

'New normal' to hold greater opportunities for women in property

 By [Sindy Peters](#)

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The South African Institute of Black Property Practitioners (SAIBPP) is hosting its annual convention this week, 7-8 August. The theme of this year's event is 'The New Normal', addressing land reform in South Africa and transformation in the property sector, among other pertinent topics.



Nkuli Bogopa, president, South African Institute of Black Property Practitioners (SAIBPP)

Celebrating Women's Month on Bizcommunity, we interviewed Nkuli Bogopa, president of SAIBPP to find out more about her background in the property industry - where her journey began, the state of transformation within the sector, and where women fit into 'the new normal'.

■ Could you tell us more about you - your background leading up to your presidency of SAIBPP - how did you get involved with the property sector and what's its appeal for you?

I studied architecture and worked for one of the leading firms on phase one of the Melrose Arch development. They were the principal agents and had a huge responsibility of managing all the other architects and the rest of the professional services consultants.

While I was working on a really exciting project, I was lacking client interaction. I was also lacking the connection between the building fabric and the occupier, so I sought out a mentor who then outlined all the different disciplines of professions within the broader property sector and I found those options really appealing.

The appeal was really in the fact that while I would move away from practicing architecture, I could still be involved in managing property in a way that has direct impact with the occupier, and this marriage of people and space was very appealing to me! Real estate is very emotive and I wanted to be part of the daily solutions of how people interact with it.

■ ***How would you describe the current state of transformation in the South African property sector - particularly in terms of black women representation?***

While we have no statistics specifically measuring gender transformation within the sector, it goes without saying that we do have a lot of work to do to get to a desired state of transformation. The participation of women has historically been low, but the numbers of enrolment at tertiary level are promising and we are seeing a pipeline of young ladies who are taking up relevant courses for our sector and with a great amount of passion!

I currently have about 15 female mentees from different universities and their fields of study vary across the different disciplines – this is very encouraging. We definitely need to do more in the form of exposure for high school students to ensure that we build the necessary amount of awareness and interest in our sector. The real opportunity to change this dismal picture is not to dwell on the past, but to actively find ways to ensure that the future is what we desire and spend our energies with young people to come into the sector.

■ ***The upcoming SAIBPP convention is themed 'The New Normal' - where do you think women fit in this 'new normal' for the property sector in SA?***

I think 'The New Normal' presents different and non-traditional ways in which women can participate in property. I, for one, am of the strong opinion that every other woman I meet falls under a kind of a stokvel and/or social club. These structures have a long history in our communities and go back a few generations. The structures are based on money circulating between members whose basis of being together is trust.

More and more such structures are looking for investments and I think it's about time that their investment of choice becomes property. It is the best-performing asset class, with a proven track record and only needs patience, because of the long term gains. So women have to recognise the strength that these structures can provide, because it's essentially crowd-funding and put them to good use.

The current era of technology presents platforms like Airbnb and this platform can be explored to the benefit of many investment property owners and even home owners. Back room dwellers are often a solid source of steady income in our townships, so people are already participating in the sector on a small scale, but doing so informally. All too often, I find women of all levels of education leaving the "big" decisions of home ownership for their partners to take and exclude themselves. This has to change and women have to take an active role in such decisions.

■ ***Based on your experience, what advice would you give to women pursuing a career in property?***

From a career perspective, I'd say if anyone is considering our sector, they're making the correct choice! I dare say the best choice! The sector presents many different career options and this allows for those who did not necessarily start off with specific property studies to still be able to enter.

If you've studied law, for instance, you can come into the sector and do conveyancing, leases analysis, etc. With a financial or accounting background, you can pursue property finance, property management, etc. With a technical

background, you can focus on facilities management and development management.

I could go on and on, but the possibilities are plenty.



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■ *Is there a female figure that has had a positive influence on your life?*

I know this sounds very cliché, but I guess it has to be my mum. She essentially went and registered me into the school of architecture and decided that's what I was going to be. Her reason for this was her own love for the built environment, which she saw as a constructive and productive sector. She spent all her life as a professional in the health services sector and said I should be in a sector that provides people with conducive living conditions, so that they don't need to encounter the health sector due to bad living conditions. She has great foresight and knowing what I know now, I wouldn't choose to be doing anything else.

■ *What is your message for Women's Month?*

Be in it to win it! Always have a winning spirit – it shows. Once you set your mind to something, don't deviate because of difficulties that you will encounter. Always have the attitude to make the best of what you do and derive pleasure while doing it. Passion will keep you going, even when it's tough. I am definitely driven by my passion and I just love what I do!

ABOUT SINDY PETERS

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