

# Leading women of industry in Africa gather for the Standard Bank Top Women Virtual Conference

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Despite a global pandemic and recent economic downturns, progress has been made towards advancing the role and standing of South African women in business. Has it been quick enough? According to research, South Africa is one of only 12 economies globally where the number of women entrepreneurs has risen over previous years, with 11% of working-age women currently engaged in some form of entrepreneurial activity (up from 10% in 2020)<sup>1</sup>. At the same time, female representation in the boardroom of JSE-listed companies has risen to 15%, a two-percent increase from the last year<sup>2</sup>.



However, with women making up more than half of the working-age population<sup>3</sup>, these figures remain far below those needed to achieve true gender equality in the workplace. As such, proponents for the advancement of women in business are calling on leaders in both the public and private sectors to support tangible efforts aimed at closing the ever-present gender gap.

Heeding their call, more than 100 global industry leaders, futurists, entrepreneurs, policymakers and philanthropists will be gathering virtually for this year's edition of the [Standard Bank Top Virtual Women Conference](#). Now in its seventh year, the event is set to welcome more than 12,000 c-suites, decision-makers and established entrepreneurs from across the world, making the largest virtual gatherings of African business women on the continent.

Taking place on 12–13 October 2022, the Standard Bank Top Women Virtual Conference is an exclusive platform that aims to drive change in politics and policy and accelerate action to propel the growth and expansion of female leadership in Africa. In doing so, the event affords delegates unprecedented access to network and engage with business leaders through a variety of panel discussions, breakaway sessions, remote meetups, one-on-one networking and exhibitions.

“It’s clear, after measuring impact, that both women entrepreneurs and gender-empowered organisations outperform men-only start-ups and organisations,” says Top Women head of brand, Twaambo Judy Chileshe. “Women are proven to be better with money, less risky in repaying debt, and more sustainable in terms of return on investment with money. Every indicator known to the financial services and investment community overwhelmingly showcases the fact that the best investment organisations can make is to attract women leaders, drive gender equality in companies, and invest and grow female entrepreneurs. We seek to share the reality and the social, economic and sustainable impact of greater inclusion, equality and diversity.”

With some hot, progressive topics up for debate with actionable insights, proceedings will feature Top Women driving change in organisations and society, such as former deputy president of South Africa, Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, chief

operating officer at the Standard Bank Group, Margaret Nienaber, award-winning entertainer and activist, Yvonne Chaka Chaka and Dr Judy Dlamini, chairperson of the GBV response fund and chancellor of Wits University to name but a few. The conference boasts several back-to-back compelling high-impact sessions, including an exploration into the role that women in technology play towards driving growth in emerging economies; a review of impactful career strategies from women at the top of the corporate ladder; tactics for solving South Africa's gender-based violence pandemic; and approaches towards stimulating female leadership in male-dominated industries.

These must-watch sessions continue during day two, with attendees set to unpack how stakeholders in corporate and government can bridge the gender income gap in South Africa; ways in which both business and society can better hold organisations accountable for gender-balanced leadership; and immediate and sustainable solutions that women can bring to the table for resilient post-pandemic recovery.

This will be amplified by a series of fireside chats, where attendees will unpack how women can build a culture of change, featuring South African actresses, Shannon Esra and Terry Pheto, and former Miss Universe and UN Women Ambassador, Zozibini Tunzi; as well as look into the power of media and brands and how they are driving the women empowerment narrative with award-winning investigative journalist, Devi Sankaree Govender.

Commenting on the diverse event programme, Italia Mabula, head of brand and marketing BCC at Standard Bank Group, says: "The Standard Bank Top Women Conference is all about developing a sustainable pipeline of female leaders on the African continent. It is a platform on which to celebrate, inspire and mentor women in business and corporate. When women gain courage through empowerment, they gain the capacity to #RiseAboveTheNoise, inspiring them to work towards achieving their goals and dreams."

To register and learn more about the Standard Bank Top Women Conference, visit <https://bit.ly/3fq8Bwb>, or snap an image of yourself at the [Top Women Photo Booth](#).

For the full event programme, go to: <https://hopin.com/events/standard-bank-top-women-summit>.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.mastercard.com/news/media/phwevxc/the-mastercard-index-of-women-entrepreneurs.pdf>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.pwc.co.za/en/press-room/supporting-womens-rise-in-corporate-south-africa.html>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=15668>

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