

Advancing women is a task for all

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The battle for gender equality, diversity and inclusivity should not only be fought by women and those directly impacted, but are issues that society as a whole needs to work together to address. According to the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report 2020 there is a growing urgency for action, because at the present rate of change, we would be looking at nearly a century to achieve complete gender parity.



Videsha Proothveerajh

Videsha Proothveerajh, CEO and Chairperson of the Board of legal technology company, LexisNexis South Africa, believes that in order to level the playing fields, there needs to be a shift in the perception of women in the country as well as globally.

“Recent developments in our own country have shown that we are still a long way off from being a society that truly respects women. Culturally and socially, therefore, it is still a challenge for the voices of both men and women in leadership positions to be listened to equally,” she says.

“We must all join hands in challenging stereotypes in the workplace and society, and must collectively strive to fight ingrained and unconscious biases in order to create a society where women, as well as men, can respect and celebrate women,” she adds.

“It is inconceivable that we continue to exclude over half of the population and that inequalities such as gender pay gaps and financial disparities remain, even in the most forward thinking of environments. This exclusion will be an ongoing stumbling

block to us growing our economies and delivering on the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the promise of the Fourth Industrial Revolution for all of society,” she says.

Proothveerajh is a leader who believes it is important to always give back and to pull others up on the ascent up the corporate ladder. She is counted among a small percentage of women on corporate boards or as top business leaders, with only 18.2% of firms globally being led by a woman and only 10% of South African CEOs being women.¹

She credits mentorship and sponsorship as being among the biggest building blocks to her own success and is grateful that at LexisNexis she gets to combine her passion for empowering women and the girl child, with the company’s purpose of Advancing the Rule of Law in order to create meaningful impact across the African continent.

“When I dream big, which is quite often, it is not just about helping women advance but also about assisting individuals from all marginalised groups who don’t always have a voice or who are not always recognised for the leadership attributes they possess, to claim their rightful place in the work environment. While many people may see this as a tick-box diversity metric based on gender and inclusion, it is about much more than that. If we enable our people to bring their whole selves to the workplace, it ultimately strengthens our organisations, increases our competitiveness and enhances our business performance,” she said.

She believes women should look for policies in companies that demonstrate they look after women. “At LexisNexis we’ve built on our global parent company RELX’s commitment to D&I with the launch of our LexisNexis SA Diversity and Inclusion programme. This seeks to champion diversity, equality and equal pay, among numerous other initiatives which also include addressing policies such as Maternity & Paternity Leave and Work from Home procedures; the peer support offered through the LNSA Women Network, and the LexisNexis Graduate Development Programme which sets out to create a

pipeline of well-rounded future leaders and specialists,” she explains.

Proothveerajh has 20 years' plus experience working in high-profile ICT companies such as EDS, Microsoft and Intel and running her own business focusing on business strategy and value creation. Her accolades include being recognised as: the most influential Woman in Business and Government for ICT in Africa; a Forbes change maker in Africa; one of the 50 most inspiring women in South Africa as part of the global Inspiring Fifty initiative and among the 'Africa 50' of Leaders in Data Centres and Cloud, driving change in Africa.

“If we truly want to uplift our societies and our economy, we need to collectively pave a way for a future where women are seen as equal. It's just that simple,” she says.

¹According to the latest [Businesswomen's Association of South Africa \(BWASA\)](#) census on women in leadership.

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