MTN Bushfire Festival, and the Standard Bank Luju Festival. She attributes her success to being able to produce unique, high-quality products and the pride she takes in quality workmanship.

For Carol, the International Women's Day 2024 theme, #InspireInclusion is exciting as it means she gets to inspire others to understand and value women's inclusion.

In her words, "When women themselves are inspired to be included, there's a sense of belonging, relevance and empowerment."

For the future from Mantsholo Creations, EmaSwati and the globe at large, can expect a brand that flies the "Made in Eswatini" flag high across the world.

QUICK FACTS ABOUT CAROL

The Best Advice you have ever received?

"Never be afraid of failure. Failure is a stepping stone to success. Never shy away from failure and the lessons learnt thereof."

What are 3 words that best describe you?

Self-disciplined • Resilient • Creative

What are 3 things you cannot live without?

Good friendships • The internet • Cell phone



The First Liswati to Officiate in a FIFA World Cup

Dominating the Field and Making a Name for Herself

Leticia Viana

Sportswoman and Official FIFA Referee

Leticia Viana is a sportswoman and referee who is dominating the field and making a name for herself, and Eswatini, internationally. She grew up playing soccer in the streets of Manzini with the neighborhood boys. At that time it was uncommon to see women and girls playing the sport in Manzini. It was thus an exciting time when she went to her high school at St. Marks and found that there was a women's soccer league. She joined a team called Two for Joy where began her official sporting career. Leticia went on to play organized soccer from 1998 to 2005.

Throughout her career, Leticia held on to the conviction that she did not want handouts or favors. She was determined to work hard to perfect her craft and build a name for herself for her efforts. Understanding that her field was heavily male-dominated, Leticia endeavored to work twice as hard as her male counterparts. She shared how she was keen to let her work speak for itself. She never sought validation from others but preferred to move in silence. She was and continues to be determined to use her platform to show women that a career in sports is possible.

In 2005, Leticia's career would take a turn for the better. She realized the fruits of her labour when she got recruited to become a referee by a premier league referee at the time. Her career would take a sharp growth from there. In 2007 she became the first female to be promoted to the Eswatini Premier League. 2015 came with a double win - becoming part of the first team of Eswatini female referees to be FIFA accredited and being selected into CAF ELITE A, the top tier of referees in Africa. This made her the first Swazi among both male and female referees to reach this category. She has since gone on to break many ceilings including becoming the first Swazi-qualified Video Assistant Referee (VAR) and the first Swazi to officiate in a World Cup.

To reach the heights she has, Leticia invested much time and effort to improve her skills. Preparation for a game for her begins immediately after her last. She says she ensures to recover well, prepares her training during the week, and watches her diet. She also makes sure to analyze the teams she is scheduled to officiate as soon as she is informed which games she will be

appointed to. She then trains according to what the game will demand from her. Leticia says her goal is always to outperform herself with each game. She is a strong believer in the power of praying, training, reading the laws of the game regularly and just keeping things simple on the field and being herself.

Overall, Leticia wants to be remembered as a woman who inspired others. She believes that #InspireInclusion is when women feel like they belong and are given enough support to realize their potential. Leticia says that when this is achieved women become empowered and capable of achieving far beyond what their minds can even imagine.

This made her the first Swazi among both male and female referees to reach this category... including becoming the first Swazi qualified Video Assistant Referee (VAR) and first Swazi to officiate in a World Cup.





A Voice For The Voiceless

Striving For Inclusion & Equality



Joyce Nunn

Founder - Fountain of Life - Centre for Independent Living

No one has to ask Joyce Nunn how she #InspiresInclusion because the question answers itself as you speak to her and get to know more about the work she does.

Joyce is the founder of Fountain of Life Centre for Independent Living and a staunch advocate for empowering persons with disabilities to live full, independent lives. She was already on this path when her advocacy opened the door for her to attend training in Japan on independent living. Joyce describes how that training gave her a name for the work she was doing and the passion that had always been in her heart. Being in a wheelchair herself, her one aim in life was to live independently. She refused to become a burden or bound to the mercy of others. Joyce describes seeing confident drivers steering their cars and wanting the same for herself, a fete she has since achieved.

Joyce believes that all people deserve to be given a chance to fail or succeed, more so women and persons with disabilities. She is against the underestimation of people based on superficial judgments. She says when we underestimate people, we rob them of the chance to discover their capacity and live full, independent lives. Through her NGO and work in her community, Joyce builds income generation capacity among youth. She desires to see young people able to stand on their own two feet. In her community, she is known as a jack of all

trades and a master of all. She teaches a variety of skills from handicrafts to making detergents. Joyce has empowered young people, disabled and able-bodied alike, to possess skills to support themselves. Her NGO has worked with community leaders, the Federation Organization of the Disabled People in Swaziland (FODSWA), Young Heroes, and Sebenta National Institute, just to name a few, to deliver services in the Motjane community.

My greatest joy is in seeing the lives of people living with disabilities transformed

Alongside her advocacy for disability rights, Joyce also firmly believes in supporting women. Her greatest inspiration has always been former Minister of Health, Lizzie Nkosi, whom she worked under while at Save the Children Fund. It was from Lizzie that Joyce saw what women's leadership could look like. Joyce promotes supporting women and gender equality. She says women are implementers and know how to get things done. This is a quality she says Nkosi exhibited well and one that Joyce continues to strive to live by. Oftentimes persons with disabilities are restricted from accessing the resources to adequately realize their potential, a challenge she faces to date both personally and professionally. However, Joyce says if we learned to look at women and persons with

disability as human first, then the world would be more open to providing them with the support they need for success.

Still, Joyce does not let this get her down. She is proud of the progress she has made despite the constant stigma. She shares how proud she was to see one of the students she supported from primary to high school get into tertiary. Her greatest joy is in seeing the lives of the disabled transformed. She wishes more children with disabilities could receive the support they need and deserve. She shares how taking them to schools outside their communities contributes to isolating and disconnecting them from their communities. She says if more schools accepted and supported children with disabilities when they were young, it could make the transition into adulthood smoother. Their communities would already know them and it would place them in better standing to access leadership roles and opportunities later in life.

In the end, Joyce would love to be remembered as a woman who left a positive mark everywhere she went. She envisions a world where persons with disabilities are seen as capable. As human. Joyce endeavors to be part of creating such a world and leaving behind a generation of independent, empowered people.



A Mother's Love - My Greatest Inspiration

Velemseni

Award-Winning Musician and Singer-Song Writer

Operating in a largely under-developed, male-dominated industry makes it important for this #BlueShero to hold space for other women in the industry. Velemseni, an award-winning musician and singer-songwriter, attributes her success to having a powerful example of female excellence around her growing up.

As the last born in her family, the doting love of her mother has been Velemseni's greatest inspiration. Velemseni describes her mother as a strong, street-smart woman who consistently shows endless self-drive and motivation. These are traits the award-winning singer-songwriter strives to replicate even in her professional life.

She shares how it is always her desire to make her mother proud in all that she does.

As a singer, she expresses cinematic sounds that reflect Eswatini's culture and aesthetic, dabbling in genres such as jazz, afro-pop, and neo-soul.

Looking at the track record and acclaim Velemseni has built for herself over the years it is not hard to believe she is doing exactly that. Velemseni has accomplished much in her career making her a mainstay in the Eswatini music landscape. She has graced the prestigious MTN Bushfire Festival main stage twice. She describes how it was always a dream for her to perform at the Bushfire Festival. So to have done it more than once is one of her greatest achievements to date. Similarly,

winning the SWAMMA Awards gave her great pride as it represented a sense of confidence and a seal of approval from her peers.

With these achievements under her belt, Velemseni states that it makes her extremely proud to have developed a thriving career in the arts. It is in all that she has accomplished that she feels she can #InspireInclusion and challenge gender norms. In an industry dominated by men Velemseni's work speaks for itself. It acts as a beacon to what is possible for women and other vulnerable groups to achieve. Being a woman who has mastered her craft, plays multiple instruments, and garnered the support she has, is in itself a challenge to gender stereotypes

ONE ON ONE WITH VELEMSENI

Velemseni's Gems for Success for Creatives

1. **Be an apprentice** - do not be afraid to start small, learn from others and grow.
2. **Master your craft** - give it time, don't rush.
3. **Feed yourself with art** - stay abreast with current news and know what is happening in your space
4. **A good artist borrows and a great artist steals** - find people who inspire you and don't just mimic them, which is surface level. Try to internalize the traits you admire-digest them so they may be a part of you

What are 3 words that best describe you?

Compassionate • Stubborn • Spontaneous

What are 3 things you cannot live without?

She says despite being in an era of learning to let go and not attaching to things, these three still keep her in a choke-hold:

"Good Coffee, Salt, Electronic Devices
(Give me any)"





Organically Rooted in a Proactive Business Mindset

From Airtime Vendor to Farm Produce Wholesaler and Exporter

Philile Mdluli

Woman Farmer and Farm Produce Exporter

Philile Mdluli comes from a family of strong businesswomen who inspired her enterprising spirit. Both her mother and grandmother are business owners who support their home through their entrepreneurial initiatives. Philile described how resilient the women in her life were, giving her the blueprint of what a woman is capable of. It is no wonder then that she would follow in their footsteps, becoming an organic vegetable and livestock farmer of note who supplies major chain stores with high-value produce.

However, Philile did not start as a farmer. It was whilst she was selling airtime at the Manzini city center, that she noticed a gap in the supply of spinach and was quickly inspired to take produce from her small backyard garden to try to supply Pick n' Pay. Her eye for spotting business opportunities would be what would turn Philile into a business giant. From the 50 heads of spinach she sold to the chain store that first time, Philile has grown exponentially, widening her range of products to include watermelons, goats, dragon fruits, and more which she supplies nationwide.

If anything one picks up from talking to Philile, is her lack of fear in the face of a

challenge. She is a woman with a can-do spirit which has gotten her far over the years. When she started her venture, she says she often had to source produce from other farmers to meet her clients demands. Even when she was not always sure where or how her problem-solving skills always led her to a plan and satisfy a customer. Soon the demand for produce would lead Philile to cross borders, taking other women with her along the way. From needing to constantly source produce from other farmers to eventually producing the high volumes she needed to supply, Philile now produces much of her products with a quality that keeps her clients coming back for more.

This #BlueShero has accomplished a lot from the profits she has gained through farming, including building her home and purchasing a vehicle to transport her goods so she does not have to rely on renting from others. She is on the verge of completing a block of flats to lease and is acquiring tunnels to increase her productivity and climate resilience. However, her greatest achievement to date has been purchasing a warehouse to store produce on its way to the market. Philile acquired the warehouse to lease storage space to farmers and suppliers who require such a service. She remarked on how exciting this development has been for her and is a mark of her growth.

When all is said and done, Philile still looks forward to owning her own land to expand her business. She says one challenge women farmers continue to have is access to land they can call their own. She has seen land being repossessed just as business booms. Her dream is to own a large farm where she can grow organic produce and keep livestock. She excitedly shares how she would love to couple her farm with a butchery. Many of the farmers she previously sourced produce from now look up to Philile and marvel at the progress she has made. Her growth shows that she is one farmer to keep an eye on as she continues to expand her businesses and work her way to becoming a farm owner.

From the 50 heads of spinach she sold to the chain store that first time, Philile has grown exponentially, widening her range of products...she supplies nationwide...She is a woman with a can-do spirit which has gotten her far over the years...



THE TIME FOR CHANGE IS NOW!

Together let's advocate for
gender equality & celebrate
women making a difference
in our communities.



Strength in Unity

Empowerment by Solidarity: Contributing to the Development of Women-Led Businesses

A mother of 8 and resident of Manzini, Bethusile Ruth Dlamini began her career as an informal trader, selling fruits and vegetables at the President Centre in Manzini. She is the zone 1 chairperson under the Municipal Council charged with representing the welfare and voices of informal vendors within the council's structures.

Bethusile Dlamini

Chairperson - Coalition of Informal Economy Associations in Eswatini (CIEAS) | Woman's Rights Advocate

With 20 years of experience in the trade, Bethusile's story is the embodiment of what happens when women support women. She shared how her life expanded when she met Malta Vilakati who at the time was the president of the Swaziland Cross Border Traders Association (Swacbta) president. Vilakati saw Bethusile's nascent leadership qualities and began grooming her in business and trade. Bethusile explained how her keen interest in gaining new knowledge and skills made her receptive to the guidance Malta provided, opening doors for her to attend different workshops and learn key skills that would later in life lead her to become a voice for positive social change through the many roles she has since occupied for women's development.

Bethusile does not only represent informal traders within the council, but through other platforms, too, both locally and regionally. She shares how her interpersonal skills and willingness to groom and mentor other women have given her great influence and inspired confidence in her leadership abilities among her peers. Locally, she serves as the Manzini Regional Chairperson under Liphimbo Labomake, the non-partisan women's coalition that amplifies women's collective voices. She also

serves as the chairperson for the Coalition of Informal Economy Associations in Eswatini which coordinates informal trade in the country. Regionally, Bethusile works with cross-border SADC which brings together cross-border traders across the region to promote business skills, financial literacy, and more skills to advance their trade. In these roles, she can engage stakeholders such as the government to advocate for the needs of women, in a manner that recognizes the government as a partner and not an adversary.

Bethusile can #InspireInclusion by taking the lessons and skills she gains from her civic engagement initiatives and bringing them to other women in the informal trade sector, contributing to the development of women-led businesses' income generation and market access capacity. Her training allows her to teach other women on how they can comply with trade regulations to operate successful cross-border businesses. She has come to understand that leadership requires her as a woman to be

firm in her convictions, understand interpersonal dynamics, and foster lasting, collaborative relationships that lend to greater support for all. She feels she has a responsibility towards supporting the women she supports, lending an ear, and making an effort to leave an impact in the lives of those around her.

QUICK FACTS ABOUT BETHUSILE...

The best advice she has ever received

It is important that humans love each other, support each other, and engage with each other, especially those who we live around to create a sense of harmony.

3 things she loves doing

Gathering with other women
The work I do
Spending time with family

How would she love to be remembered

I want people to remember me as someone who shared love and promoted harmony in the spaces I operated in.



Taking a Taste of Eswatini to the World

A producer of artisanal sauces known for adding a little bit of something sweet and a little bit of something a little spicy, Nontobeko Nxumalo is climbing the entrepreneurship ladder one bottle of sauce at a time.

Nontobeko Nxumalo

Founder - Pecko Sauces



A lover of food who values her work, Nontobeko is the founder and face behind a tasty brand of sauces: Pecko Sauces. As a versatile woman, it is no wonder she would curate an equally versatile brand. Her sauces can be used in a variety of ways for the adventurous chef and foodie alike.

Nontobeko was inspired to start Pecko Sauces after identifying an opportunity to share her love for food with the world. Initially, she just wanted to share that love in the form of a condiment that would enhance people's culinary experiences. She debuted her brand through stall activations at events as well as high traffic locations such as The Gables in Ezulwini. As the business gained traction, she made efforts to establish distribution channels by experimenting with various outlets.

Pecko sauce proved itself to be an immediate hit among retailers- opening doors for Nontobeko to access broader avenues to market her brand and landing her on major stages: MTN Bushfire Festival and Standard Bank Luju Festival. This, alongside launching her website, is one of her greatest achievements. But her appearance on big stages did not end with Eswatini. Nontobeko is bringing a taste of Eswatini to the world, exhibiting at international stages. One such stage was the Kaohsiung Food Show in Taiwan in October 2023, facilitated by The Eswatini Investment Promotion Authority (EIPA). Pecko Sauce received a raving review from the Kaohsiung City Mayor, Chen Chi-mai, which was

documented in a reel by Allan and Wes Davies; well-renowned YouTube Vloggers - consequently highlighting Eswatini at a global scale.

Nontobeko attributes her success to remaining focused on her goals, prayer and community-building with people who believe in the brand. She has shown consistency over the years and continues to be strategic with her brand positioning and overall image.

However, the journey of being a woman entrepreneur has not been easy. Nontobeko shares how her greatest challenges include navigating access to resources, industry regulations and platforms to access relevant information. She shares how, in her experience, the entrepreneurship terrain is characterized by complexity. Hence, she believes women need grit, confidence and knowledge. She says having an idea is only the beginning of the journey, the real business is execution which comes with many hurdles.

She advises aspiring women entrepreneurs to be flexible in adjusting their focus as some ideas or strategies may not work. She encourages women to have confidence in their competency; the ability to build successful businesses.

Indeed her recipe for success is showing its fruits as Nontobeko grows in strides. Over the past 3 years Pecko Sauces has managed to diversify to include the curation of gourmet dishes

made with the sauce. The transition also saw an extension to the range of products one can enjoy from Pecko sauces. Nontobeko announced that Eswatini can look forward to something new and exciting from her: Pecko Eats; a culinary enterprise she is on the verge of launching. Nontobeko shares how important it is to her to remain relevant as a key focus in establishing sustained growth.

In the end, Nontobeko would love to be remembered as a trailblazer, a woman that positively impacted lives through her gifts, talents, and efforts - substantiated by remarkable work.

Quick Questions with Nontobeko

What is the best advice you have ever received:

"Keep showing up." As simple as three syllables but effective in yielding outcome. It simply means keep going, of course you need to make sure you're headed the right direction but all in all it means "do the work and eventually it will yield success."

What 3 words that best describe you?
Passionate, Eccentric and Driven.

What 3 things you cannot live without?
God, Love and Knowledge

Name your all time top 3 most inspiring women?

In no particular order;
Phuti Mahanyele-Dabengwa, CEO of Naspers South Africa
Monica Musonda CEO of Java Foods and Baratang Miya Co-founder Devshired AI.

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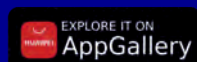


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From Roots To Results

Temangweni Zwane
Founder - Agrolife Nursery

Young female Agriprenueur Temangweni Zwane is a fine example of how deeply rooted, inherited traits of hard work and resilience can shape ones future. In this piece we dive into her journey at becoming an award winning farmer.

When she was just 20 years-old, Temangweni Zwane took her passion for agriculture and the savings from her internship with the Central Bank and turned that into an award-winning agribusiness. Temangweni is the founder of Agrolife Nursery, an enterprise that specializes in producing high-quality vegetable seedlings, contributing to a sustainable food system and empowering communities through agriculture.

Her passion for agriculture was cultivated by bearing witness to her grandfather's dedication to providing for her family as a maize farmer and his love for farming. Temangweni shared how she initially resisted farming because of the early hours and the heavy workload. However, she says seeing the sense of accomplishment her grandfather showed gave her a new perspective. In the end, she says farming taught her about more than just crop production, but also about resilience, patience, and the satisfaction of seeing your efforts come to fruition. These are traits she carries into her business and why we celebrate her today among our #BlueSheroes.

A businesswoman who keeps herself updated with the latest technologies in her field, Temangweni takes an innovative approach to farming. To improve profits, she says she utilizes hybrid seeds with a proven track record of improved yield and disease resistance, increasing her overall seedling production. Additionally, Agrolife boasts a custom-built germination house that ensures consistent germination rates even during cold weather, allowing her to extend her planting season and further boost her yields.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Despite growing her business in leaps and bounds through hard work and dedication, Temangweni explained how challenging it was to start her business while balancing the demands of school. She began her business while studying towards her BSC in Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness Management. Temangweni says she is guided by a strong internal compass and a clear understanding of who she is which allows her to develop deep connections with others. She believes these authentic connections were integral to her ability to overcome the difficulties she encountered in this period. Furthermore, accessing funding from institutions like Youth Fund and

Catalyse has been a much-needed boost in her journey.

Her dedication and commitment did not take long to start bearing fruits. Within the first year of being in business, Temangweni was recognized as the 4th runner-up in the Woman Farmer of the Year competition. From there, she has gone on to be recognized both nationally and globally, winning the Total Energies' "Best Start-up Under 3 Years" award and gaining a much-coveted spot on the Mandela Washington fellowship program in 2023.

From Temangweni, one can learn about how it's never too early to start.





The Pursuit of Happiness

A Stepping Stone to Success

Andrea Mendes-Maphanga

Finance Director - Eswatini Sugar Association

Andrea Mendes-Maphanga is an eccentric, adventurous powerhouse with a serene demeanor. Her family is of utmost importance to her. She proudly proclaims that she is a mother of two boys and a wife to a supportive husband who has made her climb to the top that much easier. She speaks of how she always dreamt of one day working in the sugarcane industry. With much hard work and dedication, this #Shero is an example of how one can turn a dream into a reality.

Andrea is now leading at the helm of Eswatini Sugar Association (ESA), Eswatini's second largest exporter, as the Finance Director. Before joining the association, Andrea built for herself a strong resume characterized by a fast climb to the top which is a testament to Andrea's hard work and skill. She is no stranger to entering a space and

immediately shining. She began her career as a Management Accountant at Standard Bank where she was quickly recognised as a leader. Within 6 months of joining the company she was promoted to Manager- Management Accounting and Budget, a role she held from September 2018 to March 2021. She describes how significant this promotion was to her. She felt it demonstrated the confidence the company placed in her abilities despite having worked there a short time.

She would later leave the bank to pursue her dream of working in the sugar industry, joining Ubombo Sugar Limited. Even there Andrea was given her flowers. It took only seven months before she was entrusted with the role of Acting Finance Director. She was chosen to lead the local steering committee responsible for implementing changes to the financial reporting system. She shares the appreciation she has for the mentorship and support she received in this role.

By the time she eventually joined ESA, Andrea shared how the sugar industry was experiencing major challenges globally. She says she felt honored to have been selected among equally qualified candidates for the role considering. She sees dedication, hard work, and faith in her aspirations as crucial elements to her success. She goes on to say that there were times when she doubted how achievable her dreams were. She says she is still amazed at her current position, showing gratitude to her unwaver-

ing faith in God. She further shares how having strong support has consistently encouraged and pushed her to reach the great heights they believe she is capable of reaching. Andrea cherishes the amazing leaders she's collaborated with and the incredible organizations she has worked with.

She does not forget to thank her husband whose steadfast support carried her through her journey, witnessing her steady growth and never losing faith in her.

Throughout this journey, Andrea says she has always been focused on personal growth over career advancement. She says her greatest accomplishment in life has been her determination to persevere. Being able to learn every day and apply the lessons to her work is what she enjoys most about her job. She says she has learned to navigate life's challenges with grace and resilience, fully embracing the notion that life is meant to be lived, rather than to merely exist. Strengthened by this worldview, she believes that greater things are in store for her.

She encourages other women climbing the corporate ladder to pursue what brings them joy and what aligns with their comfort. She warns against succumbing to the expectations set by societal norms. She ends her advice by saying if something does not resonate with your true self, there is no need to justify it to anyone else.

...she has always been focused on personal growth over career advancement...life is meant to be lived, rather than to merely exist.



Empowering Women Igniting Communities

From reaching over 20,000 women with GBV response and prevention programs to improving the livelihoods of 160 women and youth in Matsapha by building a waste buyback center.

Vimbai Kapurura

Executive Director - Women Unlimited

We talk to the Executive Director at Women Unlimited Vimbai Kapurura who says her nomination as a Standard Bank Blue SHERo belongs to every woman who is working hard for her family, her children, her community, and every woman suffering the scourge of gender-based violence as she continues to build a dynamic, diverse, and inclusive community in the Kingdom of Eswatini that is bound together by a shared commitment to women, young people, and gender equality.

Please briefly tell us about your organization, Women Unlimited?

Women Unlimited is a registered not-for-profit organisation based in The Kingdom of Eswatini. We are a women's rights and development organisation that has been in existence since October 2017. Our vision is to attain economic emancipation, social freedom, balance, and equitable representation for all women, young people, and marginalized groups in Eswatini and Southern Africa. We are dedicated to building a dynamic, diverse, and inclusive community in the Kingdom of Eswatini that is bound together by a shared commitment to women, young people, and gender equality in line with Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and Goal 5 (Gender Equality). While we are all out for women, we do also engage men and boys as important change agents for what we seek to achieve.

What are some of your proudest achievements as an organization, to date?

Since 2019 we have reached over 20,000 women with GBV response and prevention programs and messages mostly in vulnerable communities. We worked in the rural communities, bringing education and awareness to the SODV Act and demystifying the misconceptions that surrounded it.

We mobilized women for equal participation and representation of women in decision-making roles in 2019, through our EU-funded project where we partnered with WLSA as an affiliate from 2019-2021.

We fostered the peace agenda after the 2021 unrest and reached women in all corners of Eswatini with the message of peace and reconciliation while working with relevant stakeholders to advocate for a national action plan on the Women Peace and Security Agenda (UN Security Resolution 1325).

We have ventured into little-explored territory for women and youth economic empowerment under smart climate change actions. In 2022 we established a bottle recycling site and supported 20 vulnerable youth and women who are now registered as a company called "Waste Life Investments" operating independently. As a sustainability strategy, we managed to acquire land for this group of women to enable them to develop further as well as engage in different streams of waste to ensure they are completely involved in the complete value chain of waste management. In the same year to 2023 we contributed significantly to the implementation of

anti-plastic pollution legislation and pioneered the first-ever Eswatini Waste Indaba in partnership with the Eswatini Environment Authority that has become an annual event. Not only did we contribute to policy change but we also improved the livelihoods of 160 women and youth in Matsapha by empowering them to see value in waste. We built a buy-back centre which is a structure operated by one of the big recyclers in the country and this is where our beneficiaries and the community sell their recyclable waste for money. This is where we can say we stand out by providing long-lasting support to the communities that we have been in contact with amongst the other GBV prevention and response initiatives that have been done and are ongoing.

What does it mean to you to be recognised as a Standard Bank Blue SHERo?

It is a very humbling gesture and I feel honoured to have been nominated not only for me but for the vulnerable communities we serve. The gender gap is ever so widening worldwide and most women do exceptional work that is often unrecognized, unvalued, and unrewarded in a male-dominated world punctuated by gender inequality. This nomination is not for me, it's for every woman working hard for her family, her children, and her community and every woman suffering the scourge of gender-based violence whose light has suffered the momentary dim power of abuse and neglect.



'My purpose in life is to serve others and spread love'

Deliswa Maphanga

Founder - Sanakwa Inclusion Care Centre

Deliswa Maphanga always knew from a young age that her purpose in life was to serve others and spread love. She describes how she has carried her vision to care for people since she was 5 years old. Maphanga remembers dreaming about one day being a caretaker, running a big house where people were receiving care and healing. It would be many years later when she would finally realize that dream by founding Sanakwa Inclusion Care Centre (SANAKWA), an NGO that focuses on supporting children living with special needs and disabilities. SANAKWA's work can be divided into three core pillars: advocacy, information dissemination and sensitisation, and social support and inclusivity.

Deliswa was still a young woman when she founded SANAKWA and has achieved so much through the fledgling organization. However, finding the courage to start the organization was not easy. The young founder shares how, because she married young and moved straight from her parental home into her marital one, she found herself in a confining marriage. Even as she maneuvered the many challenges that came with her marriage, the belief that she was meant to live a life far bigger

than the one she had been living stayed with her. This meant when her husband eventually filed for divorce, what was a very tough period in her life became the source of her freedom. Deliswa describes how suddenly doors started opening up for her in ways she could not imagine. It was at this time that she founded SANAKWA.

In 2021 she was elected as the youngest Chairperson of the Global Fund's Country Coordinating Mechanisms (GF-CCM) in Eswatini- the body that oversees the Global Fund's funding in Eswatini. Suddenly, she was responsible for steering a team of representatives from various interest groups including government, development agencies, key populations, the private sector, and more, to oversee budgets worth millions of Emalangeni.

As she exits that role, Deliswa shares how her success in her tenure led to her nomination to lead the development of the body that will now oversee TB funding at a regional level, overlooking more than just Eswatini. This is a journey Deliswa looks forward to taking on and advocating for inclusive programming in the process.

Deliswa also shares that one key belief she has held that has helped her to care for and interact with people from all backgrounds and abilities is the notion that we are to all love our neighbors as we love ourselves. As a private person who draws strength from time spent alone, enjoying her peace and recollecting

herself. She shares the importance of loving oneself in order to extend that same love to others. Through this she is able to practice externally the care she shows herself internally.



Q & A WITH DELISWA

The Best Advice you have ever received?

Never stoop low to your opponents level- keep quiet and pray.

What are 3 words that best describe you?

Humble • Respectful • Considerate

What are 3 things you cannot live without?

Being true to herself • Belief in God • Love

3 things you enjoy doing outside of work?

Spending time with her siblings
Spending time with herself
Being outdoors with people

Watch the inspiring stories of empowered Women

Visit the Standard Bank Eswatini YouTube Channel
and get to know more about your favourite SHERoes
by watching the exciting series **A Cuppa with Nomcebo**



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Inspiring a Generation & Transforming Women's Sports in Eswatini

Nobuhle Dlamini

Professional International Golfer

Few people can boast of being the first person to achieve a particular fete in their country. However, Nobuhle Dlamini is one such person. Swazi-born and living in South Africa, this #BlueShero began her golfing career at the tender age of 12 and has risen in rank and skill to become the first female professional golfer from the kingdom of Eswatini. Her father, Johannesburg Dlamini is a self-taught golfer who learned as a caddie at the Royal Swazi Sun Country Club. Dlamini introduced his daughter to the sport while they still lived in Eswatini before Nobuhle migrated to Johannesburg when she was just 14 years old to attend high school.

The record-breaking golfer made quite a name for herself while studying towards her degree in sports management from the University of Pretoria. She says she went to the university because she believes in the importance of attaining an education. For Nobuhle, knowledge is power. Though some may be of the opinion that one does not need an education if one hopes to pursue a career in sports, Nobuhle says she has absolutely no regrets in her decision to pursue her degree. She says she learned a lot in her time there, graduating as the UP-Tuks Sportswoman of the Year in 2013. However, before graduating Nobuhle was already making moves to

secure her spot as Eswatini's first professional golfer. In 2012 she won 6 titles and broke into the top 10 on the World Amateur Golf Ranking- sweeping up the number 2 spot- a global achievement for a woman with global dreams and a global footprint. Her dedication, hard work and drive are evident in the tremendous progress she made and continues to make.

After graduating Nobuhle went on to the LET's Q School and secured status then played on Tour for the coming season. Let Nobuhle tell it, and she will share how in that period she had not played a lot of professional sports before then so all she knew was that she had to play golf that week in order to play internationally. It was her first tour and Nobuhle shared how much she enjoyed the whole experience from beginning to end. Having gone on more tours since then, Nobuhle explains that one of the challenges she faces is accessing her visas. She finds that having too many tours close together sometimes makes the planning process a bit more complex. However, luckily for her, much of the navigation of these complications is made easier by the support she receives.

Her track record in the sport since her early days where she rocketed up the ranks in full throttle has been nothing short of impressive. From playing mainly on the LET Access Series with a

best finish at the Larvik Ladies Open where she finished third, to winning 7 tours in 2018 and 2019 at the Sunshine Tours, she continues to inspire many in her wake. In 2019 she swung her way to R100,000 after winning the Investec Property Fund Order of Merit award for being the leading player at the end of the season.

Now paying it forward to the future generation of golf stars, Nobuhle hosts the annual Nobuhle Dlamini Junior Golf Challenge

Nobuhle can be termed a beacon of light for young women, and most certainly all emaSwati that the impossible can be turned into a reality.



Helping Women Discover their Wings

Sebenzile Dlamini

Executive Director - Women in Trade and Development

Sebenzile Dlamini is the founder and director of Women in Trade and Development (WITAD), which is a non-profit organization that operates in Eswatini. In 2015, a year after legally incorporating WITAD, she and her husband used their personal income to provide humanitarian aid to a poor, vulnerable household in Malindza, and they built a house for them with assistance and donations from the local community. It became clear to Sebenzile that poverty is a complex phenomenon that can only be eradicated through multiple, integrated interventions at the household, national, and global levels.

In 2020, she developed a curriculum on income generation, wealth creation, and purposeful living. WITAD used this curriculum to train 45 adolescents through in-person and online training workshops in 2020 and 2021. She left employment in March 2022 to focus on growing WITAD's programs. In April 2022, WITAD trained 52 volunteers to assist the organization in building the capacity of Out-of-School Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW) to create self-help projects and businesses and access education opportunities.

Amongst the organization's other recent achievements, in collaboration with the Eswatini Investment

Promotion Authority (EIPA) and the Taiwan Government, WITAD presented locally made chili sauce, Pecko Sauce, to the international market for the first time. This was at the Kaohsiung Food Show in Taiwan.

The organization also recently hosted a graduation for 84 young businesswomen who were up-skilled with vocational and digital skills. The women are only a fraction of the approximately 500 women who are a part of WITAD's rural community-based empowerment program in the four regions of Eswatini.

Sebenzile also founded a business named 19-D (Pty) Ltd that trades as an eatery and a management consultancy. She shares stories about her business with adolescent girls and young women to inspire them to start their businesses.

Previously she served as the Head of the Incubator at the Royal Science and Technology Park (RSTP); Chief Economist at Swaziland Competition Commission; Director of Trade at Business Eswatini; Senior Trade Policy Analyst at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Trade and Economist at the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development. Sebenzile holds a Master of Science in Business Economics, Finance, and Banking

from Portsmouth University and a Post-graduate Diploma in Management Practice (Trade Law Specialization) from the University of Cape Town.

She shares stories about her business with the adolescent girls and young women to inspire them to start their own businesses.





Redefining Eswatini's Fashion Landscape

Inspired to Bet on Herself and Take a Leap of Faith

Mbali Kunene

Fashion Designer - Monte Couture

Mbali Kunene has made her mark in the fashion industry through her thriving brand, Monte Couture, which she founded in 2012. Mbali is a talented designer whose work has received much notoriety in over a decade. The brand which #InspiresInclusion caters to full-figured women, a group often left behind by many fashion houses. Mbali is not the kind of woman to wait for the world to cater to her. Instead, she shares how she was inspired to start her brand because she struggled to find chic, comfortable clothes she loved.

The decision to start her brand was a bold one. Mbali holds a diploma in Tourism Management from the University of Tshwane. Even as she pursued that qualification, she knew that

...she found it better to try and fail than to be stuck wondering “what if”...

she had a hidden passion for fashion. It was no wonder then that when she eventually entered the world of work, taking on a desk job, she found it to be a frustrating routine. She finally quit her job in pursuit of something that would allow her to express her creativity and show off her avant-garde side. She baldly claims that she found it better to try and fail than to be stuck wondering “what if” for the rest of her life.

Before she became a designer, Mbali drew designs that she kept hidden. Being free of her corporate job gave her room to take this hidden talent out of the closet and dust it off. At first, she took the designs to tailors to make her own clothes, but little did she know that she was sowing the seeds to a booming business.

Mbali's leap of faith gave birth to Monte Couture, a brand that produces garments designed to embody beauty, luxury, and craftsmanship. Initially, the fashion house was launched as Monte Elegance but has since rebranded. Monte Couture boasts a team of friendly

and passionate professionals who work with clients to personify their client's personality through design. Clients can be treated to

custom designs of all kinds, from school uniforms to high fashion gowns, Monte Couture has shown itself to be a versatile brand.

When Mbali first started on her fashion journey, she was selected as one of 6 Swazis to undertake a three-year program in Fashion Design and Clothing Construction in Johannesburg, South Africa. The prestigious program opened

the opportunity for designers to have their work auctioned and pushed them to design beautiful, creative work. Closer to the end of the program, Mbali and another Swazi designer were the only two remaining Swazis to run the whole program, earning their diplomas.

Mbali describes how she loves paying attention to detail. She gives her designs dramatic detail and killer finishes. She likes utilizing what she terms “sizzling” colour shades with textiles to create a timeless effect to her work. According to Mbali, her inspiration is drawn from her surroundings- the beauty of nature, the people she encounters, and amazing architectural designs. This is one #Shero who shows how incredible it can be to have the courage to bet on yourself and take that leap of faith. The pivot in her career choice has very well worked for her as she continues to serve clients and onlookers with quality work and high fashion.





Empowered Women Empower Women

“We must open the doors
and see to it they remain open
so others can pass through,”

Rosemary Brown - Canadian Politician & Activist





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