

# Nation Builder takes lead in driving high-impact social change

 By [Sindy Peters](#)

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Nation Builder is hosting its annual In Good Company Conference later this month, with a speaker lineup featuring leaders in social innovation and impact investment. Under the theme, 'South Africa Matters', the conference aims to bring like-minded businesses interested in social change together, sharing fresh perspectives on current issues within the socio-economic sector in SA, explains Keri-Leigh Paschal, executive director of Nation Builder.



Keri-Leigh Paschal, executive director of Nation Builder

Celebrating Women's Month on Biz, we chatted to Paschal to find out more about the women empowerment space in South Africa, how much priority business's place on this sphere of social development, and how companies can join the Nation Builder community.

■ ***Could you tell us more about you - your background leading up to your current position at Nation Builder.***

I have always had a passion for upliftment, starting with a 10-day scooter trip from Pretoria to the Western Cape via the Garden Route to raise awareness for Autism in South Africa - a wonderful campaign that created much awareness and raised a good amount of funds for autism awareness. I did, however, learn a lot over that time about the mistakes passionate people make when engaging in social development - a passion that only grew as I co-founded Nation Builder, which inspires and equips business leaders to lead in social change.

■ ***South Africa continues to face a number of social development challenges. How much focus do you think should be applied to uplifting women and girls in South African society?***

The needs in our country outweigh the available resources; therefore it is of the utmost importance that every cent spent on social development work is spent effectively and for greatest impact and long-term benefit. It has always been said that women in South Africa play one of the biggest roles in holding together our social fabric in South Africa. There are many women who are caring for other people's children, assisting friends and family and generally approach life with a serving mentality. It is, however, just as important to support initiatives around men, as the absence of fathers is one of the big contributors to many of our country's social ills.

### ▣ ***What sort of long-term campaigns have you found to be most impactful in terms of women empowerment?***

There are so many not-for-profit organisations that support women who are 'angels sent to Earth'. Ladies who foster children and care for them as their own, organisations such as LIV Village, Moasic and Refilwe are just a few that we work with. There are the organisations like POPUP, Learn 2 Earn and MES who focus on skills development and training to equip ladies in a skill so as to be placed in employment to support their extended families.

Then there is Viva Village and PEN, which focus on ladies who have fallen victim to sex offences and who have a safe house for vulnerable ladies. Straatwerk works with the ladies in the sex trade, trying to assist them to exit this industry and enter different options for income generation to provide for families.

### ▣ ***How much of a priority do most of the businesses with which Nation Builder partners place on women empowerment?***

Women empowerment is a strong focus, especially since the BBBEE scorecard is favourable towards employment and initiatives that involve women. Due to the makeup of most not-for-profit organisations, the majority of their beneficiaries are women and it therefore translates to a large portion of social investment spend going to women.

### ▣ ***Can you share any successful social development campaigns, focused on women empowerment, on which Nation Builder and its partners have worked?***

There are so many. The sex workers initiatives are always such beautiful stories of restoration and the new beginnings the ladies find on the other side of the trade. There is no specific campaign, as most organisations focus on women holistically and long-term. There is, however, an interesting NPO called the Dignity Campaign that we partner with that provides sanitary towels to young ladies to assist in school attendance, as well as playing a role in menstrual cycle education.



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20 Jul 2018



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### ▣ ***How can businesses connect with Nation Builder - what do you look for in your partners?***

Nation Builder is an initiative that aims to empower businesses in their social investment endeavours. We are part of Mergon, a private investment group that uses 70% of its proceeds to impact lives, and seeks to equip others to do the same.

To join the Nation Builder community, businesses and individuals can complete a quick Social Investment Health Check on the Nation Builder website to determine how well their business's social development approach is doing. This gives them free access to the online peer-learning community, where there is a wealth of resources available to anyone who wants to use their business as an impactful force for good through wise and responsible social investing. This will not only build towards a more prosperous South Africa, but also towards a more profitable business.

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

My mother, Anna Griffiths – a mentor from the USA.

### ▣ ***What is your message for Women's Month?***

Let us be the change we want to see in South Africa, let us not let norms and stereotypes of past generations determine where and how South African women leave their fingerprints on our beautiful country and its even more precious people.

*This year's In Good Company Conference will take place 21 August at the Atterbury Theatre in Pretoria. For more info,*

go to [www.proudnationbuilder.co.za](http://www.proudnationbuilder.co.za).

## ABOUT SINDY PETERS

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