

Gender equality by 2030

By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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Did you know that 66% of the world's work is done by women and 50% of the food produced globally is by women? Yet women only earn 10% of the world's income, only own one percent of the world's property and lead in less than 10% of the world's 196 countries. For gender equality to be achieved by 2030, women will have to overcome many challenges.



Dr. Judy Dlamini, executive chairperson, Mbekani Group. Image © [Top Women Conference website](#).

Reaching a 50/50 split will take a huge effort from not just women, but men too, says Dr. Judy Dlamini, executive chairperson of the Mbekani Group and author of the book, *Equal but different* at the Standard Bank Top Women Conference.

“Women are doing everything they can to change this space, but more is needed. We need policies and support, leadership in business, government and civil society and the help of men. We need to work alongside them to achieve gender equality that is inclusive. We need to pull all the levers if we are to see equity in our time.”

She also highlighted women overcoming their own prejudices. “We are born in a country designed by men and this has given us certain prejudices which we need to overcome. We need to change how we think if we are to lead.”

One of challenges women face is working and living in a culture that has been developed by other people and for men, both at home and in the workplace, says Phuti Mahanyele, executive chairperson of Sigma Capital. “At the same time, the expectation is still there for women to play a role in the home.”

The hardest thing for women in management to navigate is the yin and the yang, agrees Prof Glenda Gray, president of the SA Medical Research Council, the first woman to ever hold this position. “Women struggle to find the sweet spot in their lives as they strive to balance family and work. They pit themselves against men and work harder. Often, they are the last to leave the office, yet women who navigate power are often viewed as aggressive.”



Phuti Mahanyele, CEO, Sigma Capital. Image © [Sigma Capital website](#)



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The stereotypes assigned to women in leadership are not assigned to men. For example, women leaders are aggressive as opposed to men leaders who are assertive. She adds that ‘career man’ is not a phrase, so why is ‘career woman’?

“ This stigmatises women and makes out they do not care about their family, are callous and want power at all costs. ”

We have an obligation to give opportunities to women, just as are given to men, she says. “Men have a network from school, old boys’ clubs and activities such as golf the enable them to move up. Women do not have this. They are also restricted because much of this happens after hours. Too often, women are prejudiced by what men have inherently. We need to create other ways for women to achieve.”

Successful women can find or make an environment at home that allows them to grow. They create an environment where their husband is supportive of them. As women, we always are having to balance our lives, adds Mahanyele.

“There are many opportunities for women apart from government and corporates, and we need to go look for them. You must go make it happen yourself. Being a person of a difference gender or race does not make you a lesser person. You can excel.”



Glenda Grey, president of the South African Medical Research Council. Image © [Brand South Africa](#)

Gray suggests finding a mentor. “I only discovered a mentor in my 50s, but it opens doors and takes you to another level. They unlock potential and opportunities that did not previously exist.

Dlamini agrees with her: “Michelle Gadsden-Williams says that while performance matters, it is relationships and mentors that are important as they can navigate you through politics, career decisions and the tough times. It is really not just what you know, but who you know.”

Other advice from Gray is to be passionate about what you do. “Do it as if you are doing it for free. Make the money incidental. Do not let your gender, race or background stand in the way of your dreams. What matters is your passion and desire to improve yourself and navigate your life.”

Not only is it important that we lead, but it is important that we own urges Dlamini. “We need to create wealth and that includes assets that you own. It is important that women own a stake in the industry.”

Gray, Dlamini and Mahanyele were all speakers at the Standard Bank Top Women conference held at Emperor’s Palace in Gauteng.

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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