

Standard Bank grows its support for entrepreneurial women

Issued by [Topco Media](#)

8 Jun 2017

A new three-year partnership has been inked between Africa's biggest bank and South Africa's platform for women in leadership, *Top Women*. The move will see Standard Bank and Top Media - the company owning *Top Women* - co-hosting the 14th national *Standard Bank Top Women Awards* in August, rolling out a series of exciting conferences and co-sharing the cover of the businesswomen's coffee table must-have, *Standard Bank Top Women Leaders*; circulated every year to 10,000 subscribers and retailing nationally.



Launched in 2003 *Top Women* researches, showcases and awards gender-empowered companies; prompts other companies to bridge the gender gap and flourish; and gives iconic women leaders a platform to share their entrepreneurial success stories with the next generation of women achievers. Another partner now on board with *Top Women* is UN Women, the global champion for gender equality.

The new partnership enables the bank to continue to contribute towards growing South African women entrepreneurs who are a core driver to change our economy. For Standard Bank, their purpose of driving Africa's growth is what inspires partnerships with organisations such as *Top Women*. This year, four *regional* conferences will complement the main event, between May and December ensuring that a broader base of women are to benefit from this collaboration. Their purpose: to give bright capable women, at provincial level, a voice and a business network through *Top Women* - plus the financial services, resources and tools, from Standard Bank, to accelerate their entrepreneurial goals.

With the ratio of women entrepreneurs being higher in Africa than *anywhere* else in the world, Standard Bank views it as a responsibility - in fact, a *calling* - to be on hand for each and every one of them - and to equip them for the success a platform like *Top Women* inspires them to pursue.

On the new partnership, Topco Marketing Director Karla Fletcher, said, "We're thrilled for Standard Bank to be sharing our vision for women on such a scale. It has been in the pipeline for a few years now for our longstanding ties to ramp up to the next level, and the timing couldn't be better: two thirds (and growing) of Africa's workforce is women. It is women who must drive pan-African prosperity, while also fulfilling their own potential. Together with Standard Bank, we can now reach more women - at all levels of the economy - and help them to bring out the Top Woman inside."

Ever since it first employed women in 1915, Standard Bank has consistently been at the forefront of advancing opportunities for women. By 2016, its permanent workforce comprised almost 60% women; its management almost 50% (far above South Africa's average of 23%). Now it wants the rest of the economy to achieve a similar level of gender parity

- and soon.

Speaking for Standard Bank, Jayshree Naidoo said, *“We have been embracing a focus on empowering woman entrepreneurs through several strategic partnerships over the last few years. This includes Standard Bank’s sponsorship of the Lionesses of Africa Lean In’s and Conference in South Africa and on the continent as well as structured growth accelerators in partnership with major corporates including; General Electric and Liberty. We have also profiled several high profile female entrepreneurs to various sponsored activities like the Startup-up Grind events in partnership with Google for Entrepreneurs.*

In a survey conducted last year we found that 43% of the woman cited Access to Markets as a key barrier to entry and 22% of them listed networking on their wish list. We strongly believe that our partnership with Top Woman will address some of these areas identified by woman entrepreneurs.”

Together with change-makers like Top Women, we strive to share two messages: the first, with women, to say we are here to help them move forward; the second, with wider economy, to emphasise that advancing women is good for business, good for society and great for Africa’s future prospects.”

Join Top Women at www.topwomen.co.za.

For brand partnership enquiries, contact Angelique Edwards on 0860 00 9590 or email angelique.edwards@topco.co.za.

[*View the groundbreaking study commissioned for the Peterson Institute for International Economics.](#)

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