

Open Chair starts a movement amongst women in advertising

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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On the eve of Women's Day, women in advertising gathered to start a conversation that will hopefully inspire generations to come.

Open Chair was started by Jenny Glover (ECD at TBWA Hunt Lascaris), Simoné Bosman (executive producer at Molo Sana Films) and Suhana Gordhan (CD at FCB Africa and Loeries' chairperson), and initiated by the Loeries. Gordhan's vision for this 'open chair' concept was voiced at last year's Loeries, where she spoke about filling chairs with bright young women and the onus on leaders to pull out those chairs. "I wanted to create a space for us to learn, to grow, a space to be heard, to engage with each other, to be inspired and feel looked after. Then I found two amazing women [Glover and Bosman] who shared the same vision, and open chair was born."



Suhana Gordhan, Jenny Glover and Simoné Bosman aka 'Destiny's Child'.

Photographer: Zuzi Seoka, [Zuno Photography](#)

Gordhan opened the event with a brief introduction about the heart behind it and how it came to life, followed by a few thought-provoking comments by Facebook Africa's CEO Nunu Ntshingila.



#Loeries2017: What the hell happened to women in leadership? Facebook's Nunu Ntshingila

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The rest of the evening took the form of speed networking, intended to create a safe space for mentors and mentees to meet face-to-face, to ask questions and to ultimately build a community. "The purpose of tonight is to be open – to be our authentic selves, to be honest, to learn from each other – because I think part of the mentor thing is also learning from the mentees, and then eventually to build this community of people," she explained.

This year's mentors included Jenny Glover, Simoné Bosman, Suhana Gordhan, Fran Luckin, Mariana O'Kelly, Dani Hynes, Thithi Nteta, Neo Segola, Melina McDonald, Lorraine Smit, Nkgabiseng Motau, Mukondi Ralushayi, Jana Hamman, Gugu Nkabinde, Kirsten Leeuw, Masego Motsogi and Vanessa Maselwa.



Photographer: Zuzi Seoka, [Zuno Photography](#)

The initiative will eventually include men as well, but for now, it's filling a desperate need within the industry. "There has been so much good energy around this event – male and female energy – and I've learnt that you need to surround yourself with the people that understand and share your vision, and for those that are still questioning it, you can just leave them on the platform while your train is going off. And to the young women sitting here tonight, we want you to see that there's a place for you, we want you to thrive in this industry and to aim for empty seats in leadership roles," she went on to say.

A village of advertising aunties

In Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's book, *Dear Ijeawele*, Adichie gives her friend advice on how to raise her daughter as a feminist. She wrote:

“ Surround her with a village of aunties, women who have qualities you'd like her to admire. ”

"I love this," said Gordhan, "not just because I'm your chair aunty of the Loeries, but because I think we should all be aunties for each other, and for generations to come. That means we must make pots of tea when needed, pour a glass of wine when the situation calls for it, offer a generous, non-judgmental ear, arrive with broad, sturdy shoulders and strong, long arms, and offer equal measures of tough conversations and kind affirmations when needed. Because it takes this village of aunties to ensure that the chairs in leadership are filled with more and more women like you sitting here tonight."



Suhana Gordhan appointed chairperson of the Loeries

Loeries 22 Aug 2016



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