

# COMEXT

The Official Newsletter of the Digital Council Africa

August 2021 Edition



**Digital  
Council**

## CELEBRATING WOMEN'S MONTH

**In conversation:**  
Meeting some of  
our extraordinary  
women

**Sector welcomes  
new Leadership**

**Thought Leadership:**  
The force of the female economy

**Human Rights and the  
Gender Digital Divide in  
Africa's COVID-19 Era**

**DCA and Harambee  
sign a formal partnership**

Issue #004



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## WELCOME FROM JUANITA

Dear colleagues,

Every year, in August, our country marks Women's Month. As part of this celebration and in honour of women, we have decided to dedicate our August issue to this theme. Some of the phenomenal women from our partner and member companies representing the digital sector have graciously shared some of their journeys, wisdom, and experience with us. Get to know them better in this edition.

By now most of you know that President Ramaphosa has made some changes in his cabinet. In this regard, we bid farewell to Minister Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams, the Commander in Chief of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (as she became known) and Deputy Minister Pinky Kekana, both of whom have done phenomenal work in steering our sector forward. In their place we welcome a new Minister, Honourable Khumbudzo Ntshavheni and her Deputy Mr Philly Mapulane. We wish them all the very best in their new roles.

The pandemic has impacted South Africa and all its people in countless ways. Exposing and deepening pre-existing inequalities and

vulnerabilities and amplifying the desperate need for action and change. Young people have been hardest hit by the ongoing challenges brought about by an increase in missed educational opportunities, lack of employment and an inability to access technology and the internet. Now more than ever it is imperative that we continue our efforts in bridging the digital divide and supporting and enabling the telecommunications sector in its deployment of infrastructure to reach and benefit as many people as possible. In light of this, it is with great pleasure that we announce that the Digital Council Africa and Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator formally signed a collaboration agreement during a virtual Board of Directors Meeting on the 4th of August 2021. By leveraging the joint capability as intermediary entities to partner with the government and the ICT sector we can unlock barriers and enable the implementation of catalytic projects.

In these uncertain times, it is even more important to work together towards a brighter future. As we strive towards our goal of a South

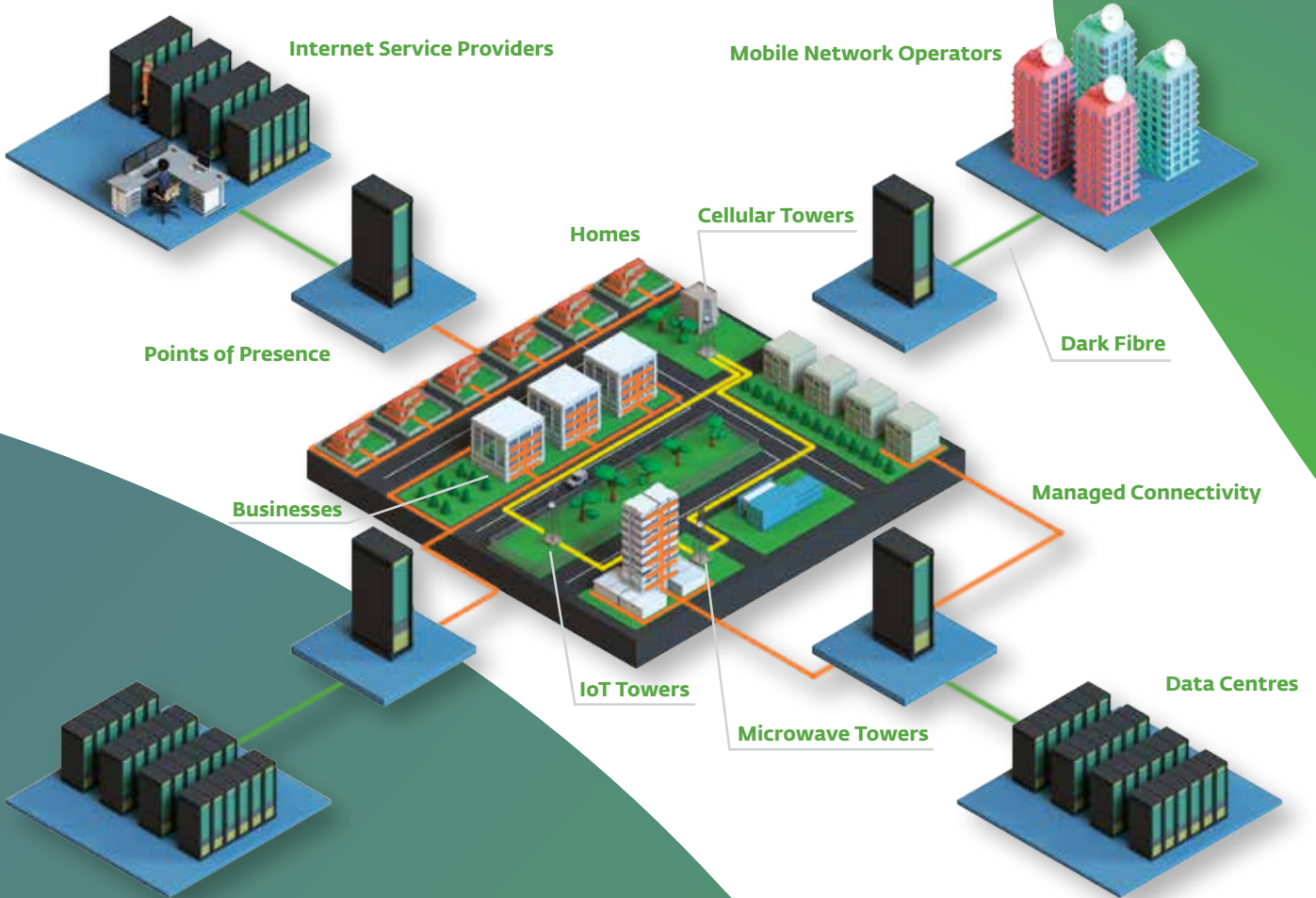
Africa where everyone is connected to all the extraordinary opportunities brought about by the digital economy. We are committed to our partnership with Harambee and believe that, together, we can bring meaningful change. We invite all of you to join the fight against unemployment. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me to get involved.

Thank you for your ongoing support. Together we are creating a truly transformed Africa, one in which all can participate equally.

Stay safe!

Juanita Clark  
CEO

D F A  
OPEN ACCESS NETWORK



Service providers that use our wholesale **fibre infrastructure** and **connectivity services** can give you premium access to a world of digital possibilities where **innovation** and **meaningful connections** prosper.

For more information on our state-of-the-art wholesale connectivity, visit [www.dfafrica.co.za](http://www.dfafrica.co.za).

# CONTENT

## FROM THE OFFICE

6

What is Conext? | CONEXT Conference | Message from the Treasurer |  
Annual Invoicing | Member Certificates | Database Management  
Getting featured in Conext | Member Benefits

## WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO

Estate Living: Smart living - Connected Community Webinar 9  
DCA & Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator sign Formal Partnership 11  
Digital Council Africa partners with Huawei for 5G education sessions 19

## THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

How out of the box thinking creates work for women 13  
Open Access Networks key to providing benefits for both ISPs & consumers 17  
Q & A: Member & Partner Female Leadership Focus 21  
The force of the female economy:  
What women want: connecting with the female consumer 34  
Human Rights and the Gender Digital Divide in Africa's COVID-19 Era 36  
The security challenges 5G will pose to every telecom network 39  
The evolution of gender-balanced recruitment processes in the  
telecommunications sector in Africa 44  
Beyond COVID-19: how tech's great leap forward can help bridge  
the digital gender divide 46  
Women Diversity in Tech 51

## NEWS FROM

Thank you to outgoing Minister & Welcome to the new Ministers 8  
Convergence Partners' latest fund to drive Digital Inclusion in Africa 20  
Cortex Hub launches all woman Fibre Optic Training 48

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Huawei: IPv6 Network Course 42

## CONTACT US, POPI INFO & LOST & FOUND

53

# FROM THE OFFICE

## What is Conext?

“CONEXT: a relationship in which a person or thing is linked or associated with someone or something else.”

In a world that is becoming increasingly digital, it is important to ensure that ongoing engagement takes place. The Digital Council Africa strives to remain in contact with its members, and to provide its members with ongoing communication about its activities. Conext is the answer to staying engaged.

Member engagement is encouraged through participation in events and working groups and through the distribution of the Conext Newsletter.

The DCA strives to offer members opportunities to network and collaborate and discuss best practice frameworks that is in the best in-

terest of all, solving complex issues through dialogue and policy recommendations and we encourage dialogue between government and private sector from a platform that is independent and product agnostic.

**STAY CONEXTED.** Follow us on [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)



Digital Council  
**CONEXT** 4-8 OCTOBER 2021

5 DAYS

Monday - Keynote Speakers  
Tuesday - Towers & 5G  
Wednesday - Cloud & Data  
Thursday - Fibre Optic Infrastructure  
Friday - IoT & Edge

The Digital Council Africa is pleased to invite you to the 2021 edition of the CONEXT Conference.



The annual Digital Council Africa Conference aims to keep participants abreast of the sector as we explore the world of Towers & 5G, Cloud & Data, Fibre Optic Infrastructure and IoT & Edge as well as the impact on the industry and the opportunities it holds for the continent. The 2021 edition will bring together like minded individuals from all over the world over a 5 day period with expert speakers who will share local and international expertise on topics relevant to the various streams.

## Sponsorship Benefits

There are various sponsorship benefits (dependent on package selection) and some of which include:

- Create business opportunities in new markets
- Give your brand the spotlight and share your business with participants
- Reach Digital Council Africa members through the Conext publication, the official newsletter of the Council (20 000+ readers)
- Delegates from around the world attend and will earn your company international recognition
- Brand the online registration area with your logo
- Naming rights – Brought to you by
- Branding on screen (before & after) sessions
- Speaking opportunity
- Panel discussion participation
- Workshop or Technical presentation
- 2 marketing mailshots to DCA member database (10 000+, 1 prior and 1 post event)
- Logo on all online correspondence
- Sponsor announcement mailer to DCA database

For more information about sponsorship [click here](#)

DCA Members receive a 20% discount on sponsorship prices



## Message from the Treasurer

Dear Members,

As a not-for-profit, the DCA is reliant on membership fees to effectively run the organisation. In this regard, we ask members whose fees are outstanding to make payment ensuring certainty in the execution of the budget.

In August the DCA went through its annual financial review and we are proud to say that for the 11th year running the organisation received a clean bill of health. Well done to the internal team for a great effort.

Thank you to all member companies who already made payments for the 2021/2022 membership year and thank you for your continued support.

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## Member Certificates

If you would like to receive a copy of your member certificate please reach out to Reesha Iyer at [reesha@digitalcouncil.africa](mailto:reesha@digitalcouncil.africa)

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## Database Management

To ensure that the relevant people in your organisation are receiving our communications, continually update the contact details of the individuals that should be added to the Council member database.

These details can be sent to Reesha Iyer at [reesha@digitalcouncil.africa](mailto:reesha@digitalcouncil.africa)

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## Want to feature your company in the upcoming Conext?

This publication belongs to the members of the Digital Council Africa. We welcome and encourage submissions from our members in the form of conversations related to the development of the digital economy as well as thought leadership articles you have written or would like to share, advertorials, adverts and any information that may be of interest to the ICT sector as a whole.

Contributions can be sent to Nadene Reignier at [nadene@digitalcouncil.africa](mailto:nadene@digitalcouncil.africa)

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## Member Benefits

By joining the Digital Council Africa members have a competitive advantage because they become informed members of their industry as the council actively engages and represents its members at government level. Council members who lead busy professional lives can depend on the organisation to represent and brief them on important industry trends, new legislative rulings, and advances in technology. The main platform the Digital Council Africa (DCA) uses for this is through its annual conference. This event aims to attract C-level speakers and best of breed OEM's and distributors to keep industry informed and updated on the latest trends in technology and legislation.

To find out more visit our [website](#).

# Thank You

As we bid farewell to Minister Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams and Deputy Minister Pinky Kekana we extend our gratitude to them both for the phenomenal work they did in steering our sector forward through their excellent service and leadership.

Although they are both taking on new roles the DCA will continue to support them in their new positions.

We wish them all the best in their new portfolios.



# Welcome

The Digital Council would like to extend a warm welcome to the new Heads of Department and offers its warmest congratulations on their appointments. We will continue to support the work of the department and look forward to grow its collaboration.



Ms Khumbudzo Ntshavheni was appointed as Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies on 5 August 2021.

From 29 May 2019 to 5 August 2021 she was the Minister of Small Business Development of the Republic of South Africa and was Acting Minister in The Presidency: Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation from 27 January 2021 to 5 August 2021.

She is a Member of the National Assembly and a Member of the African National Congress and a member of the ANC YL NEC.



Mr Philly Mapulane was appointed as the Deputy Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies on 5 August 2021.

From 2007 to 2009, he held the position of Municipal Manager at the Madibeng local municipality in Brits, North West. He also previously served as MEC for the North West Provincial Legislature from 2010 to 2014 and as Treasurer of the ANC Provincial Executive Committee.

He has been a Member of Parliament since 2014.

# ESTATELIVING

## Smart Living – Connected Community Webinar



On 28 July Estate Living hosted a webinar aimed at Property Management Companies that looked at Smart Living – a Connected Community. Juanita Clark was a speaker at the event and provided an overview of the ongoing benefits of connected communities. 2020/21 has seen an approx 300% increase in internet usage, this has driven large telecommunication companies to ramp up their fibre deployment. The country has experienced a semigration to coastal and inland towns, populations in these areas have swelled and more and more people in general are working from home.

So how does this relate to where property developers should be developing and what types of properties and facilities they should be offering? For community management, how can communities access fibre networks and use fibre enabled technologies to add value to their estates by including smart and sustainable technologies. This topic was explored with CEO of the Digital Council Africa Juanita Clark, Openserve Master Planner Sunil Piyarlall and Head of Research Karen Nel as we sought to get a better understanding of where the telecommunication industry is currently focusing its attention and what new solutions are being adopted.



## Largest freelance talent network joins leading FTTH Councils in the EMEA Region

Outvise, the largest freelance talent platform in telecoms, is now a member of the three main FTTH councils in Europe, MENA and Africa. These industry associations are on a mission to advance full fibre-based connectivity across their corresponding regions. Fibre will transform and enhance the way we do business, connecting everyone and everything, everywhere.

Outvise is excited to be a part of advancing this important project. By connecting telecoms providers with experienced, specific expertise, we can roll out the power of fibre connectivity to the world. Outvise experts operate across borders, timezones, and cultures, bringing an agile, international approach to freelance consultancy and project-based work.

**Alex Collart, CFO & Co-Founder at Outvise, said:**

*"We are really excited to contribute to the development of the fibre industry*

*by providing agile access to on-demand talent. Our positioning and ability to find the right professionals makes us a pivotal player in the FTTH Council ecosystem, where most members are confronted with increasing talent gaps to execute their new projects."*

This comes at a particularly critical moment for the telecoms industry. The fibre investment boom has led to a substantial talent gap, where major companies and startups alike are finding it increasingly challenging to source the expertise they need. This is not only because the skills were highly specialised to begin with, but because top talent has been snapped up fast.

The answer lies in the freelance market. However, for highly specialised projects, you need highly specialised talent sourcing – and Outvise provides just that. Thanks to Outvise's team of specialised headhunters and bespoke project-matching algo-

rithms, businesses can locate the expertise they need in as little as 24 hours. This includes niche expertise like network design, market analysts, regulatory experts, pricing specialists, data analysts, and more.

Connectivity will be crucial to this radical shift in the way we work. FTTH council members can encourage and facilitate the transition to fibre. By ushering in this new, evolved moment in business culture across developed and emerging regions alike, we can create opportunities and level up prosperity together.

Outvise finds and connects the best digital & TMT experts with companies that require deep expertise to deliver on their projects. We do this by building and managing a global community of specialised freelancers, finding collaborative ways to serve our clients and experts to deliver greater value and satisfaction to both parties.



**m4a**

OUR PRODUCTS BUILD NETWORKS

## m4a (Pty) Ltd launches the **corruDUCT™** product line

At the core of m4a (Pty) Ltd's capabilities lie a mix of manufacturing technologies. One of those technology pillars is HDPE extrusion.

The result: **fibreDUCT™**, **corruDUCT™** and **optiDUCT™**.

**corruDUCT™** (Corrugated Pipe) is a flexible cable conduit system with a unique double walled corrugated construction and is manufactured from high density polyethylene (HDPE). It is used for protection of low and medium tension electrical cables, as well as telecommunication cables and has application in agricultural drainage systems.

### OUR PRODUCTS BUILD NETWORKS



m4a (Pty) Ltd is an Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) with the following manufacturing technologies: **extrusion**, **injection moulding** and **compression moulding**.

Our 4 Telecommunication Outside Plant (OSP) product pillars include **axsCHAMBERS™**, **CNKTclosures™**, **fibreDUCT™** and **fibreCABLE™**. Our investments in Modern Composite Technology manufacturing assures high performance and world-class products.

Click here to view  
our **corruDUCT™** in  
the making!





## Digital Council Africa and Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator signs MOU



through bridging the digital divide. Now, with the financial support from Harambee the DCA's efforts can be accelerated and we trust that it will help the infrastructure providers to provide greater connectivity to areas that may have been out of reach or excluded historically.

The signing of this Agreement signifies an important milestone for the mutual collaboration between The Digital Council Africa and Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator and lays a strong foundation for future development. We look forward to working together and hope that this will set the scene for many years of fruitful collaboration.

**The Digital Council Africa and Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator formally signed a collaboration agreement during a virtual Board of Directors Meeting on the 4th of August 2021. The signing marks a significant moment for the Digital Council Africa and Harambee as the parties welcome the continuation of their joint efforts towards building a long-term and strategic partnership.**

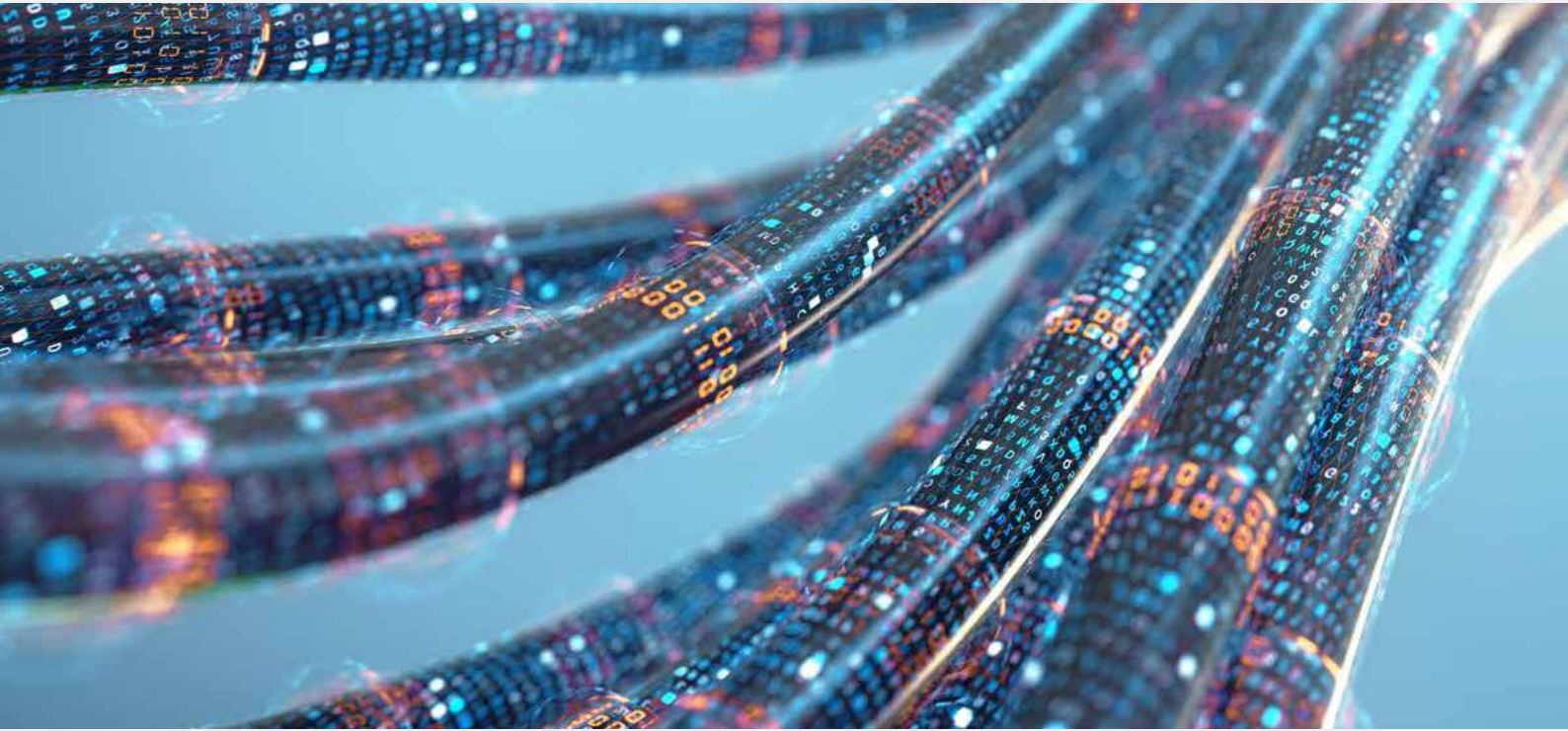
Thinus Mulder, Treasurer of the DCA observed that: "The Digital Council Africa and Harambee's paths crossed in 2020, a difficult time in South Africa's history. What started out as a simple collaboration to understand the impact of COVID on the sector, particularly focusing on the digital divide and how that impacts youth, turned into a strong and mutually beneficial partnership".

The DCA's vision of enabling the telecommunications sector in its deployment of infrastructure to reach and benefit as many people as possible, aligned perfectly with Harambee's focus on the empowerment of youth

### **The two organisations outlined a Combined Mission:**

The Digital Council Africa and Harambee have indicated a mutual interest in establishing a working relationship in pursuit of their mutually held strategic goals with respect to driving digital acceleration and adoption, promoting inclusive growth and participation in the digital economy, and increased work opportunities by leveraging the joint capability as intermediary entities to partner with government and the ICT sector to unlock barriers and enable the implementation of catalytic projects.

In this regard, we commit to working together to enable and facilitate inclusive growth, social transformation and demand-led learning and earning opportunities - at scale.



## **Supporting fibre network operators through their business cycle**

### **Sourcing the right talent for a successful rollout**

The digital economy creates a vast amount of data. Currently, estimates suggest that we generate at least 2.5 quintillion bytes of data every day. The reality is, telco players need to spearhead a large-scale transition to fibre optics to meet demand.

However, there is a key obstacle: talent. As an example, a good fibre network designer is becoming somewhat of a unicorn on the employment market.

Companies are scrambling for these competencies, and yet, they're becoming more and more difficult to find. That said, the solution is out there – in the freelance market.

Download the Ebook and discover new opportunities in the fibre market and how to source the talent telco needs to leverage this key opportunity:

- Fiber as a clear driver of regional competitiveness
- A clear opportunity for new and non-in-cumbent players
- Attracting top talent to stay agile
- Support at every stage of a fibre project

[DOWNLOAD THE FREE EBOOK](#)

# How out of the box thinking creates work for women

By Evan Jones, Group Strategy Director at Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator



The deck has always been stacked against women in the workplace, but COVID-19 has exposed the staggering inequalities and barriers that women face in finding and keeping work. The impact of COVID-19 has exacerbated all of these challenges – with increased gender-based violence, missed educational opportunities, and a precarious economic environment where women are hardest hit.

Work for women has not recovered at a meaningful rate. In March this year, employment levels were similar to February 2020, after a partial employment recovery in Adjusted Lockdown Level 1, however, women’s employment remained 8% lower than pre-pandemic levels while men’s employment seems to

have recovered. Fewer women are now employed than before the pandemic, further widening the gender gap.

Our research shows that, even before the pandemic, young women shouldered additional burdens from childcare and other household responsibilities. They had less time and money to look for work and faced a greater threat of harassment even if they could get a job interview. They are also less likely to have some of the tangible and intangible attributes valued for work, such as a high school qualification, a driver’s license, and confidence in looking for and finding work.

But the same research tells us that once in work, young men, and young women perform at the same level. There is little difference in their likelihood of success, ability to perform in the job, or to be retained in work.

Employers need understand this, and progressive employers need to find ways to lower the barriers to access for young women. Even then, it will take more than a handful of forward-thinking employers to improve employment in South Africa, and specifically that of our women. A coordinated effort at a sector level is required to create economic inclusion for our jobless youth.

Sector-level coordination supports industries to organise themselves into engines of inclusive growth by harnessing all players’ mutual interests. The global business services (GBS) sector is doing just that in a Soweto-based pilot programme to create township-based work-from-home opportunities for women.

SA-based global outsourcing specialist CallForce brought the job opportunities, Harambee Youth



Nothando Vilakazi working from her home in Dube

Employment Accelerator brought employable young women living in townships who could be geo-located close to the third collaborator, Vumatel's established fibre presence which enabled high-speed internet.

One of the young women in the programme is 25-year-old Nothando Vilakazi. She lives in Dube in Soweto with her two-year old daughter and her cousins. One of her cousins is disabled, so in addition to her responsibilities as a mother, Nothando is also responsible for care-taking her cousin while at home. She'd been looking for work for two years with no luck before she was offered the work-from-home opportunity. Fibre was installed in her home, she received a laptop, headset and training from Call Force and with her workstation

at home, is now a fulltime call centre agent. She says that becoming a mother gave her a reason to live and now that she's working, her mother is proud of her.

**"I'm a responsible daughter that my mother no longer needs to take care of," she says with a smile.**

Ongoing tracking of the work from home team shows productivity levels of 103,12%. CallForce ideally expect a minimum of 95% productivity for its agent. The team's average call handling time is in line with all agents and they're recording very high warm transfer rates which speaks to ownership of the customer's query.

Findings from the [\*Harambee Mapping of Digital and ICT Roles and\*](#)

[\*Demand for South Africa Survey\*](#) released in late 2020 by Harambee in conjunction with The Digital Council and others, forecasts demand for 66,000 jobs in digital and ICT roles in the next year, two-thirds of which are entry-level roles. A significant takeout from the findings is that growth in digitised services has the potential to unlock jobs for youth at scale. It is now incumbent on employers to find clever and creative ways to create employment solutions that lower the barriers to entry for our youth, and particularly our young women.

# EMPOWERING WOMEN



## VISITME+

S A TECHNOLOGIES

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**Your Trusted Partner for improved FTTX Network Deployments**

## Open Access Networks key to providing benefits for both ISPs and consumers



**Frogfoot**  
Just connect

By Shane Chorley, Head of Sales and Marketing, Frogfoot Networks

**Open Access Networks have played a vital role in the growth of access to fibre connectivity around the country, created a level playing field for internet service providers (ISPs) to offer services across the coverage area and provided consumers with more choice in terms of affordability and contract flexibility. It will also be key, indirectly, in bringing high speed wireless connectivity to the masses.**

While we were initially behind in comparison with international peers, local operators have caught up significantly and are now able to offer services on par with what is offered in other markets, especially when looking at urban areas, with investment being championed by the private sector. Open access operators, such as Frogfoot Networks, are continually building relationships with multiple ISPs as they pursue a strategy of expanding fibre into South Africa's secondary cities and towns. It currently has over 140 ISPs on its network and could theoretically accommodate as many providers as wanted.

"We believe in the consumer having choice. Open access is critical to driving better offerings because of network democratisation which ultimately leads to better product offerings and allows us as an internet service provider to contribute to a better, more polished user experience," says Webafrica spokesperson.

### Giving the customer the upper hand

Investing in national long distance networks to provide sufficient backhaul, and providing access to multiple undersea fibre optic cables further improves network stability, allowing for ISPs to focus on other areas as key differentiators in a highly competitive market.

This could be in the form of including additional redundancy (such as bandwidth on multiple undersea cables), more offerings (hardware, software, services, bundled offerings) and high customer satisfaction.

"A closed access model promotes monopoly, whereas open access fibre has promoted rapid expansion of connectivity by a plethora of providers within South Africa. Immeasurable opportunities have opened for small and large enterprises alike – this, in turn, helps our economy," says Afrihost spokesperson.

### High speed connectivity for more people

The growth in fibre networks has to date seen between 3 and 3.5 million homes around the country being passed, though this remains a fraction of the total number of homes, and more can be done to grow this number. Fibre networks will also play a key role in expanding access to high speed connectivity in peri-urban and rural areas, as they will be used to provide the backhaul capacity required for the LTE/5G towers operated by cellular operators.

The increasingly connected lifestyle that we are seeing isn't only an occurrence in middle class South Africa, but also an aspiration among all income groups. Upward mobility will see them consume more data and add more smart

devices, they will realise that the most cost effective and stable way to remain connected is through fibre, which will spur demand for this connectivity type.

Expanding fibre networks however requires significant investment, and operators have to assess financial feasibility before rolling out more infrastructure. As current fibre networks are amortised you will see more expansion to individual customers living along the edge, with high speed wireless connections being extended to provide coverage further out, and we will see this cycle repeat.

### About Frogfoot Networks

Frogfoot Networks (Pty) Ltd (frogfoot) is a licensed open access fibre network provider. With 15 years' experience in the telecoms industry and widely acknowledged for their technical excellence, Frogfoot intends to play a pivotal role in the growth of fibre to the business and home in South Africa. Funded by Rand Merchant Bank (RMB), Investec and Metier Capital, group revenue exceeding R1 billion per annum, and one of the only true open access wholesale fibre network offerings in the market, Frogfoot is well positioned to build and maintain fibre networks that will enable service providers to acquire their own fibre backbones on a shared network.

For more information go to [www.frogfoot.co.za](http://www.frogfoot.co.za)

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We at FSN pride ourselves in the design, deployment, finance managing and maintenance of open access telecommunication networks.



## **fibresuburb** networks

FibreSuburb Networks (FSN), with more than 15 years of experience services the subscribers in residential, commercial and industrial gated communities with offering an end-to-end licensed telecommunication Fibre network operator service.

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## Digital Council Africa partners with Huawei for 5G education sessions

The Digital Council Africa (DCA), in association with Huawei, recently hosted a series of 5G training and education sessions. Delivered to an audience made up of DCA members and industry representatives, the sessions focused on 5G's potential and also sought to address some of the myths and concerns around it.

The need for sessions like these is evident when you consider the rapidly accelerating rollout of 5G technology. Currently more than 169 commercial 5G networks have been deployed in 70 countries. It is clear that the ecosystem is maturing rapidly, in China, more than 68% of smartphones shipped in 2020 were 5G phones. More than 200 5G modules and industrial devices are currently available, these support 5G application in a broad range of industries enabling a natural fusion with industries.

5G offers new and advanced opportunities to improve efficiencies and create new value throughout vertical industries. In smart ports, smart mining and smart transport, 5G's high bandwidth and low-latency transmission are kicking off a revolution in operational efficiencies, characterized by a shift from onsite operations to remote control and the remarkable reduction of business costs.

"There is no doubt that 5G's high download speeds, low latency, and high levels of robustness have the potential to fundamentally change the way we live, work, and do business," says DCA CEO Juanita

Clark. "Given that Huawei is a global leader in the deployment and rollout of 5G technologies, it was an ideal partner for our education sessions."

Among the topics covered by the sessions were the fundamentals of 5G; clarifying the around 5G; the importance of spectrum to 5G's deployment; the real-world applications of 5G; and the link between 5G policies and economic recovery and development.

"In the very near future, the capabilities of government sectors, private industry and entertainment will be greatly enhanced by leveraging 5G technology," says Dr. Bello Moussa, Head of Innovation and ICT Strategies at Huawei, who presented one of the sessions. "In order to ensure that happens, it's pivotal that there's as wide an understanding of 5G as possible, especially among the people responsible for putting together the policy that will influence its rollout."

As Marius Engelbrecht, Senior Strategy Consultant at Huawei points out, part of that means addressing the myths around 5G.

"Over the past year or so, we've seen a number of dangerous myths around 5G. While the ones around COVID-19 have largely died down, we still need to clarify the related health worries," he says.

In his session, Engelbrecht also emphasised the need for networks to start planning for the evolution of architecture as soon as possible.

"Being both people-centered and things-oriented, 5G connections will not only provide excellent user experiences, but also enable industries to optimise production modes for higher energy efficiency and improved working environments, while also delivering on the commitment to sustainable development," concludes Clark. "If South Africa is to reap those benefits, it needs everyone to understand, and get on board with, 5G as soon as possible."

**Links to the recorded sessions are available here:**

### DAY 1

Introduction to 5G Technology  
Motivation & industry progress -  
Dr. Bello Moussa

### DAY 2

Overview of 5G Network  
Principles - Marius Engelbrecht

### DAY 3

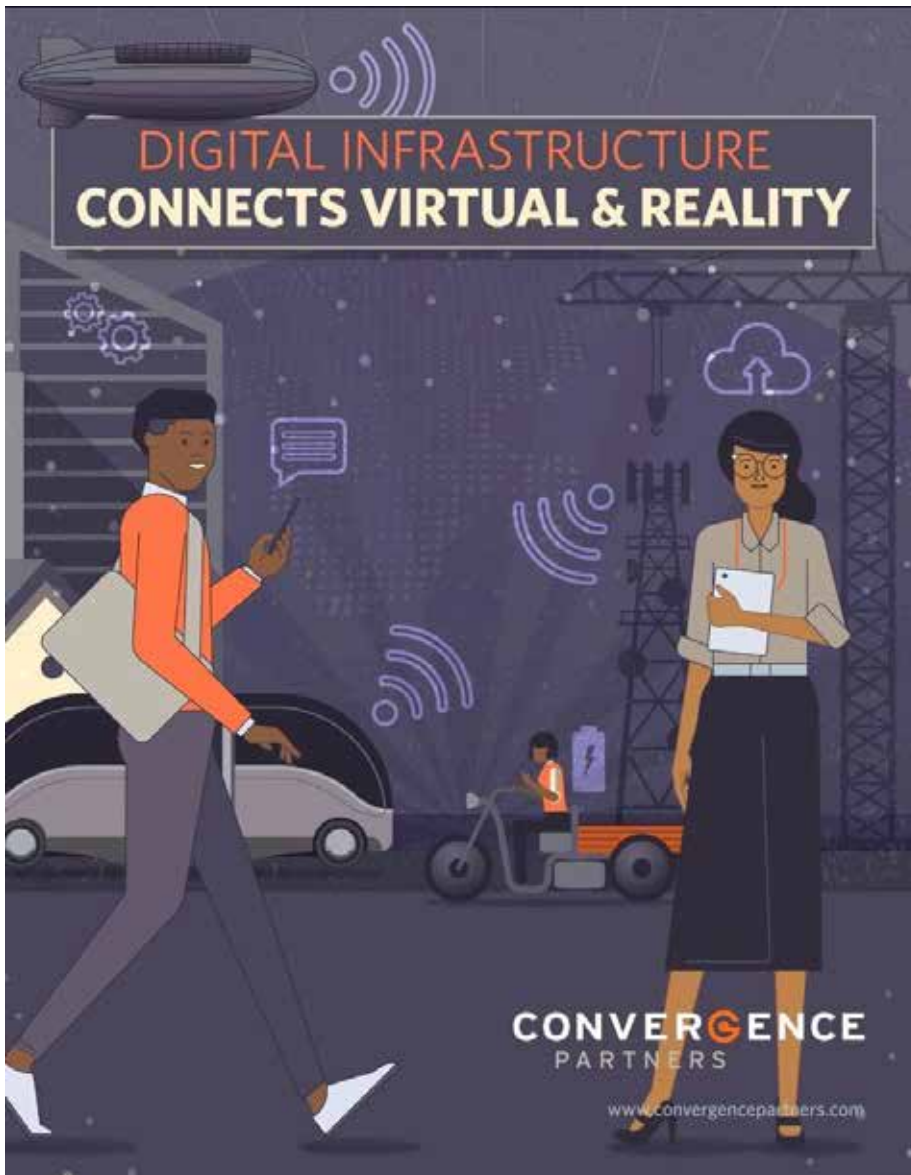
5G Spectrum requirements and  
Planning - Cesar Gutierrez

### DAY 4

5G Applications & Services -  
Marius Engelbrecht

### DAY 5

5G policy and strategy trends  
linked to economic recovery and  
development - Desre Nieuwoudt



## CONVERGENCE PARTNERS' LATEST FUND TO DRIVE DIGITAL INCLUSION IN AFRICA

Convergence Partners, a private equity investor focused on the technology sector across sub-Saharan Africa, announced the successful first close of its third fund, the Convergence Partners Digital Infrastructure Fund (CPDIF) at US\$120 million. The fund is targeting a final size of US\$250 million. Now with more than US\$400m of capital under management, Convergence Partners remains the largest private equity investor dedicated to digital infrastructure in Africa.

Investors in CPDIF are leading institutions that continue to support African growth such as the CDC Group (the UK's development finance institution), the United States International Development Finance Corporation (DFC), the European Investment Bank (EIB), the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and Proparco (the private sector arm of the Agence Française de Développement - AFD Group).

CPDIF investments will be driven by the infrastructure needs of the emerging growth themes in the digital infrastructure ecosystem, specifically fibre, wireless, data centres, towers etc., as well as 5G,

Cloud, Internet of Things (IoT), Artificial Intelligence (AI), fintech and network virtualisation. CPDIF's first investment is in Ctrack, a transaction that was announced earlier in the year. As a data analytics business servicing the fleet management and insurance industries, the business sits at the intersection of AI and IoT with all its solutions being cloud delivered.

The fund also has a strong and measurable impact objective and, via its participation in the build out of Africa's digital infrastructure, will boost entrepreneurship, innovation, skills development and job creation though massively

boosting access to the internet and all the critical digital tools it offers. Africa remains by far the most underserved region in terms of broadband and digital technology access. Despite the advances in the rollout of digital infrastructure on the Continent, fixed broadband penetration in sub-Saharan Africa still lags far behind at about 7% of the population. There is a massive investment opportunity that still exists to address digital inclusion with the World Bank estimating that more than US\$100 billion of capital is required to bring sub-Saharan Africa to acceptable levels of digital access by 2030.

Says Brandon Doyle CEO of Convergence Partners, "we are delighted to have achieved this milestone particularly given the headwinds in African PE fundraising generally, and the impact of the Covid pandemic on business activity, over the past 12 months. We are very pleased with the level of support from both repeat and new investors and believe this reflects our solid track record and the opportunity CPDIF presents at this crucial time in both a tech and African context."

CPDIF is a continuation of the strategy that has been successfully implemented by Convergence Partners since inception in 2006 across its funds under management. In the past 15 years, Convergence Partners has invested in submarine cable systems, geostationary satellites, terrestrial

long-haul, metro and access fibre, wireless networks, data centres, as well as service provision delivered by these networks such as enterprise connectivity, SD-WAN, fintech & healthtech solutions, data switching and more.

Andile Ngcaba, Chairman of Convergence Partners, added, "in the past 20 years, we have witnessed the exponential growth of internet penetration on the African continent. Internet penetration in sub-Saharan Africa alone has grown tenfold, compared to the threefold increase the rest of the world has seen. As Convergence Partners, we pride ourselves on contributing to this growth through our numerous communication infrastructure investments across the Continent. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that there is still much work to drive digital

inclusion. Today, Africa is experiencing the highest growth in international internet bandwidth compared to any other region in the world. As we embark on this journey as CPDIF, the next twelve years will be spent continuing to build on our original vision of ubiquitous pan-African communications. As the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) commences in the same year, we embark on the next step of our journey as Convergence Partners. We believe that AfCFTA will benefit immensely from the availability of digital infrastructure. Our greatest strength is our knowledge of technology, investments, and deep understanding of the African market and cultures."

[www.convergencepartners.com](http://www.convergencepartners.com)

## About Convergence Partners

Convergence Partners was founded in 2006 and invests as value-adding partners into private equity and infrastructure opportunities in technology and digital sectors across sub-Saharan Africa. It has an asset base in excess of \$400 million which it deploys across Southern, East and West Africa through three funds – Convergence Partners Investments, Convergence Partners Communications Infrastructure Fund and the recently launched Convergence Partners Digital Infrastructure Fund.

With its strong sector focus and primary strategy of growth stage investing, Convergence Partners brings its deep skills, relationships, experience and capital to actively grow its investments, including catalysing new investment opportunities both directly and via its portfolio companies.

Convergence Partners has played a leading role in several landmark African digital infrastructure investments that have changed the paradigm in the availability, quality and affordability of digital services on the Continent.

Intrinsic to Convergence Partners is generating and sustaining superior returns on investment while maximising positive impact and accelerating digital inclusion through its focus on infrastructure development in Africa.

Convergence Partners was awarded the Best TMT Impact Investment Strategy for Africa 2020 by CFI.co.

[www.convergencepartners.com](http://www.convergencepartners.com)



## MEMBER & PARTNER FEMALE LEADERSHIP FOCUS

Welcome to Woman's month, a whole month to celebrate the achievements and to pay tribute to all the dauntless and passionate women throughout history who paved the way for us and to celebrate all the courageous and determined women in our lives, who lead and inspire us in all spheres of life. And as we do this we also take stock of where we are at as a sector and society.

We all know by now that Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) are powerful tools for women's empowerment. Access to the Internet plays a crucial role for women to start their own businesses and entrepreneurial ventures, secure wider access to credit, and thereby increase their income potential. It can bolster women to enter the world of work by increasing their access to quality education and healthcare, and by enabling their participation in online networks and associations. Internet access can give women a platform to have a voice and to organise and advocate for a more accountable government.

The opposite is true; formidable gender gaps in internet access, digital skills, and online rights and freedoms are undermining the internet's potential to be a powerful tool for women to grow and access their rights. The road to genuine gender equality is a long and constantly shifting one. For too long we have believed that gender equality is an issue for women, that must be addressed by women. This is not true. Gender equality is something that every person should have an opinion on. Every person reading this should make up their mind to speak out against gender discrimination, but also to take the next step and to provide opportunities for women to participate in the wider digital economy.

I have been very fortunate to have worked with phenomenal women in the sector; strong, powerful trailblazing women we all look up to. Similarly, I have worked with extraordinary men who are not afraid to support women in the workplace – who have instituted policies to enforce income equality and are moving the boundaries to accommodate women in the workplace.

**I want to celebrate every single person, irrespective of gender, who has contributed to the shift in gender equality. Today on behalf of women from all over the world, we salute you.**



This month we would like to feature some of the powerful women from our partner and member companies representing the digital sector, who are real trailblazers and mavericks. Some quietly assumed the stage, and others shattered the glass ceiling with a deafening clatter. What is true about every one of them is that they paved the way for equality in their own way. When you learn more about them, you realise that these women are ordinary people who had a single vision, and that is to not leave the world unchanged but to ensure it is transformed for the better.

I hope you enjoy getting to know them better as much as we did.

*Juanita*



## Maryana Iskander

Chief Executive Officer of Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator

Maryana brings a track record of scaling organisations through partnership models, data-driven delivery, talent management and technology innovation. Harambee has partnered with 500 African business in South Africa and Rwanda and provided over 175,000 jobs and work experiences to unemployed youth. In 2019, Maryana led Harambee to receive the Skoll Award for Social Entrepreneurship and the Conciuous Companies Award.

Previously, she served as Chief Operating Officer of Planned Parenthood Federation of America, a US\$1 billion organisation that is America's largest provider of women's healthcare. Maryana was an associate at global consultancy McKinsey & Company, and a law clerk on the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit. She earned a B.A. magna cum laude from Rice University, an M.Sc. from Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar, and a J.D. from Yale Law School, where she received a Distinguished Alumna Award. Maryana is a Henry Crown Fellow and a member of the Aspen Global Leadership Network.

### Q: How do you empower and engage with others?

I try hard to be a good listener so that I can really support people – and especially other women – based on where they are and where they are trying to go. Empowering others is about giving them constant encouragement and feedback that is always honest.

### Q: What energises you about your work?

I am lucky to do such purpose-driven work at Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator. But the people are what inspire me most. I love the people I work with and that's what keeps me going.

### Q: What's one piece of advice that greatly impacted you and your career trajectory?

I was once told that 'what other people think of you is none of your business' – which is a slightly funny way of saying that you should stay focused on yourself without getting distracted by others' opinions of you.

### Q: How do you unplug from work?

I am lucky to have a life partner who loves to travel and as a result I have been to 70 (and counting!) countries in the world. When I am at home, I consider hot yoga an ideal way to unplug.

### Q: If you could give just one leadership lesson that you've learnt over the years, what'd it be?

Culture and values are built by what leaders do, not so much what they say. When there is a gap between what you do and what you say, it is very hard for others to follow you.

### Q: Finish this sentence. If I were a brand, I would be...tanzanite.

### Q: Where are you going for your first vacation once travel bans are lifted?

I recently returned from the United States after not seeing my family there for almost 2 years. And later this month I will go on a bucket list trip to the Masai Mara!

**“Empowering others is about giving them constant encouragement and feedback that is always honest.”**

Maryana Iskander



## Kholiwe Makhohliso

VP & Country MD-South Africa at Software AG

Kholiwe made a name for herself as a distinct leader in the ICT sector having led South African operations of global companies, including a Fortune 500 company. From 2018, she has been at the helm of German-headquartered global software company – Software AG as its Vice President and Country MD for South Africa.

She boasts a wealth of experience that spans almost 25 years in a career that was meticulously nurtured in both public and private sectors. Her rise to become a revered executive in the ICT industry is owed to her risk-taking nature, resilience and an unwavering belief in offering her clients cutting edge solutions for their needs.

An Accountant by training, her career began as an Auditor and CFO, and after a few years she changed course and branched into Consulting and Sales in the ICT sector. Some of her most notable career moves include serving as the first Chief Financial Officer of the National Heritage Council, holding leadership positions at Accenture and being appointed to the position of Country MD South Africa at Oracle, a position that made her one of the first women to lead a multinational ICT company in the country.

### What, in your opinion, is the biggest foreseeable challenge for the next generation of female leaders in South Africa?

Continued advocacy for better representation in senior leadership positions and having our rightful place in the board room. Such requires strong sisterhood as well as support from our male counterparts. I dream of a time where we are all leaders, not female, or male and we are purely judged based on our competencies. *“Diversity is having a seat at the table, inclusion is having a voice, and belonging is having that voice heard”*

### If you could give just one leadership lesson that you’ve learnt over the years, what’d it be?

Kevin Hall once said “your gifts are not about you, Leadership is not about you, your purpose is not about you. A life of significance is about serving those who need your gifts, your leadership, your purpose.” We still frown upon servant, compassionate leadership, yet it is a greatest trait a leader can have. You can be compassionate and strong, you can lead from the heart, yet be assertive and firm.

### How do you empower and engage with others?

By meaningful participation in other’s livelihoods. Giving myself to mentor young women and women, sharing my experiences and lending a helping hand where I can. Mother Teresa said *“Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love”* Knowing that I am impacting change in one person’s life gives me joy.

### What energises you about your work?

Seeing how our technology innovation and solutions can make an impact and difference to our citizens and

customers. Seeing how our transformation initiatives and programs are making a significant impact to the future of our youth; and as the saying goes “each one, teach one, until all are taught” Changing one life at a time, energises me a lot.

### Have you experienced stereotypes or biases? Can you name them?

I have experienced a lot of undertones in my career journey but never directed as typical stereotype or bias, and I have had to learn not take such personally. I strongly believe rudeness and bigotry are the weak person’s imitation of strength. If ego is in control in how we lead, we fail to listen and understand other people’s point of view.

### What’s one piece of advice that greatly impacted you and your career trajectory?

No matter how tough it gets, don’t stop being true to who you are. Integrity, especially in our industry is gold- and it has never been more important than today.

### Where are you going for your first vacation once travel bans are lifted?

Covid, despite its challenges, has given us an opportunity to explore our country, and I took it with both hands. This year I am hoping I can attend the HBS Alumni Board meeting in Boston in September and get at chance to network with fellow members as we have been pretty much engaging virtual since COVID hit. I’ll also get a chance for a mini holiday whilst there. Also, my friend has been encouraging me for a cycling holiday in Girona next year so I am trying to exercise much more so that I can enjoy the beautiful views. I’ll also take an opportunity for a motorcycle ride there.



## Veronica Motloutsi

Founder & Chief Executive Officer - SmartDigital Solution

Veronica is one of the leading ICT and education executives in South Africa. With vast experience in multiple sectors such as ICT, Energy, Health, Mining, Retail, Financial Services and Logistics. She is a highly talented black woman who continues to make her mark in the industry. A trusted advisor to CIOs with a deep understanding of ICT. She is currently the Chief Executive for SmartDigital Solutions, a 100% black female-owned digital company, build to leverage the benefits of the 4th Industrial Revolution. As a South African company with the Vision of Africa, its mission is to enable clients to fulfil their digital ambitions and take on a leadership role to help shape the new rules of the game.

She previously worked as an Executive Head of Commercial Operations for International Markets (African Operations) at Vodacom, her role entailed managing the delivery of customer-facing channels in all Vodacom Markets to achieve an unmatched customer experience, this included customer care, online and retail operations. In this role, she is recognised as one of Vodafone's 100 inspiring women across all the markets. This was based on her contribution to strive toward improving gender balance across the company.

### What, in your opinion, is the biggest foreseeable challenge for the next generation of female leaders in South Africa?

It is to continue to inspire other women and bring them along on the journey. We have passed the ceiling-breaking era and now it is time to lift as we rise. We need to build the next cohort of female leaders with the right values, focused more on empowering and embracing others. We should be able to rise above the patriarchal system by sharing our accomplishments and ambitions, so as to change and shape our communities' perceptions about our ability to lead, and create a source of inspiration for other women to rise above gender bias and fear.

### Have you experienced stereotypes or biases? Can you name them?

Fact that you are black and female, you are viewed as an empowerment project, not someone who possesses the right skills and capability to deliver on what is expected. Your success and achievement are linked to sleeping your way up. Women bring each other down. Which is not true. I have worked closely with women that empower and promote others.

### How do you unplug from work?

Play golf and spend quality time with family. Being present both at work and home is a priority at this moment.

### If you could give just one leadership lesson that you've learned over the years, what'd it be?

Women bring out important leadership qualities such as empathy, compassion, courage, and the ability to execute. We are able to succeed with managing complex situations because we are authentic, collaborative, result-oriented, and sacrificial. These are all attributes that society needs to prosper, and we have all of them in us. It is how we embrace and leverage them particularly now when dealing with the greatest crisis of our lifetime

### You have reached the pinnacle in your field, where to from here?

Play an active role in developing our beloved continent and teach my daughters that they can be leaders in a globalised world.

### Finish this sentence. If I were a brand, I would be... Jaguar:

Grace, space, pace. To exactly execute with grace, at the right pace, and give yourself space to excel.

### Where are you going for your first vacation once travel bans are lifted?

I will go back to Las Vegas, US, We have been through a lot and one needs to make time to let down and let go.



## Lillian Barnard

CEO at Microsoft South Africa

With more than 20 years' experience in the ICT industry, Lillian is a seasoned professional with proven capabilities and a strong understanding of local market. She has held various executive positions, both locally and abroad, and as such has gained extensive knowledge in sales, operations, business controls, strategy, business transformation and leadership. This experience, combined with her deep industry knowledge, positions her perfectly to deliver on Microsoft's digital transformation ambitions in South Africa, thereby empowering governments, organisations and individuals to achieve more.

Lillian is renowned for building strong, high-performing teams that consistently deliver on their financial targets, while also bringing innovative digital solutions to her partners and customers. Having led large teams both locally and abroad, she is recognised for strength in developing people and creating an environment where everyone can do their best work. Passionate about enabling a truly diverse and inclusive workplace, Lillian draws on her own experiences, she endeavours to create a culture that enables people to bring their authentic selves to the workplace and be embraced for that individuality.

### What, in your opinion, is the biggest foreseeable challenge for the next generation of female leaders in South Africa?

In an era where South African women have become increasingly prominent in medicine, law and business, they are still significantly underrepresented in the technology sector. Only 20 percent of tech jobs globally are held by women. While some gains have been made to narrow the gender gap, interestingly, increased encouragement versus technical acumen seems to be the key to speeding up the take-up of technology careers by females.

There are several books, and articles that discuss this issue. It's been reported, for example, that more gender diversity, particularly in corporate settings, can translate to increased productivity, greater innovation, better decision-making, and higher employee retention and satisfaction.

Committed mentors and leaders are essential to helping women envision their path forward and I have personally benefited from strong mentorship by some of the best leaders both inside and outside of my industry. They exposed me to the power of diverse thinking, courageousness to lead and continuous learning as I navigated my journey to leadership, and often helped me envision an even bolder path forward than I imagined for myself

Now, in my role as local CEO of a leading global company, I am passionate about paying that mentorship forward to the incoming generation of women in the

workplace. I believe it is our responsibility as business leaders to foster an inclusive working environment that enables all employees to do their best work and serve the diverse needs of customers. It's important that we promote gender equality as a business enabler in our respective organisations, and encourage dialogue and discussion among all employees to empower them to do the same.

Microsoft truly believes in the transformative power of diversity and inclusion - a core pillar of our company culture. This is evident in the steady progress we've made to increase female representation in the company.

But there is still work to be done - at Microsoft, in organisations throughout South Africa and the rest of the world. Building diverse and inclusive employee populations is a long-term commitment which requires a deliberate strategy, and importantly to note is that success will not happen overnight.

My message to women is to seek guidance and mentorship from other leaders, male and female, that you aspire to emulate. Learn from them and teach others around you along the way.

### If you could give just one leadership lesson that you've learnt over the years, what'd it be?

I have learned that career paths are not linear – those valleys, detours and obstacles are critical for us to discover how strong we truly are.

There are seven critical leadership lessons I have embraced and focused on as I have led my team:

### **Be human – show empathy for your team members' wellbeing:**

Communication on a purely business level isn't enough, it's vital as a leader to ensure that you are also prioritising your employees' wellbeing. I have found that taking the time to connect – through a simple message, email, or call – is remarkably effective and helps both my people and me. It helps us stay engaged even if we are not face-to-face and reminds us that we are working towards a common goal.

### **Communicate well and often – engage with your people regularly:**

Communication is key to being a good leader. One of my mantras as a leader is that effective communication enables others to understand the business priorities, align behind them and feel motivated enough to deliver successfully on them.

I always strive to be transparent, authentic and effective in communicating plans and goals for the organisation. I have found, without fail, that this helps energise my people and motivate them to reach both their own goals and collective business objectives.

It is also critical that your actions are aligned to what you are communicating - and that as a leader you are role modeling the behaviours that you are asking others to follow.

### **Trust your people by giving them greater responsibilities:**

"Leaders become great, not because of their power, but because of their ability to empower others." — John Maxwell.

Our people are our biggest asset, and as leaders we are working daily to unleash each individual's full potential by expressing confidence in their abilities, and allowing them the opportunity to showcase their capabilities.

Giving our people greater levels of responsibility will build their confidence, and in turn, benefit both their performance and the business. I have always believed that confidence is a key ingredient of success. Coupled with faith in your capabilities, a deep sense of purpose, and clear values and goals, plus a firm belief that you are able to achieve your goals, will push you to reach them.

### **Empower your people by giving them access to learning and training opportunities:**

The world is changing at a rapid pace, and now more than ever, we need to invest in continuous learning and self-development to ensure that we are able to benefit from the latest advances and remain relevant. As leaders, we need to model this behaviour and I encourage my own team members to actively look for and take advantage of learning and training opportunities, as well as provide them with access to different learning platforms and experiences.

### **Nurture Diversity & Inclusion:**

Stephen Covey once wrote: "Strength lies in differences, not in similarities".

I believe a core pillar of my job is to nurture an environment where Diversity and Inclusivity is truly embraced and a way of life. I endeavour to create a culture that enables people to bring their authentic selves to the workplace and to celebrate their individuality. The conversation and focus on diversity and inclusion is not just relevant for the workplace - but in broader society - it is an imperative for us to move forward stronger as individuals, as organizations and as a country!

### **Lead in Compliance and ethics**

I hold myself to high standards, and I am the lead voice on compliance and ethics in our business. I continuously re-enforce the need for us to hold ourselves to the highest of standard - there is no compromise when it comes to compliance.

### **Inspire purpose and passion**

I have always believed that passion can transform an individual from average to excellent - and enables people to put more into something that is required

And passion starts with purpose. It is important to ensure, as a leader, you are finding the deeper purpose in the work that your organisation does - and the aligning this to your people's deeper reason for being - your work ambitions are aligned to delivering on your deeper reason for being - and this will ignite the passion and fuel the energy required to keep their motivation regardless of the challenges.

### **Q: Where are you going for your first vacation once travel bans are lifted?**

I have been inspired by Stanley Tucci's Searching for Italy on CNN, and that has made me determined to go to Italy as soon as we are able to travel again.



## Portia Thokoane

Chief Human Capital Officer for Dark Fibre Africa (DFA)

Portia is not only an executive but also a philanthropist and a leadership coach who empowers leaders with tools to thrive in the markets they operate in. She is passionate about technological evolution and its impact on youth and women in Africa. With connectivity being the keystone of technology, she is exposed to incredible technologies in the Fibre infrastructure, Internet of Things (IoT), Digital Transformation and Artificial Intelligence (AI) applied in customer and employee experience analytics. Portia has initiated impactful projects to skill and reskill communities for sustainable participation in the country.

Prior to joining DFA, Portia was the Head of HR for the Africa operations of Eaton Corporation where she helped the business design the commercial strategy for the Africa business and opened operations in various countries in the Africa continent. She is privileged to have had board experience on the boards of SqwidNet and SADV as well as participation in the DFA and CIVH boards. She also sat on the boards of all the Eaton Africa's operational companies. She currently participates on the 4IR Committee of MICT Seta which focuses on creating a strategy for digital skills transformation in South Africa. In her spare time, she participates as a mentor through the National Mentorship Movement.

### What, in your opinion, is the biggest foreseeable challenge for the next generation of female leaders in South Africa?

Even though there is progress, women are still lagging behind with regards to accessing leadership roles. Four of the challenges which will continue to be faced by the next generation of female leaders are the following:

**Trusting their own voice:** Female leaders face a challenge in that for many generations they believed for that their voices were subservient and not good enough; this shows up in how they lead in organisations. To overcome this, they need to believe that they did not accidentally rise to their titles and they have valuable knowledge and talents to serve their stakeholders. Mistakes and failure are acceptable ingredients of success.

**Building Strategic Alliances:** Men have brilliantly built networks which helps them to access a network of business opportunities and strategic roles. This is an areas women have struggled with. Women need to learn and master 'playing the game' by building mutually beneficial strategic relationships

**A culture that does not champion women's success:** Just as individual female leaders are invested in learning and growing their own careers, they should create a culture

that champions women's success through mentorship. Each woman should make it a personal goal to mentor and advocate for other women.

**Individual and institutional mindsets:** Women leaders have assumptions and stereotypical mindsets they hold for themselves and which others hold about them which limit their advancement. For example women feel that they. Need to be perfect and work twice as much to deliver a similar result as men. It should be a priority for women leaders to identify those disempowering mindsets and reframe them.

### How do you empower and engage with others?

I give of my time to mentor people, share my life story and the lessons I have learnt. I use radical candor to help individuals and teams to crystallize their goals and challenge them to calibrate where they are against their goals.

### Have you experienced stereotypes or biases? Can you name them?

Yes, I have experienced many biases throughout my career. These ranged from being passed over for opportunities, earning much less than my male counterparts, having my ideas being discarded and being expected to silently seat in boardrooms. I have learned

to point out these biases as they show up, set clear boundaries and be a voice not only for myself but for others in organisations I work in. I believe that together with our male colleagues, we ultimately lead to better outcomes.

### **What is something that you believe now that had never occurred to you before?**

A belief I have adopted in the recent years is that people's perceptions and dispositions can change at a deep level. We need to be authentic and patient with each other. As we share our life journeys and experiences people get a better understanding and work towards creating meaningful shared experiences.

### **What energises you about your work?**

Two things: I love working with leadership teams to transform them into a collective brand which courageously drives business results with compassion and humility. The second thing which ramps up my energy is witnessing teams come together in the midst of adversities to deliver great results - tough times have the potential to solidify teams.

### **What's one piece of advice that greatly impacted you and your career trajectory?**

You are on your own individual journey: trust in yourself, be equanimous during difficult situations and use your talents to create a better society where you are.

### **How do you unplug from work?**

I love to hike, enjoy moments with my daughters, read on various topics, meditate and great food!

### **You have reached the pinnacle in your field, where to from here?**

I am a life long learner and don't believe that anyone ever reaches a pinnacle as we constantly evolve as human beings. As we are grappling with the 4th industrial revolution, the 5th industrial revolution is upon us. Companies need business minded Human Capital leaders to help them through the evolution, this is an area I am passionate about. I would like to continue running independence projects to accelerate the much needed growth of quality skills in Africa and in driving social justice.

### **If you could give just one leadership lesson that you've learnt over the years, what'd it be?**

You do not need to have all the answers; listen to your people, when they genuinely feel seen and heard, they will go to the ends of the world for you. Respect is a minimum irrespective of social and organisational status. One of my favorite leadership quote is that of John Maxwell who says "He/She that thinketh he/she leadeth, and hath no one following, is only taking a walk."

### **Q: Finish this sentence. If I were a brand, I would be...**

Toughees School Shoes 😊

### **Where are you going for your first vacation once travel bans are lifted?**

To shake off all the time spent in doors, I intend to do a long road trip exploring the little dorpies of South Africa, through Mpumalanga, KZN and joining the garden route through Eastern Cape to Cape Town. I am just loving on my country!

**"You are on your own individual journey: trust in yourself, be equanimous during difficult situations and use your talents to create a better society where you are."**

**Portia Thokoane**



## Valencia Risaba

Chief Corporate Affairs Officer, Liquid Intelligent Technologies, SA

Valencia is an admitted Attorney of the High Court of South Africa. A seasoned commercial lawyer and capable manager with over 15 years of experience, 8 of which were in the Telecoms industry, she currently heads up Regulatory Affairs and Corporate Services at Liquid Telecom South Africa. Valencia has served in legal and Regulatory roles in both the public and private sector, having worked in various capacities for a large State-Owned Entity (Eskom), and has a proven track record in the Telecoms sector in South Africa and African markets such as Nigeria, Uganda and Tanzania.

Key areas of expertise include Commercial Law, Legal due diligence in major funding transactions, Labour law, Regulation, Stakeholder Management and Corporate Governance. Valencia holds BProc and LLB degrees from the University of the Witwatersrand, a Higher Diploma in Corporate Law as well as a Masters' degree in Business Leadership from UNISA, and is currently the Chief Corporate Affairs Officer at Liquid Intelligent Technologies (South Africa).

### What, in your opinion, is the biggest foreseeable challenge for the next generation of female leaders in South Africa?

We have come a long way from women raising the banner of free speech and fighting for political freedom at a time when women were unheard. Today we are driving towards economic freedom where independence is the frontier and co-dependency is decreasing. Women should and are aspiring to create sustainable generational wealth and in order to achieve this we need to lead as pioneers in a progressive corporate community. How we achieve this is by having leaders drive appropriate strategies that invest in people and promote an evolving vision. Leadership is no longer about creating jobs, but rather seeking to develop and sustain talent and promote careers that align and support the overall organisation vision.

### How do you empower and engage with others?

I rely on my own story and background which is worth telling and inspiring young women, especially those embarking on their career or see success as unattainable. I am a township girl that came from a not very privileged background supported by a bantu education system and working-class parents. But my environment did not dictate my future. My parents instilled in my siblings and I the ability to dream and be resilient. And that is what I impart unto others. People need to hear real stories in order to be able to see real opportunities and success stories. I believe that it is

important to be the leader that one needed in their growth as my approach is informed by the gaps and methods that molded me.

### Have you experienced stereotypes or biases? Can you name them?

I certainly have over the years experienced a number of stereotypes and biases. In particular what stands out for me is during my time as a lawyer I was always judged and undermined as a black woman by my colleagues and counterparts. I have had my fair share of condescending commentary and being classed with lower expectations because of who I was or stereotypically depicted in society. Certainly, sexism played its part, and I began to learn to manoeuvre my way through it.

### What is something that you believe now that had never occurred to you before?

Success does not have to be bred from success and your background and environment does not seal your fate. Despite our background my parents instilled in me hard work, commitment and discipline that allowed me to dream and step out of my environment. I am proof that a non-affluent woman from Soweto who matriculated in Limpopo broke her boundaries and set herself up for success.

### What energizes you about your work?

To know that I am raising the next generation of leaders and setting an example for my children and in particular my daughters who are beginning to venture out into the professional environment. Through my work I see myself as a creator of future leading women who are redefining stereotypes of what an African woman should be, and broadening expectations not limited to traditional roles.

### What's one piece of advice that greatly impacted you and your career trajectory?

If you are going to do something, do it with passion! With passion comes conviction. Be thorough, put your all into it and pay attention to detail. Always keep your eye on the bigger picture, and in the face of challenges and adversity never lose sight of your ultimate goal.

### How do you unplug from work?

With the current limitations on movement due to Covid, spending time with my family is time out for me. I have recently taken to having movie marathons with my family. Thankfully I also do not stay too far off from my parents, so I get to connect with them as well. My family and I are dotted on by my parents and it's great to experience their attention and also feel like a daughter again, as I engage in insightful debates with my dad. Family is certainly the cornerstone for me.

### If you could give just one leadership lesson that you've learnt over the years, what'd it be?

The golden thread that I follow as a leader is lead, teach and be ready to be taught. As a leader there is always someone who has more insights and different approaches, and you should take it as a learning curve.

Always remain open to contrasting opinions and be accessible. I lead through teamwork and that it is important for me. My approach is to engage and discuss rather than dictate.

### You have reached the pinnacle in your field, where to from here?

I do believe that I am still in the learning phases and I am not even remotely close to my pinnacle. I still intend on breaking many glass ceilings. My future outlook in the next three to five years includes being a critical decision maker, stakeholder or owner of an economic institution, rather than just a contributor. As women on the African continent and especially in the technology space, you hardly see women designing African solutions for African women. I intend on being part of a journey that sees a woman owned technology company owned and led by African women. This is the legacy I would like to leave behind and it would give me a great sense of pride.

### Finish this sentence. If I were a brand, I would be... Apple.... their tag line is "Think different"

### Where are you going for your first vacation once travel bans are lifted?

I always enjoy exploring our beautiful country and when opportunity presents itself, I would like to escape to the Kruger National Park or even a farm in Limpopo. It would be great to relax and explore the nature around me. If I had to travel out of country for a holiday, it certainly would be Rome.

**"Through my work I see myself as a creator of future leading women who are redefining stereotypes of what an African woman should be, and broadening expectations not limited to traditional roles."**

Valencia Risaba

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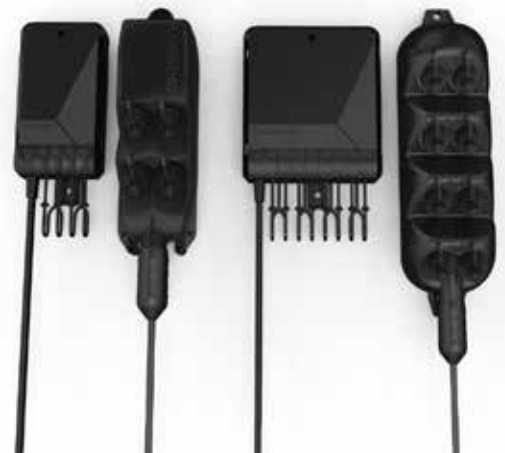
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# CASSANDRA GABRIEL

## JOINS BMIT!



BMIT is very excited to have Cassandra Gabriel recently join as a Director, following multiple collaborations over the years, including on the recent SA Connect Phase 2 Feasibility Study, where she spearheaded the stakeholder engagement and institutional review.

BMIT MD, Ryan Smit, believes that Cassandra will add rich experience and fresh perspectives to BMIT's Staff and Customer Satisfaction research practice, which has seen significant growth as the broadband market has matured.

Cassandra cut her ICT teeth at Telkom's Parliamentary and Regulatory divisions in 1998, during the liberalisation of the ICT sector. She played a role in the development of policy and regulation for the Telkom IPO, the introduction of the second network operator, and preparatory meetings of the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS). As Chairperson of USAASA she was then able to unlock the Universal Service Fund from the National Treasury and achieve a clean audit.

Cassandra believes the ICT sector has a long way to go to achieve gender equality, not just in Boards and the C-Suite. A deeper understanding is also needed on how the benefits of broadband are impacted by gender, exacerbating South Africa's digital divide. She points out that this research is important for the sector, with access and pricing still marginalising stakeholders such as rural women. "We must apply a deeper understanding of the needs of different stakeholder segments, to innovate our commercial models and drive a stakeholder engagement approach with a greater social benefit".

BMIT advises customers who are making investments in the broadband industry, be that acquisition scouting, due diligences, expansion into new markets or strategic re-alignment. Clients are from fibre, 5G, LTE and fixed-wireless industries. Our commercial reports cover business and consumer surveys, industry opportunities and developments.

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## The force of the female economy What women want: connecting with the female consumer

Jorge Mendes, Chief Officer of Consumer Business at Vodacom



There's no denying the strength of women, and this rings true in the world of brands. Research has revealed that **60%** of women in South Africa are the primary purchasers in their households. In addition, they have a multiplier effect, as they are often the gateway to buying decisions of family members and friends. By 2028, it's predicted that women will control **75%** of the discretionary spend worldwide, making them an even more powerful consumer force.

With **half** our population in this country female, brands need to sit up and take note of what women

want to get ahead in the market. In fact, according to **Nielsen Scarborough** data, **85%** of women say that if they like a brand, they will remain loyal to it. This makes it even more important for brands to connect with women, address their concerns, earn their trust and align with their values.

### Meeting needs through technology

In today's busy, fast-paced world, consumers are seeking solutions to everyday challenges that allow them more time to spend on what matters most. Women are no excep-

tion. They are extremely busy, especially as the lines between work and home life have become increasingly blurred during the pandemic. Brands must capitalise on the desire for convenience and speed, by offering products, services and experiences that simplify and enhance daily life.

Technology is one way to meet these demands. A connected mobile device, for example, can enable a woman to quickly and easily communicate, shop, manage her finances, run a business, access learning and employment opportunities and improve her and her family's health. This creates opportunities for brands to develop digital solutions that bring value to women's lives, and in turn, develop a lasting relationship with their female customer.

The rise in femtech, which is estimated to have a global market potential of **US\$50 billion** (R730 billion) by 2025, is evidence of how technology is being used successfully to address women's health concerns. We have seen how much of a need there is within this sector, with 1.9 million registered subscribers to Vodacom's zero-rated Mum & Baby service, which provides information on maternal, neonatal and child health and well-being in South Africa.

It's not just about delivering innovative digital solutions to attract the female consumer. In Africa, **52%** of women believe that they are worse off financially or about the same compared with five years ago. Brands must take cognisance that although women hold the spending power, this is only possible if they are economically empowered.

Here too, technology can play a role in helping women overcome economic barriers. This is why we have developed affordable



financial services products, such as Advanced Airtime, funding for businesses through VodaLend, and insurance. The arrival of Vodacom's VodaPay Super App is set to be a game changer for driving financial inclusion and economic growth. The platform has been designed to serve people with or without access to banks, giving all South Africans access to a broad range of digital financial services, from shopping online to paying bills and sending money.

## Breaking gender stereotypes

Brands need to take a more realistic approach to women if they are to connect with them meaningfully and incentivise consumption. In a [Kantar report](#), two thirds of women admit to ignoring ads that they felt portrayed negative stereotypes of women, and 85% said film and advertising depict women inaccurately.

Stereotypes develop at an early age and brands can do their part

in dispelling gender bias among a younger audience. For example, the field of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) is traditionally considered as male dominated. Vodacom's Code Like a Girl programme is a brand initiative that challenges this stereotype, nurturing coding and other IT skills in girls to encourage them to follow careers in STEM and become future leaders of industry.

Mattel has recognised its responsibility to shift cultural norms for girls. The manufacturer of the Barbie doll came under criticism for unrealistic and outdated representations of women. The company has now introduced new body types and skin tones, and launched the [Barbie Dream Gap](#) initiative to inspire young girls to reach their potential. As a result, the brand has received a much-needed boost.

## Actions are louder than words

Who better than women to create products and develop solutions and services for women? If brands want to truly meet the needs of a female consumer, they need to include more women on teams and in leadership positions who understand the market sector.

More than this, by hiring women, ensuring equal pay, and offering both maternity and paternity leave, brands are helping to address gender inequalities while contributing to the growth of the economy of women. As we strive for gender balance across all levels of our business, Vodacom is the first telco in South Africa to introduce a gender-neutral parental leave policy. We firmly believe in supporting phenomenal female talent in our company. Through various gender

equality initiatives, including training and development programmes, our aim is to empower our female employees so that they can realise their full potential as women in the workplace.

These actions extend beyond workplace policies to the greater community, where companies who actively support women in business and entrepreneurship, educational development and economic empowerment earn the respect of female consumers.

Women are a powerful demographic. Engage with them meaningfully and understand their priorities, and brands will not only find commercial success, but help to build a diverse, inclusive society for a better future.



Jorge Mendes, Chief Officer of Consumer Business at Vodacom. Over 25 years Telecoms experience, entrepreneur, people leader, results driven, love food, always have fun! Trying to be a Superlative human being.





# Human Rights and the Gender Digital Divide in Africa's COVID-19 Era

By Dr Adetokunbo Johnson

**The emergence of coronavirus has meant an increased dependence on technology. What does this mean for gender equality and the human rights of African women with limited use and access to the internet?**

The *digital divide* is a human rights issue that has resonated significantly worldwide and particularly in Africa. The digital divide refers to the gap between, on the one hand, individuals who have effective use and access to digital and information technologies, in particular the internet, and on the other, those who have very limited or no internet use and access at all. Unfortunately, the attention given to the gendered dimensions of this digital gap in African societies has mainly remained *limited, contradictory and scattered*. Yet, according to the *United Nations (UN) High Commissioner*, of the four billion estimated people without internet access worldwide, most are African women. And, within Africa, only *one out of every seven* African women is likely to use the internet, whereas the figure for African men is one out of every five.

Multiple reasons could be advanced for women's disproportionate access to the internet in Africa. The UN High Commissioner identifies a *common reason* as affordability, perhaps exacerbated by patriarchal attitudes and stereo-

types about women that persist in Africa. For example, burdensome societally-sanctioned functions could explain the significantly lower number of African women that have and use the internet compared to men. Likewise, multiple and intersecting *factors* such as ethnicity/race, ability, age, poverty, geographical location, language, religion, sexual orientation and class contribute to and exacerbate the gender digital divide encountered by African women.

This gendered digital divide has been exacerbated and brought into sharp focus by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Sadly, according to the *World Health Organization (WHO)*, approximately over one million Africans and still counting have contracted this disease. With this chilling statistic comes empirical and anecdotal research that exposes the negative gendered impact of this pandemic, particularly on African women. Both the *African Union* and *UN Women* have described how, with strict lockdown rules and economies shutting down, the pandemic has exposed and deepened pre-exist-

ing intersecting inequalities and vulnerabilities, which amplify the negative impact of the pandemic on women.

Evident in most African countries is women's historic disadvantage of being more likely to live in *abject poverty*. This situation prevails because they are usually the last ones to access adequate food, education and health care services, leading to the denial of essential human rights. Unsurprisingly, this disproportionate disadvantage that women in African countries face in spheres such as employment, education, development and health has echoes in the digital and internet space. And these digital disadvantages have been worsened by the ongoing pandemic.

The coronavirus has brought an abrupt shift of daily lives to the virtual world, with increased reliance on smartphones and internet connectivity. The upshot is that African women without internet access and use are excluded and experiencing more rights violations at a greater severity. Two examples substantiate this point.

First, the right to healthcare in Africa: women who do not have smartphones are more likely to be excluded from adequate health services. Without internet access and use, already strained health services, information and treatments resulting from the public health emergency become increasingly difficult to access for women; especially with the adoption of *e-health and m-health services*. In most cases, detection and protection from the virus become a challenge when *tracing and testing* is dependent on having access to a mobile phone. Evidence from the WHO points to how some *proximity and symptom tracking tools* need individuals to have a charged smartphone and to carry it at all times. As a result, women who do not have smartphones are more likely to be excluded from approaches that rely heavily on proximity tracing tools.

The second example concerns the right to education in Africa: girls and women who do not have smartphones are more likely have their right to education jeopardised. And with *learning disrupted*, and looming economic crisis as well as social isolation as a result of the pandemic, the threat of forced and child marriages, including teenage and unwanted pregnancies have increased considerably.

Evidence shows how some dictatorial African governments have, unfortunately, used the coronavirus response as an excuse to impose internet cuts, stifle opinions and monitor online actions, as well as block or filter access to information. In some cases, internet connection has been slowed or removed completely in a manner that enables repression. Reports, for example, mention how the Ethiopian Government cut internet

connections in response to the unrest in the Oromia region. Another example is in Guinea, where internet connections were disrupted allegedly because of elections.

**Such disruptions reinforce and widen the gender digital divide, interfering with the rights to freedom of expression, information and assembly. And crucially, as Access Now has argued, internet disruptions may amplify the spread of the virus.**

If this evidence is true, it points to how women's lack of internet access and use threatens more than their freedom of expression and information rights; it also threatens their rights to life and health.

Under the *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*, African states have made commitments to close the gender digital divide. Specifically, *Target 9c of SDG 9* speaks of striving to ensure that by 2020, there would be universal and affordable internet access in least developed countries. This obligation had echoes at the regional level, with the African Union's declaration of 2010-2020 as *the African Women's Decade* to achieve gender equality. Relatedly, in 2019 the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights adopted a *Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa*. This Declaration elaborates on article 9 of the *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights* and its relationship with the internet, and it follows the Commission's resolution 362 on Freedom of Information and Expression on the Internet in Africa. Amongst other things, the 2019 Declaration acknowledges that the rights of African women to information, and to express themselves fully using the internet, is key to closing the

digital gap and the enjoyment of other rights.

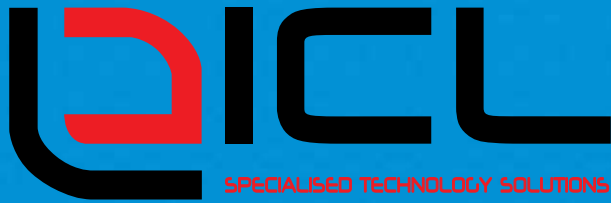
Further support for the need for action can be found in the June 2020 *judgment* in the case of Amnesty International and others v the Republic of Togo. In this case, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Court declared that the internet is an essential element in human rights enjoyment, in particular, the right to freedom of expression and the right to access information. The case is significant as it demonstrates that internet cuts are unlawful. It also indicates how, as outlined above, the enjoyment of rights has become increasingly threatened amidst the public health emergency.

To conclude: pandemics, particularly the current coronavirus, demonstrate the importance of Information Communication and Technology (ICT) in efforts to achieve gender equality in Africa. Thus, unless attention through the enactment of binding human rights laws on digital inclusion is prioritised, the gradual erosion of women's rights in Africa will be inevitable.



Dr Adetokunbo Johnson is a post-doctoral fellow at the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa.

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## The security challenges 5G will pose to every telecom network

By Jayesh Daga

**5G is set to revolutionise our telecom network: facilitating the transfer and proliferation of big data, reducing energy consumption, and increasing connectivity performance. This new paradigm will enhance broadband speeds and capacity, in some cases by more than 100 times. It'll also facilitate greater reliability and lower latency, taking response times down to single-digit milliseconds. This creates the potential for use cases like autonomous vehicles or lights-out factories.**

It also has the potential to support massive machine-type communications (mMTC), connecting millions of devices per square kilometer. This supports the expansion of IoT at a never-before-seen scale. With these new communication capabilities comes a different breed of architecture: more distributed intelligence on "the edge"; greater possibilities for third party intervention; and a network that's more flexible and adaptable.

However, with these new capabilities come new risks. With greater connectivity and more entry points, there are more opportunities for malicious actors to hack networks. Thus, as much as the 5G revolution presents a remarkable opportunity, it has to be approached strategically. Here, we discuss the challenges and the routes to adaptation.

### 1 Exciting opportunities on the horizon

The G in 5G stands for generation. The release of this technology marks the fifth iteration of wireless mobile communications. Since 1G was developed in the 1970s, each generation has facilitated greater data transmission speeds, changing the way that we communicate.

However, 5G will go one step further. This next generation in mobile connectivity will bring more than mere bandwidth improvement or speed; it will facilitate ultra-low latency, intelligent power consumption, network slicing, and high-density device communication. All of these things account for a significant technological breakthrough, changing a telecom network's core capabilities.

This is because it's not only the radio waves that have developed; the network architecture has also evolved. Like other networks, 5G uses a system of cell sites that cover certain areas. However, this next generation of wireless technology will rely on hundreds of thousands of 'small cell' transmitters. These transmitters can be placed anywhere in cities and buildings, which Forbes magazine described as, "the biggest shift in telecommunications since the invention of the cellphone."

The enhanced speed these distributed transmitters will provide will allow for significantly faster data transmission, depending on the application. Often, 5G is described as 100 times faster than 4G; however, in some use cases, it can be as much as 1000 times faster. This has the potential to facilitate never before seen connected technologies, like self-driving cars. Equally, it could provide critical services for healthcare professionals.

5G will be the essential connective tissue for the Internet of Things, enabling the exponential growth of a worldwide network of internet-powered devices. Estimates project that by 2025, IoT will grow threefold, linking everything from mobile devices to robots, to complex industrial machinery.

### 2 The cybersecurity risks coming with these benefits

A recent long-read in The New Yorker published statistics that suggest 5G has the potential to pump \$12 trillion into the global economy over the next 15 years. This won't only be value created via automation; 5G is also set to create 22 million jobs in the US alone over

# THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

the same period. This will usher in what's been dubbed the fourth industrial revolution or Industry 4.0.

However, the greater the connectivity, the greater the risk. In a hyper-connected mMTC environment, the likelihood of a security breach increases exponentially. Even ahead of the 5G era, hackers have wreaked havoc on infrastructure, homes, and businesses. According to the same New Yorker report, the average American is now more worried about cybercrime than violence. Considering the risks, public and private organisations alike are analysing how to address these new, complex security threats. The Brookings Institution, a non-profit public policy think tank, has identified five key ways in which 5G networks are more vulnerable to cyberattacks.

## Distributed networks

As the network relocates from centralised, hardware-based architecture to distributed, software-powered digital routing, the potential for hardware 'choke-points' is lost. This diminishes the capacity for cyber hygiene as there are fewer obstructions between devices.

## Increased standardisation

This virtualisation of higher-level network functions also standardises previously complex physical systems. Where once every physical building block of a network presented a new barrier for cybercriminals, now, these tools have been standardised to allow for greater interoperability. This, naturally, cuts out a lot of work for those seeking to do ill.

## Early generation AI

Even outside of the possibility of mitigating all the software vulnerabilities in the wider network, the network is also managed by software. Frequently, this will be early generation artificial intelligence, which can be vulnerable to attack. If a hacker gains control of this software, they could take over the entire network.

## New avenues of attack

The significant increase in bandwidths associated with the 5G rollout creates new avenues of attack for cybercriminals. This is, once again, because of the greater distribution of nodes. According to Brookings' report, "small-cell antennas deployed throughout urban areas become new hard targets."

## The proliferation of smart devices

The tens of millions of hackable devices in the Internet of Things are creating a whole host of new opportunities for hackers. From devices in public infrastructure, hospitals, homes, even battlefields are all, in the words of the report, "wonderfully and uniquely vulnerable." As is evident from the risk factors described above, the chief benefits of 5G are also its biggest downsides. With

the ability to connect more devices, comes an increase in threat vectors for cybercriminals. Equally, faster networks also mean the potential for the rapid spread of viruses and malware. The more users in the network, the greater the potential for infected devices and systems to spread malign software to others, making botnet attacks a particular concern. In the face of new threats, the cybersecurity community needs to reappraise strategy and shore up defences. This means that the future of cybersecurity will be inextricably linked to the understanding of the risks associated with 5G and having the capacity to counter constantly emerging threats. This will begin with some foundational principles, which we will discuss next.

## 3 Measures every telecom network should take to adapt

As connected devices play an increasingly integral role in peoples' homes, businesses and cities, every telecom network has a duty to ensure cybersecurity. Experts suggest that regulators should seek to incentivise telecom networks to invest in security, instilling a duty of care for their customers. This would begin with the following investments, implementations and strategies.

### Invest in cybersecurity

A proactive approach to cybersecurity is absolutely essential, although right now, this tends to be the exception rather than the norm. Statistics from the United States suggest that public organisations are investing heavily in cybersecurity ahead of the dawn of 5G. Meanwhile, the private sector is lagging behind, particularly smaller businesses. As part of a duty of care to their customers, every telecom network should invest heavily in cybersecurity R&D.

For example, small- and medium-sized wireless ISPs – which often serve remote communities – are falling behind when it comes to 5G-ready security. For some, this is due to a lack of manpower and financial resources, and yet, they are still implementing 5G networks. If they want to serve their communities properly, it is essential these small telco players rethink their budgets.

### Fight fire with fire

The key vulnerability in 5G networks is software, and thus, they must be shored up with software protections. Machine learning and artificial intelligence will be crucially important in this fight, as cybercriminals develop fast-spreading malware and malign bots. These programs work with speed and scale; therefore, we need protections that can mirror this capacity.

### Incorporate security into the DevOps cycle

In software, developers have lived by the Agile methodology for decades now. This means sprinting to deploy

minimum viable products, accepting risk, and upgrading later according to consumer feedback. However, in the wake of 5G, DevOps teams need to incorporate security into Agile processes. Sustainment also needs to be taken into account as part of their duty of care for customers.

### Collaborating to define best practice

The National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST) Cybersecurity Framework has identified five areas for best practice in cybersecurity. These are: identify, protect, detect, respond, and recover, which could become the basis of an industry standard. For example, "identify" focuses on determining a company's cyber threats, and vulnerabilities in order to identify cyber risk reduction investments. Equally, the Consumer Technology Association (CTA), which represents the \$377 billion U.S. consumer technology industry, produced an anti-botnet guide. This document outlines best practices for device manufacturers.

However, the problem with industry-led best practice initiatives is there's no way of telling if they're being followed. Although the CTA initiative, for instance, may have been well-intentioned, there's no way for consumers to check compliance. Really, we need legislation to protect the consumer; and only then, with full industry buy-in, can we establish best practice. As part of their duty of care, 5G networks need to own the residual risk and work together with government oversight to assign cross-sector mitigation responsibilities

### Harmonising the regulatory environment

If indeed governments have a vital role to play in the new cybersecurity landscape, telco and regulators need to establish a collaborative relationship. In the past, governments and companies have had somewhat of an adversarial relationship, where corporations perceive legislation as a roadblock to innovation. However, considering the fresh threats that face both states and companies, a new paradigm in cybersecurity needs to develop, where regulators and executives work together to protect data.

### Consumer education and full transparency

One of the leading causes of security breaches is ill-informed consumers who purchase technology based on cost over security. As 5G goes global, various IoT devices and software will be implicated in critical tasks. Equally, consumers tend to be vulnerable to social engineering attacks, which are becoming an increasingly prevalent strategy for cybercriminals. Therefore, it is essential that regulators and businesses alike ensure consumers are aware of the risks associated with their actions, whether it be purchases or online activity.

## 4 Collaborate and innovate to protect 5G networks

With the arrival of 5G, the digital landscape will radically change. A software-based network built on a distributed architecture is uniquely vulnerable. As software operations are vulnerable by nature and distributed topologies forego the centralised chokepoints that 3 and 4G offered, 5G gives hackers fresh opportunities to invade. Given that the principal cyber threats come through commercial networks, devices, and apps, a comprehensive approach to cybersecurity will happen through collaboration. Telecom networks, app developers, and device manufacturers alike need to act on a duty of care for their users.

The regulatory environment also needs to evolve along with the new 5G landscape. National and transnational legislative bodies need to incentivise companies to address the vulnerabilities they create. The moment is now for unilateral action to address exposures, structural shortfalls, and funding gaps – or else the unique benefits of a 5G enabled future could leave consumers, businesses, and organisations uniquely vulnerable.

## 5 Sourcing the expertise you need

5G will revolutionise connectivity. With the low latency, the potential for mMTC, and network slicing, every telecom network can significantly expand its capabilities and offering. However, as the cliché goes, with great power comes great responsibility. With this new structure comes new threats and companies need to reappraise their security strategy. This requires expertise.

Identifying a cybersecurity specialist is crucial to a successful 5G rollout, as choosing the defence strategies relevant to your business needs is essential. Cybercriminals strategies are evolving all the time, so you need experts that are one step ahead. But where can telco find these experts? How can networks identify professionals that have experience relevant to such novel technologies?

Outvise was founded to forge relationships between businesses and experts. With a curated network of more than 30,000 fully-certified TMT and digital specialists, businesses can identify an expert with the relevant expertise in as little as 48 hours. With profiles ranging from cybersecurity experts to data architecture specialists, to Scrum masters and project managers, Outvise connects telco with best-in-class talent.

Read the original article [here](#).



# IPv6 Network Course

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Meeting ID: 8980 3865 057

No	Course Name	Instructor	Content
1	New Requirements and Trends of IP Industry Development	Daniel Tang	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Introduce IP Network</li><li>- IP service development requirements, enabling various industries and intelligent O&amp;M</li><li>- IP Industry Development Trend</li></ul>
2	IPv6 Industrial Policy	Dr. Will Liu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- National industrial policy</li><li>- Industry alliance</li><li>- Global Best Practices</li></ul>
3	IPv6+:IPv6 Enhanced Innovation	Kgabo Seopa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- IPv6 enhanced Innovation for 5G and Cloud Era</li><li>- IP target Network Standards in the 5G and Cloud Era</li><li>- IPv6 adoption at country level</li></ul>
4	National IP Talent Development	Kgabo Seopa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- What is the talent structure required in the IP domain?</li><li>- Industry IP Talent Development System</li><li>- Introduce national IP talent Development cooperation framework, solution features and benefits</li></ul>

## Course Instructors



### Daniel Tang

#### Chief Marketing Expert of Huawei Data Communication Product Line

With more than 20 years of experience working in the ICT industry. Daniel's previously held positions include: Vice President for Global Key Account Marketing, R&D manager and senior engineer. He received an M.S. in electrical engineering from the University of Southern California in 1998 and a bachelor's degree in engineering from the University of Science and Technology of China in 1993.



### Dr. Shucheng (Will) Liu

#### Industry Development Director in Data Communication Network Area at Huawei

Dr Liu's research interests include IPv6, Network AI, NFV/SDN, ICN, and IoT. He received his joint Ph.D degree in Computer Science with City University of Hong Kong, Ph.D and Bachelor degrees in Computer Science with University of Science and Technology of China. He has been actively contributing in organizations of standards and technical professional:

- Vice-Chairman and key proponent of ETSI ISG IPE and ISG IP6(closed), Rapporteur of 1 work item in IP6
- Co-founder and Technical Manager of ETSI ISG ENI
- Member of IETF OPS area Directorates, Author of 9 RFCs, mainly in IPv6 and SDN areas
- Guest Editors of Special Issue on Intelligent Network Management in IEEE Transactions on Network Science and Engineering



### Kgabo (KG) Seopa - Executive: Products and Solutions Sales

#### Southern Africa Network Marketing and Solution Sales Dept

- Over 17 years of solutions and technical experience within ICT, particularly in Fixed Networks.
- Computer Science & Mathematics Degree (Wits), CCIE#30089, MBA (Wits BS), HCIE Loading
- Worked for companies such as Aruba, a Hewlett Packard Enterprise company (CTO for Sub-Saharan Africa), Cisco Systems (SE for Service Providers), Nokia Siemens Networks (IP Solutions Manager for Sub-Saharan Africa), and Vodacom(Network Specialist)
- South African National



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## The evolution of gender-balanced recruitment processes in the telecommunications sector in Africa

By Nthabiseng Mashilwane, Chief Human Resource Officer, Liquid Intelligent Technologies



Historically, society has perceived a career in technology or telecommunications as one that involves oily hands, messy overalls, and heavy lifting. For many years, partly because of this, women have shied away or actively been side-lined from work prospects in the space, making the telecommunications workforce dominated by males. A recent study shows that women account for less than 40% of the workforce in telecommunications\*. In my over 13 years in the sector, the human resourcing patterns rarely have varied, with few women penetrating technical and leadership positions. However, the tide is changing, and the telecommunications industry is playing catch-up in gender representation equality.

To understand the evolution of gender-balanced recruitment processes in telecommunications, we must first ask why women have not generally penetrated the sector.

### The fear of the unknown

As an HR practitioner, the irony for me is that my field is perceived as a woman-led one (at least in most parts of the world). The opposite is true in the telecommunications field, and often this results from the fear of the unknown. Many young, brilliant women I have interacted with simply do not know much about the sector and tend to gravitate towards its male-driven stereotypes. Many women have not been exposed to the tech environment; they are the late entrants in the space. As a result, they often lack self-awareness and confidence in their abilities to succeed in the sector.

What exacerbates this is that many recruiters reinforce this thinking and tend to prefer male hires to their female counterparts. In HR practice, a lack of exposure does not necessarily translate into an inability to deliver value. There is a need for a mindset shift that promotes a corporate culture and environment of inclusivity in the tech space.

### Education and skills gap

Most technical positions in telecommunications require training in the hard sciences, technology, engineering, and maths. Studies have repeatedly recorded that only around 25% of women who attend tertiary education major in these disciplines. This creates an education and skills gap that negatively impacts inclusivity in employment. Deliberate career development programmes that

encourage females to study technical courses should be enabled at the formative stages of education.

### Cultural barriers

Closely related to education and skills gaps are cultural norms that dissuade females from pursuing the sciences and technology. At the household level, families are responsible for encouraging sisters and daughters to challenge themselves to take on disciplines considered the preserve of males. Further, cultural barriers are experienced at the workplace when networking opportunities are scheduled late in the evening. Most women being caregivers cannot maximise these opportunities; I have missed out on a few myself as I had to be home taking care of my son. Despite this, females must be nurtured from a young age to develop their unique

comparative advantages in male-dominated fields and not merely imitate their male counterparts. In my experience, it is essential to recognise that as a woman, you bring an exclusive skill set that is valuable in any sector, let alone telecommunications.

It is undeniable that successful businesses are those that have recognised the value add of women, especially at the leadership level. Studies reveal that gender-diverse companies are 45% more likely to improve market share, achieve 53% higher returns on equity, and are 70% more likely to report successfully capturing new markets\*. Organisations that have women in leadership at the highest level tend to put people at the centre, increasing productivity and retention. Gender inclusivity in telecommunications is especially crucial during the COVID-19 pandemic as businesses are shifting operational models to emphasise employee psychological safety by prioritising empathy and compassion, natural qualities for women. Telecommunications companies have realised the importance of attracting women in their ranks and are actively changing the gender landscape in the business.

So, how is this narrative changing? What is being done to encourage more women in telecommunications?

## Coaching and mentoring

Businesses in the tech environment have increasingly developed tailor-made programmes that attract and mentor women into the space. This is a long-term initiative that requires reshaping the image of a traditionally male-dominated industry. More and more telecommunications companies are investing in awareness

and outreach programmes to inspire women and girls by the possibilities of working in this area. Leading women in the business are engaging schools and universities to market telecommunications opportunities and stimulate the passions of female students. Further, firms in the sector are developing professional incubators to nurture young female professionals to excel with a specific focus on strategic growth, financial understanding and business acumen

## Creating a conducive environment

This must start from home. I owe my success in my career to my upbringing. My parents never exposed us to stereotypes and always encouraged us to go after our goals no matter how farfetched they seemed. Families must create a conducive environment for females to explore their full potential without limitation. At the workplace, a conducive environment starts from the recruitment process, and many telecoms companies have a deliberate gender diversity policy that promotes women entrants into the business. Firms are reviewing corporate policies with a gender dynamics lens to ensure no discriminatory workplace practices. In addition to this, companies should standardise equal pay for men and women. This is one of the many areas that Liquid Intelligence Technologies is a pioneer in, with no pay disparities between male and female employees. Further, Liquid encourages an environment where women can be assertive without having to be perceived as aggressive. This catalyses women participation in decision making that makes the business thrive.

There has perhaps never been a more dynamic period in the technology and telecommunications space. The last decade has seen

explosive growth in the sector, and the COVID-19 stay at home restrictions have only deepened this. Such industry expansion demands change. The evolution in technology services challenges incumbents to meet ever-changing consumer demand. This necessitates a fresh look at the skills available to the sector. Gender inclusivity continues to represent a key challenge and a significant opportunity for the industry's future. What is undeniable is that we need more women in telecommunications if we are to secure the sector's longevity.

For more about Liquid, Intelligence Technologies, visit [www.Liquid.tech](http://www.Liquid.tech)

## References

- [Accelerating the digital economy: Gender diversity in the telecommunications sector](#)*  
Harvard Business Review, 2018, "*[How Women Drive Innovation and Growth](#)*";  
Catalyst, 2019, "*[The Bottom Line: Corporate Performance and Women's Representation on Boards](#)*".



### Nthabiseng Mashilwane

is the Group Chief People Officer of Liquid Intelligent Technologies and brings over 27 years' experience. Before joining Liquid Intelligent Technologies South Africa, Nthabiseng was the HR Director for Nokia (2008 – 2021).

## Beyond COVID-19: how tech's great leap forward can help bridge the digital gender divide

By Christina Naidoo  
COO, Huawei South Africa



**The Covid-19 pandemic has served as another reminder that the digital gender divide is an ongoing challenge that we are yet to successfully overcome. During this Covid-19 pandemic, one of the differences between access to things such as information, employment and education was whether one had sufficient digital access or not and across the globe, women and girls were more negatively affected than the opposite gender. This pandemic will undoubtedly have an impact on the digital access gender gap.**

According to the World Bank, the gap in digital access in Sub-Saharan Africa stands at 37%, the second worst in the world behind South Asia. Closing this gap is critical to achieving the fifth goal of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the UNDP is Gender Equality: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

The world had to become instantly more digitised in 2020, but some

countries and communities were far more equipped to do so than others. Addressing the real needs of women and girls should be part of day-to-day policymaking. The gender gap in digital technology has narrowed in recent years, but the pandemic has showed us that it is not narrowing fast enough and women continue to be disadvantaged by the lack of progress.

In many ways, COVID-19 further entrenched existing gaps, especially in the workplace. According to the *Global Gender Gap Report 2021*, women face significantly more challenges in the workplace than men, especially those who have children.

It is essential that we ramp up the attempt to bridge the gap by not only attracting more women into the ICT industry but by also ensuring they have the necessary skills to thrive, by building an environment conducive to women in the industry and by finding more ways to increase the access to digital technology.

To empower women, eliminate the economic and social disparities between women and men, and promote social integration, we must not only introduce supportive recruitment policies, but also offer more opportunities and support through education, to make women fundamentally more competitive in the current digital economy.

### Initiatives for the future

At Huawei, we are committed to helping address the current skills gap. An important example of this is Huawei's Seeds for the Future programme. Since its launch in 2008, the programme has benefited more than 30 000 students, at more than 500 universities across more than 126 countries. In South Africa, we have a 50/50 gender split in candidates that are chosen for the programme. In addition, the Huawei ICT Academy trains more than 45 000 students globally every year, with a growing number of them being women. This applies to South Africa too.

On 8 March 2021, Huawei officially launched the HUAWEI Women Developers programme, which aims to empower women developers and provide them with a platform to create innovative apps that can change the world. This program intends to ensure that women have access to the education and training that they need to become fundamentally more competitive in the digital economy. Equipping women with these skills has proven to promote social integration, as well as inclusive and diversified societies.

This year, a new Tech Women's Award will be presented at the Huawei HMS App Innovation Contest 2021. This award represents a special incentive for women devel-

opers, hoping to encourage their innovation and entrepreneurship. In addition, participants from this program who develop outstanding apps with big potential will have the opportunity to be featured in future campaigns and officially invited to other Huawei events.

This August, which is Women's Month in South Africa, we're launching a Digital Skills for Women Entrepreneurs Programme. This is cloud computing, digital marketing and APP development training for women entrepreneurs.

### Beyond encouragement

Digital technology can, and should, be a tool for closing the gender divide in general. But in order for that to happen, it's vital to close

the digital gender divide. It is also not enough to just encourage participation by women and girls but we also need to continue to eliminate the socio-economic barriers that exist for women as these also contribute by hindering capable females from initiating and continuing the pursuit of a career in ICT.



Christina Naidoo



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## CORTEX HUB LAUNCHES ALL WOMAN FIBRE OPTIC TRAINING

The Cortex Hub is an ICT business incubator and accelerator which aims to create global players through leading research, development, training as well as incubation and acceleration platform(s) that will activate, nurture and support technology innovation. The Hub’s goal is to create an innovative society that is able to sustainably leverage current technologies towards solving societal problems. It works to achieve this by forming strong partnerships with local universities, Government, the local community, ICT providers, entrepreneurs and other business incubators to create a robust entrepreneurship ecosystem within the Eastern Cape (EC) province. The Hub, based in East London, has forged relations with relevant stakeholders in the province, the African Continent and as far as Silicon Valley.

As a technology incubator the Cortex Hub aims to create global Artificial Intelligence, Networking and Data Science entrepreneurs by providing training in Artificial Intelligence and Networking to the youth in the province of the Eastern Cape, South Africa. The Hub aims to activate, nurture and support innovation in this space through providing adequate technical training and business support to entrepreneurs.

The Cortex hub offers youth in the region a work space and startup support in surroundings with other technologists and entrepreneurs where they can share ideas and explore opportunities.

The Cortex Hub also provide entrepreneurs with media and marketing support. We believe that building a strong ecosystem, combined with good infrastructures, will increase our potential of being successful in the space of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Networking.

The Cortex Hub believes that Africans cannot simply be spectators as the world excel in the areas of Artificial Intelligence (AI), advanced Networking and Data Sci-

ence but that the time is right for Africans to actively participate in the digital economy.

From its inception in 2014, the Cortex Hub focused on a broad range of issues in the technology field. Solutions created by our entrepreneurs ranged from software development for businesses in the region to learning management systems for high schools in East London. With large amounts of data available and new tools to enable building efficient networking infrastructure labs. Entrepreneurs of the Cortex Hub will now direct their focus on deploying and scaling Artificial Intelligence and Networking tools. To make this a reality, the Cortex Hub will begin by training and certifying all our entrepreneurs who take part in our incubation and acceleration.

This year The Hub will launch all women training in all FOA certifications, including: CFOT - CFOS/D - CPCT - CFOS/O - CFOS/S - CFOS/T - CFOS/FC - CFOS/H - CFOS/L - CFOS/DC - CFOS/W - CFOS/DAS - CFOS/A

The Cortex Hub will implement train-the-trainer models with the

Fibre Optic Association which will enable us to have a greater reach in the province. It will further focus on:

Wireless
TCP/IP - VRAN - WAN - HTTPS
Automotive Ethernet
Metro Ethernet Forum
OTN - DWDM
Fibre Optic Association

*The Cortex Hub will train individuals in all layers of networking*

As The Cortex Hub embark on this journey to train women in the Eastern Cape as fibre technicians, we also want to equip them with additional skills to, over time, become entrepreneurs in their communities with a range of offerings. To achieve this we will train young women in the entire networking stack, from fibre to TCP/IP and Wireless. Because of The Hub’s proximity to the automotive sector in East London, it will further train individuals in automotive ethernet to prepare them for the future of automotive sector.

The Cortex Hub is open to partnerships with any company with the same principles and who seeks to expand opportunities to grow skills development and ultimately job opportunities for the youth in South Africa.

If you want to get involved in The Cortex Hub, please email: Nico Muka Kamalenga - [nicmuka@gmail.com](mailto:nicmuka@gmail.com)

## Cortex Hub - Employee Profile

### LWAZIKAZI MPETSHENI

Optic Fibre Lab Facilitator - CORTEX HUB

BSc in Geography GIS Graduate (University of Fort Hare)

Lwazikazi Mpetsheni is a goal-oriented and resilient facilitator who grew up in the neighbourhoods of Mdantsane, Eastern Cape, Lwazikazi.

After completing school in 2003, she did a short course in Information Technology (IT) at the University of Fort Hare. After which she was accepted at Border Technikon, now known as the Walter Sisulu University of Technology, but life had other plans for her. Unfortunately, when she was about to start her final year of studies, her mother, who was then paying for her tuition fees, had a major stroke, and she could not provide for her family. Roles changed, Lwazikazi decided to drop out of school to help support her family.

Her first job was at Pie City where she worked first as a cook and later as a cashier and was trusted to do the banking as well. In 2012 she started working as both a receptionist from 8H00 to 16H30 and an aerobics instructor from 17H30 to 20H00 later switching to being a full-time instructor and administrator.

She got a breakthrough in 2013 when she started working at Yanfeng Automotive Interior in ELIDZ where she started working as an operator at the warehouse under the Department of Logistics.

Because of her self-driven and curious personality, Lwazie started learning about all sectors that were available in the company. She got promoted and started working as a Line Side Team leader, a position that never existed in the company before then. She was the first one, along with her former colleague Mthetho Monakali since the company is operating 24 hours.

After ten years of trying to make ends meet (from Pie City to Yanfeng), she decided to quit her job as the Lineside Team leader in February 2017. She pursued an academic qualification at the University of Fort Hare, studying Bachelor of Science majoring in Geographical Information Systems and Geography. She felt that she could be in a better position to get a career that would provide better opportunities for her family as she is the sole breadwinner. Her income was barely enough to support her financial obligations. Going back to school after 14 years with no salary, savings, or financial aid scheme was challenging. There were times she wanted to give up, but it was not in her nature to quit. Towards the end of her first year, she got financial aid, and things were better until her last year when NSFAS implemented the N+2 rule, which stated that "if a student had more than five (5) years in higher education they would not fund him/her".



She was devastated but then again did not stop at anything to complete her studies. Currently, she is doing a BSc Hons in GIS and Computer at the University of Fort Hare.

She is now part of a team of one of the most innovative and empowering business incubators/accelerators, Cortex Hub, which provides entrepreneurial support to youth-owned startup companies looking to leverage technology in addressing societal challenges and exploring opportunities where Technology can improve our communities. She facilitates fibre optic training for women. Her duties include keeping up with optic fibre industry trends and developments to ensure compliance with current standards and conventions. The end goal is to produce young technicians certified and capable of planning, designing, installing, servicing and maintaining fibre optic infrastructure, working with the latest technology tools.

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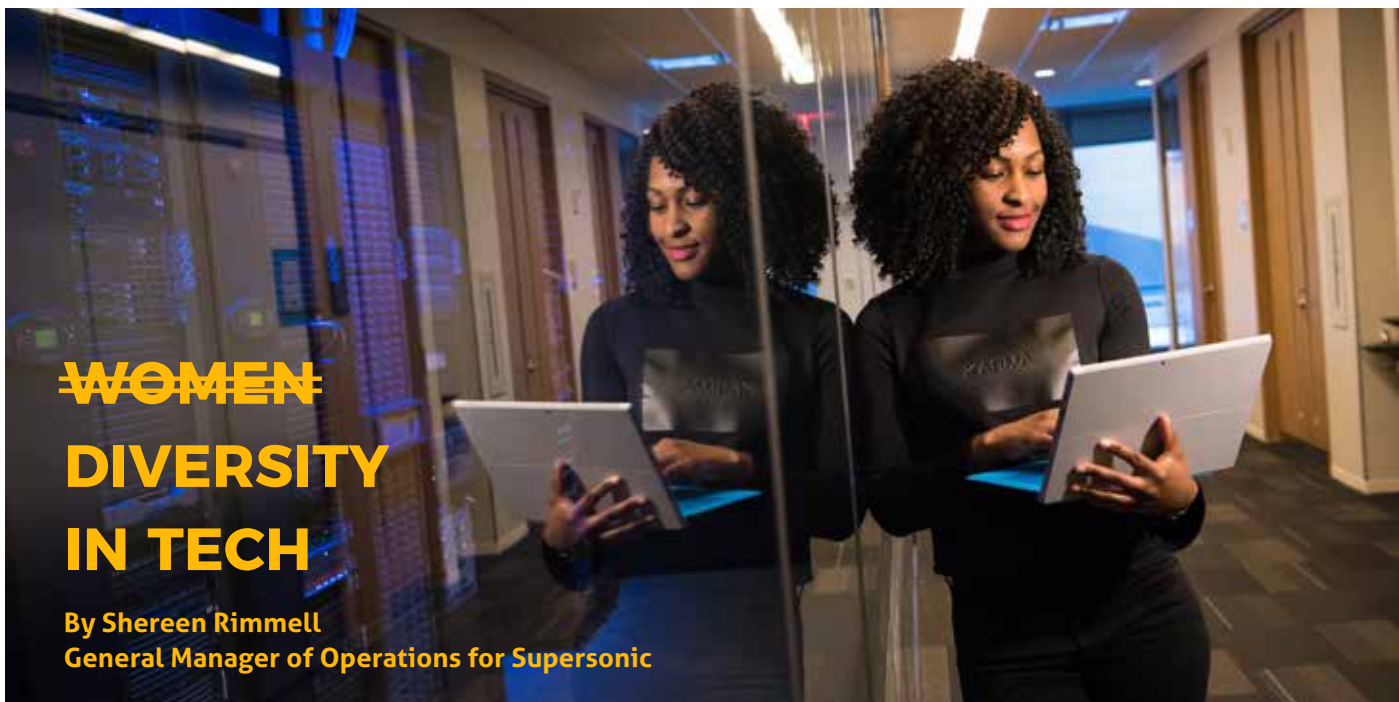
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**WOMEN  
DIVERSITY  
IN TECH**

**By Shereen Rimmell  
General Manager of Operations for Supersonic**

As the month of August approaches, businesses and brands pull out the pink and build campaigns and creative to applaud women for Women’s Month. There is a significant focus on women in various industries and one that gets highlighted frequently is tech. Women in tech have ‘defied all gender odds’ by embracing and succeeding in an industry that has traditionally been synonymous with men.

Shereen Rimmell, General Manager of Operations for *Supersonic*, supports the rights of women, and would like to see a culture that supports diversity in the tech industry. “Our industry is exciting, fast-paced and continues to revolutionise how we - as humans, do everything. I would encourage, businesses and individuals to celebrate what makes women different and how they’re able to see things from another perspective rather than it being about male vs female.”

Shereen started her formal career in a call centre at Cellphones Direct which was later bought by Vodacom where she was employed over two periods for 16

years. In between she started her own Training Company, worked at GIBS and did a fair amount of consulting. From Vodacom she moved across to SEACOM in a Business Operations role, then Supersonic in April this year. “I have built my career in tech and sure, there have been some challenges I faced as a young woman involving double standards, being spoken over or excluded from the ‘boys club’.” But when Shereen herself raised the gender equality issue where she was in a previous role, she reminisces about how fortunate she was to have worked for an incredible man – who too had to overcome his own discrimination obstacles. He advised that she move away from the men vs women discussion and just be excellent, “which is what I have strived to do every day since.”

Shereen is a logical thinker, is quality driven and thrives on fixing things. She never neglects the people side of things and makes it her mission to build high performance teams. She says, although this takes significant time and effort, the results are always incredible. “We have already

managed to implement operational changes within the business to improve; from system and process improvements through to reorganising the teams to improve productivity and accountability – all of which is being undertaken and supported by all genders, races, ages and backgrounds.”

For more information on options for your *Supersonic* connection or to sign up, visit [website](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [Instagram](#)

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**Shereen Rimmell**



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## LOST AND FOUND

The Digital Council Africa has an [Equipment Monitoring page](#) on its website. The aim is to curb theft of equipment.

To view a list of stolen equipment, you can access the list [here](#).

We encourage members to regularly send through the serial numbers of stolen equipment, and inform us when equipment is recovered to ensure that the information remains up to date and accurate.

Information can be sent to Reesha Iyer at [reesha@digitalcouncil.africa](mailto:reesha@digitalcouncil.africa)

In addition, it remains the responsibility of the industry to regularly do spot checks against the serial numbers of contractor equipment to ensure that stolen equipment is identified and that culprits are eradicated from the industry. Companies wishing to purchase second hand equipment should compare the equipment serial numbers against those listed on the website.