

SAIBPP launches Women's Forum, webinar addresses equity, access, assets

Earlier this month, the South African Institute for Black Property Practitioners (SAIBPP) launched its Women's Forum with a live virtual event. Speakers included Fundi Mazibuko, chairperson of the SAIBPP Women's Forum; Anne Githuku-Shongwe, UN Women's South Africa Multi-Country Office (SAMCO) representative; Judi Nwokedi, Black Business Council chairperson of the Women's Alliance; Mpumi Mpofu, CEO of Airports Company South Africa; and Molly Gallant, CEO of Ryden International Property Consultants.



Fundi Mazibuko, chairperson of the SAIBPP Women's Forum

Access to funding and property

Facilitated by chairperson of the SAIBPP Youth and Young Professionals Forum, Nthabiseng Makgabo, the topic of the panel discussion spoke to 'Equity, access and assets – Increasing the participation of Black women in the finance, real estate and built environment sector'. Mazibuko opened the discussion by emphasising the importance of access to funding and property for Black women in particular and how the lack of this access has perpetuated an environment that continues to enable gender-based violence.

“Gender-based violence is evident to the fact that when women do not have money in their pockets, access to funding or property, they stay in toxic relationships. That has to come to an end. Property ownership is still one of the key fundamentals underpinning economic empowerment in this country and yet Black females continue to be underrepresented. Our industry has not done enough to transform,” she said.

Economic empowerment

SAIBPP president Tholo Makhaola supported Fundi's sentiments by making reference to President Cyril Ramaphosa's weekly newsletter that reminded readers of the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action which placed the emancipation of women at the forefront of the global agenda. Makhaola mentioned that in line with the topic of the SAIBPP Women's Forum launch, Ramaphosa made a call to intensify measures to empower women economically, which is also aligned with the African Union's decision to dedicate this decade to the financial inclusion of women.

“Unless women are brought into the mainstream of the economy, they will continue to bear the brunt of exclusion and be vulnerable to abuse and to exploitation. There is a direct correlation that can be drawn between financial empowerment and the emancipation of women in the prevalence of the GBV phenomenon. As SAIBPP, we will endeavour to take visible action to constantly create various platforms and to bring together various role players that will highlight this scourge and to ensure that justice in so far as it can be realised through empowerment in our sectors, specifically of women, is achieved,” he added.

Property rights

Githuku-Shongwe provided insights into the work that the UN Women SAMCO office is doing to drive the agenda of women's access to property and land following on from the Beijing Platform for Action 25 years ago.

“We have achieved quite a bit in terms of much fewer discriminatory laws than we had 25 years ago. One of the biggest

areas that we find is still lagging is the issue of property and property rights, but of course the issue globally is about access to land. More than 80% of women in some countries do not have access to land and to property in general,” said Githuku-Shongwe.

UN Women has marked 2030 as the year that they aim to put an end to gender inequality and economic justice. “If we are to invest in countries, specifically on women’s economic empowerment and productivity looking at access to assets, particularly land and property, we expect that the economies would grow by at least 10%. In Africa we are expecting \$360bn would be added if all we did was to ensure women’s equal access to property rights. The current gender disparity is estimated at \$700bn and that plays out in the ways that companies pay women, in the actual opportunities they give. What we know is that if women had their due access, between 30-40%, we expect to be able to move over R600bn of South Africa’s economy into women’s hands,” she added.

Gender struggle remains

Nwokedi spoke to the disregard of the Black woman in the context of SA's democracy where Black women were told to suspend their struggle against male domination, patriarchal subordination and overall gender oppression until the end of apartheid and how 26 years after apartheid, the gender struggle remains deferred.

The Black Business Council has called for gender responsive policy, gender responsive procurement and gender budgeting.

“In our presentation to the president before 9 August, we asked for deliberate provisions in procurement and the president surprised all of us in his commitment that 40% of all procurement will be in the hands of women. We are also looking at the private sector and their procurement practices and how they re-engineer their supply chains backwards. When we hosted minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, she outlined very candidly that her department in terms of their procurement invest in only 10% of Black people in total. Not just in Black women. So of course, there is a tremendous opportunity for us to close that gap,” Nwokedi said.

ACSA's Built Environments Programme

In the latter part of the discussion, Mpofu took the audience through the active measures that Airports Company South Africa has taken to make intentional moves to empower Black women in the built environment sector. ACSA's Built Environments Programme includes airport planning, portfolio and projects management, engineering, property management and development.

Mpofu also shared ACSA’s Black female management component and how it have improved over the years but

acknowledged the need for growing the percentage of senior management representation.

ACSA's strategy for supporting Black woman-owned businesses has adopted the Construction Industry Development Board Contract Participation Goal (CIDB CPG) programme to support targeted groups including Black women-owned businesses.

"At prime contract level, we prequalify Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) Level 2 suppliers who must subcontract 15% to 30% to Black women, youth and people with disabilities," Mpofu said. Their investment in Black women-owned vendors has grown by 26% between 2010 to 2020 from R106.4m to R359m.

Mpofu went on to emphasise the importance of companies taking responsibility for driving the effective empowerment of Black women in their industries and eradicating the lack of representation.

Challenges in facilities management

Gallant concluded the discussion by sharing her 28-year journey in the property industry. She joined Ryden International Property Consultants in 1996 when they were looking for Black property practitioners post-Apartheid. She and her partner did a management buy-out in 2000 when Ryden UK became frustrated at the closed and hostile environment that was the South African property sector at the time.

It was quite a challenge operating in the market as a 100% Black-owned company then and she sadly mentioned that this challenge persists. Gallant highlighted two major challenges for Black business in the property sector - total facilities management and property ownership.

"Facilities management companies that are Black-owned do not have the muscle that companies like Bidvest have in order to adopt the total facilities management business model. Tender criteria for total facilities management have made it difficult for Black-owned companies to contend fairly. Stringent and prohibiting tenders pose a sad reality for Black companies in this country.

"As the SAIBPP Women's Forum, we should make a proposal to government for a similar model as the CIDB grading system for facilities management in particular. A major problem in the total facilities management approach is that if not challenged and if we do not find a way around it, it is likely to lead to a death of Black companies. I'm just hoping that SAIBPP Women's Forum will drive this new wave of transformation that will include the empowerment of women within the value chain," Gallant said.

One of the key take-outs from the panel discussion was the echoing sentiment of unity among Black women for economic emancipation, the importance of challenging the private and public sectors for economic inclusion and the demand for policy changes in favour of Black women in the property sector.

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