

Facts and figures: What's said about female empowerment vs the reality

By [Ntombi Mhangwani](#)

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The world is calling for accelerated efforts to counteract a gender divide made wider by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Voices of Change 2021 event - which will be hosted virtually on 5 August during Global Women's Month - is poised to respond to this call in an impactful way.



Ntombi Mhangwani, associate director at Accenture Interactive and Women's Forum Lead for Accenture in Africa

The event creates a platform for influential businesses and leaders to share how they are strengthening gender equality. The event programme has been designed to celebrate and learn from a number of pioneers, organisations and individuals that have done significant work over the years, paving the way for women to take their rightful place in the world and business stages.

The reality of female empowerment is in stark contrast to current claims

One of the key drivers that inspired the Voices of Change movement in 2017 is the fact that phrases such as 'gender equality' and 'employment equity' are widely used but not well supported — the world, in reality, has a long way to go to achieve true gender parity and inclusive economies.

The World Economic Forum's [Global Gender Gap Report 2020](#) indicates that the world has an average of only 21% female ministers globally, with a third of countries having less than 10%, and some countries having none. In terms of economic empowerment only 58% of the gap has been closed — for example, only 55% of adult women versus 78% of men are in the labour market, and

there's still a 40% wage gap between men and women doing similar jobs. In addition, women remain significantly disadvantaged in accessing credit, land or financial products, which limits their ability to start a company or make a living by managing assets.



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Sharon Kimathi 8 Jul 2021



Empowering women empowers business

Colleen Larsen from Business Engage, a founding partner of Voices of Change and the Business Engage Gender Mainstreaming Awards, is a strong advocate of dedicated business ecosystems that support the empowerment and development of women. Her belief is backed by a growing body of evidence that shows that businesses who focus on women's empowerment yield tangible business results — including greater productivity, enhanced organisational efficiency, higher returns on investment and increased customer satisfaction. Win, win.

To drive change, organisations need to refocus their ecosystems to support the development of women, she notes. Voices of Change strengthens the understanding and awareness of gender equality, and allows partners to share their experiences and successes to improve empowerment of women.



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Now is the time for “he, she, we” to collectively drive gender equality

As Deschica Naidoo, chairperson of Nedbank’s Women’s Forum, another founding partner of Voices of Change, points out, the event has gained notable momentum in enabling collaboration on important issues that affect women. “Through Voices of Change ... we have been able to inspire both women and men in leadership positions to advocate and be that voice to support and drive decisions that change the narrative from gender inequality to gender equality,” she notes.

The importance of women and men working together to close the continuously widening gender gap, cannot be over-emphasised. If we can get this right, businesses and economies will no doubt transform and grow. This inspired the theme of Voices of Change 2021, which is “She, He, We, is Power”. It captures a profound truth: we are stronger when we stand together. It will take a collective effort to harness the true power of diversity.

If you play a leadership role in your business, please join our movement and be part of conversations for equal world.

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