

Women lead CYRIL RAMAPHOSA FOUNDATION

Cyril Ramaphosa Foundation, established 15 years ago, has been headed up by women CEOs since its inception and has several women employed at executive level, writes Mmabatho Maboya, CEO

Cyril Ramaphosa Foundation formally marks its 15th anniversary this year. It was established as the Shanduka Foundation in 2004, the corporate social investment arm of the Shanduka Group. The foundation changed its name in 2015 following Cyril Ramaphosa's divestment from the Shanduka Group.

The foundation implements programmes to improve education and grow small and medium black enterprises for an inclusive and empowered society. It does so through its partner entities Adopt-a-School, KST, Cyril Ramaphosa Education Trust (CRET) and Black Umbrellas.

When it was established in 2004, the foundation committed to spending R100-million on social investment programmes over 10 years. By March 2019, Cyril Ramaphosa Foundation had contributed over R359-million and leveraged an additional R1.043-billion through its partner entities for programmes to develop education, youth, small and medium enterprises, and vulnerable children and women. As at March 2019, Adopt-a-School and KST together work in over 450 schools and have benefitted almost a million learners. CRET has supported more than 200 students to access tertiary study, and Black Umbrellas has

incubated over 1 300 small businesses, which have created close to 12 000 jobs and turned over more than R1.12-billion. Beyond the statistics, are the moving and inspiring stories of individual lives that have been touched and transformed. Women have been central to the role and impact of the foundation.



Mmabatho Maboya



High representation of women

Women CEOs have led the foundation since its inception and of its 11-person executive, seven are women.

The employee profile of the foundation and its partner entities is also highly representative of women. Of a staff cohort of 133, 77 per cent are women. This is not the result of deliberate affirmative policy, but of merit selection that speaks to the talents, skills and qualifications of women despite the social and structural barriers that they experience.

Among the efficacies of a predominantly women-staffed and led organisation has been its gender sensitivity and integration of women's needs in its programmes. The foundation's Thari programme, for example, addresses women and child abuse as a factor in educational performance. Under pilot at schools in Botshabelo in the Free State and Diepsloot in Gauteng, the programme provides psycho-social support services for women and children, empowers them against abuse and exploitation, and facilitates dialogues with men and boys to address issues of masculinity, violence and gender sensitivity, among other things. Thari is a Tswana term for the blanket used to cover and carry a child, and also refers to the lining that protects a baby while it is in its mother's womb.

Cyril Ramaphosa Foundation's gender profile makes for a developmental, equitable and supportive work environment, and an integrated and cohesive organisation richly in touch with its employees, the sectors in which it works, and society. ■

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