



# Happy International Women's Day

“Achieving gender equality is fundamental to realizing sustainable development and creating a more just and equitable world for everyone. The UN Women theme for the 2024 International Women's Day is: "Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress". The WPN supports this theme primarily as it aligns with both ethical principles supporting the inclusion of women as well as business objectives leading to positive outcomes for all stakeholders.

Additionally, there are further aspects promoting the inclusion of women, and diversity in the workplace (a significant focus for the WPN this year) which will ensure economic sustainability and societal benefits that our country is in desperate need of:

- **Promoting Gender Equality:** Women inclusion helps advance gender equality by providing equal opportunities for women to participate in the workforce, thereby challenging traditional gender roles and stereotypes.
- **Empowerment of Women:** Inclusive workplaces empower women to pursue their professional aspirations, develop their skills, and achieve career advancement, contributing to their overall empowerment and self-confidence.
- **Cultural Diversity and Perspective:** Women bring diverse perspectives, experiences, and insights to the workplace, enriching organizational culture and fostering creativity, innovation, and problem-solving.
- **Role Modelling and Mentorship:** Visible representation of women in leadership positions serves as role models for aspiring female professionals and encourages mentorship and support networks, promoting career development and advancement for women.

We all have a role to play in contributing positively towards the creation of more inclusive workplaces, by implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives that are intended to support women's leadership development, and advocating for gender equality within our organizations. By fostering inclusive cultures where all voices are heard and valued, we can unlock the full potential of our organizations and create a brighter future for everyone.

**THULI MPUNTSHE**  
WPN NATIONAL CHAIR



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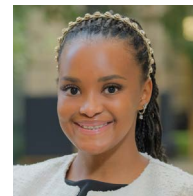
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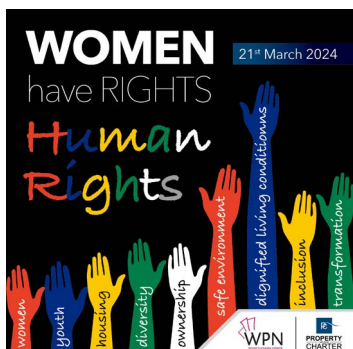
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## Beyond the Boardroom

### ELEVATING THE ASPIRATIONS OF WOMEN IN THE PROPERTY SECTOR

The narrative that board appointments are the ultimate measure of success for women in the South African property sector fails to capture the complexity and diversity of women's ambitions and aptitudes, says **Joanne Solomon, CEO of The SA Real Estate Investment Trust Association.**

In the evolving landscape of South Africa's property sector, the traditional benchmarks of success, notably boardroom representation, have increasingly been scrutinised. The argument that high-ranking positions, such as board memberships, are the pinnacle of professional achievement for women is a narrative that demands reconsideration. While seemingly empowering, this perspective may inadvertently side-line the myriad other contributions women make to the industry. The call to redefine success in broader, more inclusive terms is not just about gender equity; it's about recognising the diverse strengths and roles that women bring to the table, which often go beyond the confines of the boardroom.

In 2023, despite efforts to increase female representation in executive roles within the real estate sector, the numbers tell a telling story. While there has been progress, with women now occupying a more significant percentage of board positions than ever, this metric fails to capture the essence of women's contributions to the industry. The narrative that equates success solely with boardroom presence overlooks the rich tapestry of women's roles, from pioneering sustainable building practices to leading innovative development projects. These roles are equally critical to the industry's growth and transformation, yet they receive a fraction of the recognition and support that board positions attract.

The focus on board representation as the ultimate goal for professional women narrows the path to success and limits the potential for diverse leadership styles and innovative thinking within the sector. Not every woman aspires to a board position, and not every woman's skill set aligns with the traditional demands of these roles. By broadening our understanding of what it means to be successful, we can appreciate and leverage the full spectrum of women's contributions to the property sector.

Moreover, the emphasis on boardroom seats as a barometer of gender equality overlooks the structural barriers that continue to impede women's progress in the industry. Issues such as unequal pay, limited access to mentorship, and balancing professional and personal responsibilities are pervasive and require systemic solutions. Recognising and addressing these barriers is crucial for creating a genuinely inclusive environment that supports women's advancement in all areas of the property sector.

Encouraging a more holistic view of success is not just about fairness or representation; it's about enriching the industry with a broader array of talents, insights, and leadership styles. Diverse leadership has been shown to enhance innovation, decision-making, and financial performance. By valuing and supporting women's contributions across the spectrum, the property sector can harness this diversity to drive growth, sustainability, and resilience.

As we look to the future, the narrative around women's success in the property sector must evolve to reflect how women contribute to and lead within the industry. Expanding the definition of success to include leadership roles, innovative contributions, and strategic influence beyond the traditional corporate ladder is not just beneficial for women; it's essential for the vitality and competitiveness of the South African property sector.

In conclusion, redefining success in the property industry to encompass the full range of women's contributions requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders. The sector can pave the way for a more inclusive, dynamic, and prosperous future by challenging traditional narratives, addressing structural barriers, and celebrating diverse achievements. The time has come to move beyond the boardroom and embrace a more comprehensive vision of success for women in South Africa's property sector.





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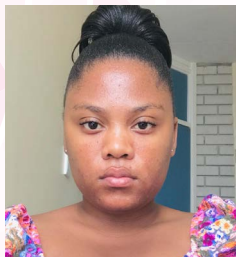
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