

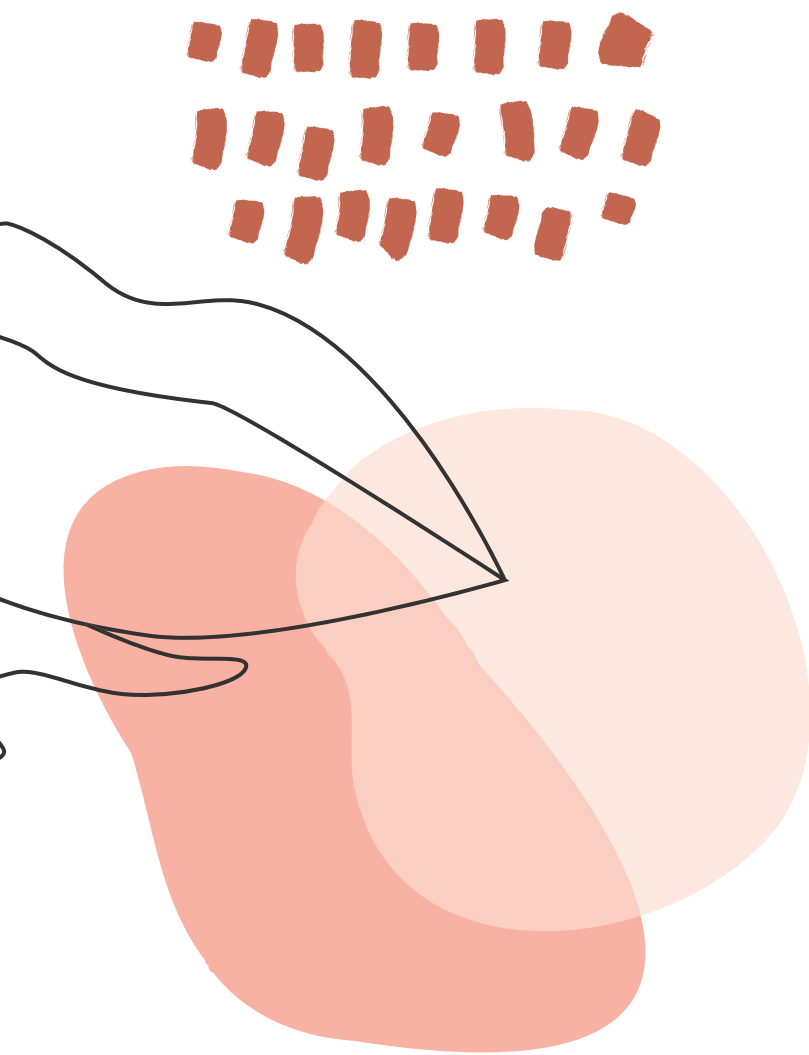


# WOMEN OF THE SEZs



**TSHWANE AUTOMOTIVE  
SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE**

AFRICA'S FIRST AUTOMOTIVE CITY



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A portrait of Vangile Nene, a woman with dark hair, wearing a black blazer over a grey and red patterned top, and red lace earrings. She is smiling and looking directly at the camera against a green leafy background.

# Editorial note

## Launch of the *Women of the SEZs* initiative

This is a rallying cry to champion diversity, foster inclusivity, and empower excellence in the country's special economic zones (SEZs) and beyond.

It serves as a testament to the unyielding determination of women who continue to steer the course of progress, innovation, and collaboration within the SEZs and beyond.

Our inaugural magazine pays tribute to the trailblazers, the innovators, and the champions who define the essence of the SEZs.

In this edition you will see the sector's commitment to building a future where women's voices are not only heard but celebrated, and where their contributions are not only acknowledged but revered.

Women have broken barriers, excelling in various roles from engineering to management, and playing an indispensable part in shaping South Africa's trajectory.

By launching this initiative, the Tshwane Automotive Special Economic Zone is aligning itself with a global movement that acknowledges and supports the pivotal role of women in every sphere of society.

Through the Women of the SEZs initiative we will be shining a spotlight on the achievements of women, inspire future generations, and create an environment that nurtures growth and success – and we are honoured to partner with you all.

Collaboratively yours

**Vangile Nene**  
TASEZ Corporate Services Executive

# Overview

## SEZs – providing a space where women can excel



Women have struggled to take their rightful place in South Africa's economic space for far too long. Many of the sectors are still perceived to be male domains: the gender wage gap remains unfathomably wide and the unseen tempered glass ceiling remains firmly in place.

The Women of the SEZs initiative, launched in September 2023, aims to help remove these obstacles and create safe spaces where women's voices can be heard clearly and decisively, where they can grow to reach their full potential.

A key word to be used when talking about SEZs is transformation. They were established to provide a different way of doing business, with specialised hubs that encourage an inflow of foreign and local direct investment through providing innovative financial

incentives for investors and uplifting local communities through jobs, mentorships and skills training.

The Women of the SEZs initiative embraces the concept of transformation in its entirety, from bringing about significant change to the economy by opening up all the sectors to new and divergent role players and innovative ways of doing things, to amending how workplaces function, embracing different skill sets and personalities that add to the business in unexpected yet positive ways. And all seen through the prism of the experiences and expectations of women.

### Equality – a sorry state

Some of the statistics are startling. In fact, when we look at the JSE, only a sixth of executives are female, according to PricewaterhouseCoopers' Executive Directors Report for 2022. However, the report shows some improvement year-on-year. In 2021, this figure was 13%. Some 8% of chief executive

officers (CEOs) are female, while this figure comes in at 22% for chief financial officers (CFOs).

When it comes to salaries, taking total packages into account, the gender pay gap is most noticeable in large-cap companies with a 32% median pay gap, up four percentage points from 2021.

The World Economic Forum's 2023 Global Gender Gap Report, in its 17th edition, found that there is much indifference when it comes to narrowing what are large gaps between women and men in terms of economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. This gap, in fact, only closed by 0.3 percentage points year-on-year.

The survey, which was conducted across 146 countries, noted that – at the rate of improvement between 2006 and 2023 – it will take 162 years to eliminate the political empowerment gender gap, 169

years for the economic participation and opportunity gender gap, while it will take the less lengthy time of 16 years to close the educational attainment gender gap. The time to close the health and survival gender gap remains open-ended, the report added.

Looking closer to home, much more needs to be done to close the gap between women and men. As a region, sub-Saharan Africa ranks only better against the Southern Asia and Middle East and North Africa region. Progress, says the World Economic Forum, may have been uneven, but some countries stand out. Namibia, Rwanda, and South Africa, along with 13 other countries, have succeeded in closing more than 70% of the gap.

In fact, South Africa comes in at 20 out of the 146 countries for having done much to close the gender chasm, and third in sub-Saharan Africa behind Namibia and Rwanda. Drilling down to the specific measurements, there are two key areas for improvement: South Africa comes 43rd in educational attainment, and 81st in economic participation and opportunity.

### Female leaders matter

Women could be serious drives for economic growth were they able to participate more. Using entrepreneurship as a proxy, in 2022, female entrepreneurs contributed \$350 billion to Africa's economy, about 13% of the continent's gross domestic product.

Professor Natanya Meyer, associate professor of entrepreneurship at the University of Johannesburg and chair of the Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education's community of practice for entrepreneurship research, has been quoted as saying that more women are moving into starting their own businesses. Some 17% of women in low- and middle-income countries are entrepreneurs, with 35% wanting to take this path as a career towards a better future.

Why then are there not more women driving companies to a better future?

Women are often stereotyped as being too soft to lead, yet it is precisely that skill women can bring to the table. They mentor and nurture more than their male counterparts, passing along skills as they grow. Diversity is exactly what is needed to drive economies and societies because it allows more voices to be heard.

It is accepted among many non-governmental organisations, the World Economic Forum included, that women help revive growth, boost innovation, and increase a company's resilience.

Women leaders are needed now more than ever. South Africa is in a very difficult place socio-economically. Based on research done during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Harvard Business Review has found that women make better leaders than men during a crisis.

However, women do not need a crisis to be better leaders. They are, the same journal article says, rated better at leading by those who worked with them when compared with men. This data was based on the assessments of 60 000 managers.

### A home in the workplace

SEZs offer a place for women to thrive, grow, and become leaders. A World Bank report from 2011 found that SEZs offer an opportunity for women to make important contributions to economies, as well as helping build future leaders.

Fostering Women's Economic Empowerment Through Special Economic Zones states that successful SEZ management approaches include fair employment and working conditions, equal access to opportunities, as well as investment opportunities for female entrepreneurs. In South Africa, key drivers behind SEZs are exactly that: decent work conditions and broader social benefits to the communities in which they are located.

On average, in SEZs, women make up between 60% and 80% of the total workforce, with as much as 90% in some instances. For many, work in a zone represents their first entry into formal employment.

In 2021, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development released a handbook on SEZs in Africa. It found that the 11 SEZs in South Africa employ 110 000 workers, 2% of the national industrial employment as of 2019. And wages are, in dollar terms, higher than the average.

These figures are just for those directly employed within the zone. However, the SEZs also seek to create economic inclusivity for the communities in which they operate through downstream opportunities. When a zone is built, the location is carefully selected to make sure that it will have a positive effect on surrounding communities. Its placement also allows for indirect impact such as creating opportunities for women who want to set up food outlets – a step towards entrepreneurship.

Through doing this, more women are brought into the SEZ fold.

The zones also take their obligation to place women in managerial positions seriously – promoting from within as much as possible. At the same time, they place a premium on hiring female leaders, such as Kaashifah Beukes, the CEO of the Saldanha Bay Industrial Development Zone; Thandiwe Ngqobe, who heads up the OR Tambo SEZ in Johannesburg; and Mpho Mgemane, the CEO of the Maluti-A-Phofung SEZ.

These are but a few examples of women in positions of power in our zones: women who can encourage, nurture, and drive growth. Women have an important role to play in our economy and can build up future leaders. Let us all empower women to empower others.

# Women have critical role in expanding impact of SA's SEZs

**KAASHIFAH BEUKES**  
Chair of the SEZ  
CEO Forum



South Africa's special economic zones have the potential to be agents of catalytic economic development, says the chair of the SEZ CEO Forum, Kaashifah Beukes.

While women are integral to building and expanding the impact of the special economic zones, those involved in running the hubs need to be deliberate in creating opportunities for women, says the chair of the SEZ CEO Forum, Kaashifah Beukes.

It is clear Beukes, who is also the CEO of Freeport Saldanha – the first SEZ to be based within a port – has thought long and hard about the pioneering role SEZs can play in transforming South Africa's economy and the role women should play within that space.

SEZs are placed to play an important role in the national economy. For example, as an automotive hub, TASEZ has a big role in driving the economy through manufacturing and logistics. Beukes points out the complex threads that weave up and down the various value chains, reaching into mining and artificial intelligence. All these provide opportunities for women, both through jobs that are created but also for entrepreneurs and businesses to invest in the zones.

"In the spaces in which we work, on the various platforms and in the business forums, we tend to see the same people in the room all the time." Much more should be done

to ensure women's participation in these spaces. "We have a small pool of professionally competent women and we want that pool to grow." And the efforts must be sustainable. There is a need to spotlight the opportunities, but these must then be backed up, with follow up programmes.

While speaking about expanding access for women into the SEZ space, Beukes ironically notes that her daily lived experience is that the company she heads has more women staff which, she points out, is different to the experience in many countries elsewhere. "So, I take that as a win."

Localisation must always be a priority, with an emphasis on women's developments, Beukes notes.

However, she knows that is not an easy ask as she reflects on how women have multiple roles and very often it is in their care-giving role that they are forced to step back from any entrepreneurial enterprise as they are forced to ensure they have a stable income to care for their families.

## Education in STEM is a must

Beukes talks broadly of the need for system changes to transform the industrial sector. "There

must be an emphasis on STEM subjects – science, technology, engineering and mathematics – for girls in the schools, that will enable them to access the required tertiary qualifications required by the manufacturing and industrial sectors."

As someone with a civil engineering background augmented by an MBA, Beukes speaks from personal experience. Much more can be done to promote these subjects and expose young female learners to the various opportunities offered within the SEZs and beyond.

Over and above that, women must be supported on their work-life journey. "They must be provided with access to skills and, importantly, to capital." She notes that many of the start-up companies, particularly the so-called "unicorns", are begun by men who have been able to acquire skills such as ICT, engineering and technology at school or tertiary institutions, and by dint of being a man, find it easier to obtain funding.

While the SEZs have a much narrower focus, managing hubs of excellence for investors while creating jobs for local communities, they are nonetheless well placed to partner with other organisations and agencies such as the Department of Science and Innovation and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, to find ways of becoming deliberate in including women in the SEZ and, by extension, in the economic space. Possibilities could include identifying scholarships for young women to study subjects that are important for the growth of South Africa's key economic sectors.

Reflecting on the ability of SEZs to bring change to the areas in which they are developed, Beukes talks of her childhood in the then Port Elizabeth. "The Coega development was on my radar as my father was one of the many civil engineering professionals on the project; so, I had a first-hand appreciation of how the SEZ changed the area as well as the complexities involved."

She is excited by the way in which the SEZs are developing. "While each has its own focus and has to compete for investors, there is a more collaborative approach being taken which can seed a system solution that will benefit all the SEZs."

# Shine the spotlight on women achievements in SEZs

We have to look beyond August and Women's Month if we are serious about transformation and development of women in the economy, and more particularly in the special economic zone space, says TASEZ board member Susan Mangole.

**SUSAN MANGOLE**  
Acting deputy director  
general in the department  
of trade, industry and  
competition



TASEZ board member Susan Mangole has a simple message when it comes to talking about women in the country's special economic zones – more has to be done to show that women are more than capable of taking their place in the space.

“We must be deliberate in showcasing the role of women in the SEZ value chain,” Mangole says. For example, in looking at a finished product like the Ford Ranger manufactured in the TASEZ hub, it would be wonderful to be able to say, ‘this bumper was 100% made by the skills and hands of women’.

Providing visual examples of women working in the day-to-day operations of the SEZs tenants, would educate people about what the SEZs do as well as creating awareness among women of the opportunities within the SEZs' different value chains.

Investors tend to focus on building the business and are not aware of the value women can bring to their enterprises; the SEZs should encourage their partners to include women in their business planning.

Describing a tour of the TASEZ hub, Mangole notes there are many women in critical positions on the factory floors, carrying out quality control checks at each station within the plant. “We need to tell their stories – what did it take for that woman to get to that position.”

That would encourage others to see themselves in similar positions or allow women to find innovative and different roles within the value chain.

“Women are more than capable,” Mangole says. They simply need the opportunities, be that through education, through upgrading or

learning specific skills, through being shown what is available, and through being supported in their journey.

The opportunities in the SEZs are wide and various, ranging from engineering to logistics, from digital to human resources, from hard core technical skills to the softer skills yet equally important skills.

“We in the SEZ space must be practical and deliberate in closing the gender gaps – let's track how many female owned companies are used within each zone, let's monitor the numbers and make sure that they continue to increase.”

Women have been knocking on the doors for a long time, it is time to open them wide and welcome them in.

# Policies exist, time to implement

We do not want the next generation to fight the same fights we had to, says TASEZ chair of the audit and risk committee, Irene Ramafola.



**IRENE RAMAFOLA**  
TASEZ chair of  
the audit and risk  
committee

The recurring theme in discussions about the role of women in the country's key economic sectors is that although great strides have been made to incorporate women into the various industries, much more still needs to be done.

"Women make up more than 50% of the population so you would expect to see more women in key areas," says Irene Ramafola who chairs TASEZ audit and risk committee.

Statistics South Africa, in a report released in August 2023, pointed to the large gender gaps in employment and "the burden of joblessness being carried by women and young people". It noted that "work is the most effective economic empowerment strategy for women".

Ramafola takes this further, emphasising that during a time when the country is undergoing an economic downturn "we cannot normalise excluding women from decision-making or from business – it is imperative that women have an influence in addressing the country's social ills".

While policies have been put in place to make the economic sectors more inclusive, little has been done to ensure they are implemented. This must change. "We do not want young people to have to fight the same battles we had to," Ramafola said.

## Be deliberate in including women

The SEZs should take deliberate action to support women. The Medium Term Strategic Framework

states that 40% of public procurement spend should be made available to women-owned enterprises. This should become central to the activities of the SEZs, rather than secondary. Including this as a key performance indicator in Annual Performance Plans would ensure the policy is implemented and monitored.

For example, the tenants of the SEZs could be encouraged to ensure that certain components in the manufacturing process are created by women.

The automotive manufacturing sector is known for being male dominated. While women do attempt to enter into it, they very often fail. "We need to look at the issues within the space to understand why they fall short, then put systems in place to help them succeed from the start, right through to the finish."

Besides enforcing the policies that exist, a critical way to ensure inclusivity is to provide mentoring and coaching. "Women need to feel that they can get into the space and once there, they are able to share their skills and expertise."

The sector is ready for more women, not just in the jobs being created, but as investors who would benefit from a better return on investment within an SEZ, says Ramafola.

She asks whether the SEZs are selling themselves properly, suggesting they could do more to market their offerings. "If businesses knew about this collaborative space – which offers so many tax incentives

and other services – they may very well reconsider locating to an SEZ rather than a business park."

## Building the manufacturing sector

The strength of the SEZs in growing the economy lies in their focus on building the country's manufacturing and export capacity. It is through this that South Africa will be able to create sustainable jobs for the local communities. And this, in turn, will transform the landscape into a place where more small, medium and micro enterprises, particularly women-owned businesses, can take their rightful place in a more inclusive economy, Ramafola suggests.

Localisation is critical to this process: "We must minimize reliance on components that come from international markets."

She reflects to the example set by the success of China's SEZs in boosting the country's economy across different regions. "We should ask ourselves 'what have we been waiting for'." It is imperative that South Africa build its manufacturing sector, she says, adding that "we have a better chance of dealing with unemployment if we broaden the SEZ space".

She notes that China produces goods on a massive scale for export purposes. "Our SEZs too can play a key role in a similar space, and women should be at the forefront."



# Driving transformation at Ford

The Women of the SEZs initiative is integral to supporting and empowering the women with South Africa's automotive industry, says Esther Buthelezi, the government affairs and transformation director at Ford Africa.

It is fitting that the driver of transformation for one of world's largest automotive manufacturers sees the importance of the Women of the SEZs' initiative.

Platforms like the Women of the SEZs acknowledge the barriers women face and are intentional about creating women-led solutions to these challenges, says Esther Buthelezi, the government affairs and transformation director at Ford Africa.

"This platform can be used to further empower women in the automotive sector through holding more networking opportunities and hosting events where women in the industry can meet, collaborate, share and empower one another through the sharing of skills and passions."

Her voice is a powerful one within the industry, and within TASEZ. The Ford Motor Company of Southern Africa is the anchor tenant in Phase 1 of the SEZ development, having invested some R15.8 billion to build a plant within the hub to manufacture the Next-Gen Ford Ranger, with a view to increasing their annual production of units from 160 000 to 200 000 a year.

As a result of this investment, 10 suppliers manufacturing components for Ford, also moved in the zone.

Buthelezi explains that the automotive industry is typically described as an industry created by men, for men. However, "South Africa has made considerable progress in the advancement of gender equality in the workplace, and more specifically in the industry – and the percentage of women in

the motor industry has since been steadily increasing in recent years."

Despite this, there is much room for improvement.

"As a black woman, working in an industry whose inception was driven by people whose demographics are starkly different to mine – paving my way through the industry has not been easy," she says.

"The last 20 plus years have seen me demanding that my voice not only be heard but listened to

and acted upon. I have had to cement myself within the spaces I find myself – paving the way for the generation of black women to come."



**ESTHER BUTHELEZI**  
Government affairs  
and transformation  
director at Ford Africa

## Women make up a quarter of the workforce in the auto sector

On the topic of promoting gender equality and inclusivity, Buthelezi notes that women make up about half of the labour force. However, women in the automotive industry comprise only a quarter of the automotive manufacturing workforce.

"I would like to see a greater percentage of women in the automotive sector and in senior managerial positions. As Ford, we have been intentional in alleviating the equality in numbers gap through the creation of special programmes and initiatives to educate and employ more women within the company."

The Women of Ford is a programme which focuses on the promotion of women in the automotive sector through networking sessions and an educational platform.

"I would also like to see the automotive sector becoming more intentional about creating more inclusive spaces for women through the creation of facilities catering to the specific needs of women, as well as the automotive finding more creative ways to improve work-life balance for women."

Buthelezi speaks from hard-earned experience, having worked at Ford

for 23 years in a variety of roles from sales planning, dealer development, government fleet sales, and regional sales. In 2019, she was appointed corporate transformation manager, and now oversees both government affairs and corporate transformation as director.

"In my role as director of transformation, I have been able to support many black-owned businesses through making them suppliers and through placing them in positions where they have greater access to opportunities. With the premise of alleviating the playing field, my role continues to directly impact and contribute to many homes in South Africa – effectively driving the economy."

It is through her role as director of government affairs and transformation that Buthelezi liaises directly with the surrounding townships of Mamelodi and Nellmapius. "We have ensured that there is a symbiotic relationship between Ford and the surrounding communities – where we are intentional about employing employees from the surrounding communities."

She is succinct in her advice to women wanting to enter the automotive space. "They ought to identify their specific 'why' when it comes to working in the automotive industry. 'Why do I want to be in this industry?' 'Why do I specifically want to contribute to this industry?'"

If women understand their inherent why, it will allow them to weather all of the hurdles they might face.

Women should learn as much as possible about the automotive industry beforehand, what are the greatest challenges impacting the industry at the moment; what are the new strategies and learning techniques being utilised; who are the key industry role players? "By acquiring this knowledge, women can identify potential gaps that they would like to fill when they step into the industry – leading to their success and making a difference."

# Keeping a financial eye on the SEZs

To build investor confidence and attract and retain tenants, it is important that SEZs have a strong financial strategy in place, says TASEZ CFO Rebecca Hlabatau.



None of the complex tasks the special economic zones are required to perform in building South Africa's economy and transforming its various sectors would be possible without strong financial controls, an understanding of the challenges that may arise in the space, and good governance.

As chief financial officer, Rebecca Hlabatau is the person who takes on that responsibility for the Tshwane Automotive Special Economic Zone (TASEZ).

As the Special Economic Zones Act of 2014 spells out, the core business of the SEZs is "to promote national economic growth and export by using support measures in order to attract targeted foreign and domestic investments and technology". And in order to build investor confidence and attract and retain tenants it is

important that SEZs have a strong financial strategy in place, Hlabatau says.

Hlabatau is responsible for implementing this strategy, which covers clean governance, the implementation of financial policies, and ensuring that the correct procedures and internal controls are in place. In fact, TASEZ has just received a clean audit for the third year in a row.

Although the SEZs were initially started through the support of government grants, it is imperative that they become sustainable and self-reliant. "They must be going concerns."

For Hlabatau, the SEZ space is an interesting combination of a company and a government entity, which allows each SEZ to access the strengths and benefits both worlds,

operating at the speed of the private sector but with the public sector drive to tackle social issues and uplift the lives of South Africans.

In the supply chain management space, for example, Hlabatau is focused on ensuring that good governance is at the forefront, with systems and controls in place allow for a fair and transparent procurement process that is carefully balanced to be compliant while embracing social issues such as economic development and job creation.

The challenge is to balance job creation with technological advances in automation; it is the age-old debate around human capital and machines. "But," she says, "we need the human touch in analysis rather than relying solely on Big Data."

Although she has been a CFO for 20 years, TASEZ is the first SEZ she has worked in. "It's been a steep learning curve, but I've grabbed the challenge with both hands," she says.

She is looking forward to TASEZ completing its next phase of development. New investors will provide revenue for the SEZ and for the country, allowing for creation of jobs. In the TASEZ, this will allow for skills development in the surrounding communities of Nellmapius, Eersterust and Mamelodi. She hopes to see future manufactures come from of the townships.

On the subject of women in the automotive zone, Hlabatau is clear: "There are myths that need to be tacked regarding women. There is no job that is solely for men!"

And she has advice for young women wanting to enter the sector. "Nothing should stop your dreams – the opportunities are out there, grab on to them."

# Women bring special skills to the table

Women are developmental by nature, says TASEZ's corporate services executive Vangile Nene, as she considers the role women can play in the country's special economic zones.

By their very nature women are agents of transformation, says TASEZ's corporate services executive Vangile Nene, and are able to bring their own strong and different skills to the workplace. They are nurturing, collaborative and effective communicators – characteristics needed to drive change in the economic space in South Africa.

Nene, in her previous life as the chief director of professional services and state technical capacity, a branch of the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, was critically involved in designing, developing and overseeing the implementation of frameworks and policies related to the strengthening of scarce and technical skills nationally.

She also set up the Public Works Forum that allowed members from the various provinces to share best practices and find solutions to any challenges they identified.

Prior to that Nene gained experience in retail with Nedbank and commercial banking with STANNIC (Standard Bank Commercial Banking), working directly with clients in the manufacturing and automotive spaces as a business development officer. She also worked as a sales executive in a Mpumalanga car dealership, before journeying into human resources and working with a host of international clients from South African Breweries to First National Bank and Absa to Sappi.

This expertise is now available to TASEZ, with its drive to help transform the automotive sector.

As stated in the South African Automotive Masterplan, the sector has a vision of becoming “a globally competitive and transformed industry that actively contributes to the sustainable development of South Africa's productive economy, creating prosperity for industry stakeholders and broader society”.



**VANGILE NENE**  
TASEZ's Corporate  
Services Executive

Six objectives have been identified to make sure this happens, with two of those focusing on improving industry competitiveness levels to that of leading international competitors, and employing and upskilling black South Africans, empowering dealerships and authorised repair facilities, and substantially increasing the contribution of black-owned automotive component manufacturers within the automotive supply chain.

## Skills development and SMME growth

All of this requires very specific skills that need to be passed on to potential investors and job seekers. Building capacity is key: “We have to grow our own people from the ground up,” says Nene.

While the example provided refers to the automotive sector, the take aways are relevant to building all South Africa's key economic sectors. Build capacity within the local workforce so that the jobs created, the programmes implemented, the vehicles set up to deliver these policies, are all sustainable.

Nene points to the special economic zones and their need to become sustainable and not rely solely on government grants. This is only possible through diversification and creating alternative revenue streams, she says.

“TASEZ currently exists because of Ford. If we look at the Coega SEZ, for example, hard decisions had to be made when they did not acquire an anchor tenant. The SEZ had to diversify and actively pursue other sectors to generate income.”

All the SEZs must be adaptable and find ways of expanding their business. “We have to be competitive and innovative in our positioning.”

In addition, it is critical to develop local small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs). “They are crucial in growing our economy.” According to the Department of Small Business Development, SMMEs are seen as the engines of growth and the sector that will provide the most job opportunities.

The National Development Plan's Vision 2030 foresees that small enterprises will be in a position to generate 90% of the 11 million jobs needed in South Africa.

With this in mind, it is important for the SEZs to share what is being done in the zones with the surrounding communities. The impact of each SEZ goes way beyond the borders of the zone.

And the focus on empowering women remains a central tenet. “Women need to see examples of what is possible. In that way young women can be inspired and then aspire to join the SEZs.”

# Meet the SEZ's organisational coach



**PATRICIA MANDLENI**  
TASEZ's Safety, Health and Environmental Manager

The skills evident in the special economic zones are broad and many, from those evidenced on the factory floors to those put in effect in the corporate offices, and keeping all the cogs in the wheel operating smoothly is the hubs' safety, health and environmental managers.

TASEZ's Safety, Health and Environmental Manager, Patricia Mandleni, describes her role in the special economic zone as "the organisational coach".

"My job is to help people find their own solutions to the challenges they face," she says, a broad smile crossing her face as she adds that, like a coach, she asks the questions that allow people to find their own path in overcoming any challenge.

This coach's job is not nearly as simple as she makes it sound. Much like a chess grand master, who has to plan for countless potential moves ahead of time in any given match, it is her role to anticipate any and all risks that the SEZ may face in the future and then put resources in place to deal with these different scenarios.

The formal definitions of the role safety, health and environmental managers include that they are responsible for leading programmes that protect people from workplace

and environmental hazards and protect the environment from human hazards.

Mandleni has first-hand experience of having to solve challenges when confronted with health risks, particularly as a woman in a technical environment. When working as one of the first female employees at aircraft maintenance company, SAA Technical, she battled to find personal protective equipment that fitted. "We worked with toxic materials – many different chemicals.

"It was there that I was exposed to the stringent requirements of health and safety." And yes, Mandleni solved her problem by using elastic bands to make sure her safety gloves were properly closed.

She began her professional journey as an intern at SAA Technical after completing her mechanical engineering studies. "I was a composite structure artisan, before eventually moving to the safety department."

At the age of 29 she was appointed to her first management role at Denel Aviation. Since then, she has gained enormous experience in a number of companies and institutions over a period of almost two decades in both the private and public sectors.

*Her interest in technical subjects began as a child. "I always liked fixing things," she explains. Mandleni went on to study technical subjects at school and technical college.*

Her experience spans from aviation, engineering, energy, manufacturing, automotive, transportation, chemical, asset management and construction.

This allows her to be versatile and creative in putting together the various safety systems required for TASEZ. "The one thing that excites me about what I do is putting all the systems together from scratch. It keeps me on my toes."

## **An ecosystem with countless opportunities**

She describes TASEZ as an ecosystem, with so many interdependencies that need vastly different skills to keep it operational and make sure it grows. "There is a lot that is expected from the organisation: to be ethical; to meet developmental goals; to provide job opportunities."

Speaking to women who want to enter the technical space, Mandleni says there an ocean of opportunities to be explored. Whereas she has had to deal with the well-known glass ceiling in other workplaces, this is not the case at TASEZ, she says.

"Don't be comfortable in where you are, be curious about everything. Fill yourself with knowledge at every opportunity," she advises women, adding that there are limitless careers for those prepared to explore.

"Find role models and ask questions about what they do. Open up your space and learn as much as you can."

She suggests that women should spend time reflecting on their emotions, attitudes, beliefs – the conditioning that may limit them. "The only person who can change you, is you," the coach concludes.

# Making sure women's voices are heard

A common message that comes from women working in the automotive industry is that their voices need to be heard loud and clear. This rings true for all the key industrial economic sectors in South Africa.

"If you haven't cried at least once, then you have not been a woman in the automotive industry," Lebogang Matloga confesses. Colleague Nonhlanhla Shinga gives her a wry look and nods.

Despite that the women both describe their jobs as exciting and challenging. In fact, Matloga goes even further, describing how much she enjoys that the work keeps her on her toes. "I like the person I'm becoming," she says.

Shinga is an assembly supervisor at Automould, while Matloga is a logistics outbound clerk at the same company.

Automould is a manufacturing operation specialising in high quality technical plastic injection moulding and ancillary operations for the motor industry.

Shinga's job is to make sure that the production of the components runs smoothly, that there are enough parts for the assembly, that the people and environment are safe and that the workplace is a positive space.

"It feels good to be able to execute our daily requirements for our customer on time and meet our targets," Shinga says, while Matloga describes her excitement at discovering the world of supply chain management. It is her job to make sure there is enough stock to deliver on the clients' requirements.

## This is serious work

Shinga has been in the automotive industry since 2007, having started in Automould's Durban operations, and has worked in various departments from logistics to production to chrome plating, among others.

Matloga is new to the industry, having joined Automould a year-and-a-half ago.

Both speak of the challenges faced by women in such a male dominated industry. "You need to fight to have your voice heard" is a common refrain heard in numerous interviews with women in the automotive sector.

But both are equally strong in their response. "You need to be confident and stand your ground – after all, you are all trying to achieve a common goal," Matloga notes. "We must always remember, we are a team," says Shinga. "I take my job very seriously and will not compromise it in any way," she adds.

The two women are both strong role models to others in the industry. "For me, all things are possible – I am unstoppable," Shinga says, adding that she will not allow herself to be defined by her gender.

Shinga talks about her aspirations of becoming a plant manager and Matloga is aiming to become a supervisor and then a manager. "Your attitude determines your performance," says Matloga, adding that women are determined enough they the potential to achieve greatness.

Asked what of her future, Matloga fires a rapid response: "Watch this space."



LEBOGANG MATLOGA



NONHLANHLA SHINGA

# Changing perspective of women in the economy

People must pay attention to women, after all they are the ones who build a family, build a nation, says Mamelodi community liaison officer Karien Titus.



MAMELODI COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICERS: KARIEN TITUS, SEBENZILE SEGAGE AND HONIPHEKILE MASILELA

The group of women sitting in the interview room find an immediate and natural rapport, listening closely to one another's stories and nodding and murmuring support when statements made hit close to home.

It is a diverse group that has come together, representatives from the different communities of nearby Mamelodi and workers from one of the TASEZ-based factories. What they have in common is that they are all interested in transforming South Africa and its economy.

Community liaison officers Karien Titus, Sebenzile Segage and Hloniphekile Masilela report to the Community Project Committees, a structure set up between the local communities of Eersterust, Mamelodi and Nellmapius and TASEZ to find ways of working together to create local job opportunities and training programmes, *while the other three women, Onica Mafaesa, Tumisang Molefe and Tshegofatso Keleco, hold different positions at Feltex.*

Feltex, one of the tenants based at TASEZ, produces a range of auto body parts for Original Equipment Manufacturers, including seats, interior carpets, boot trims, parcel shelves, and other aspects of a vehicle to make for a comfortable and enjoyable ride. From the TASEZ plant, they supply components for the Ford Ranger Next-Gen.



ONICA MAFAESA



TUMISANG MOLEFE



TSHEGOFATSO KELECO

### On the role of women

Keleco, who works in IT support at Feltex, has big dreams. She tells the group how hard she had to work to get where she is, finding nods of understand from the women around the table. “But I am driven,” she says, adding that she wants to go back to school. “I see myself as rising to become head of IT.”

She looks at where she comes from – Ganyesa in the North West province – and mulls over the limited job opportunities for the women of the area, who usually find work in teaching or nursing rather than taking a chance on something else. “I always look for the positive in any situation. I’ve learnt to dream. With God, all is possible.”

Molefe, who has been with Feltex for 16 years, is a production team leader who heads up a crew of 10 men and one woman. The economy must become more inclusive, she says, “although lately, I have been seeing more women enter the automotive industry.”

Reflecting on her experience as well as that of women in other industrial sectors, Molefe notes that “society has taught us to fight” and “work hard”. Many women, she says, are broken and need to find healing.

A quality inspector at Feltex, Mafaesa, points out that her role is one that decides the outcome of the work done. “I have to approve the part or it does not leave factory” she notes, adding that her role on the factory floor is one of changing perspectives.

While she acknowledges there are many opportunities within the automotive industry, her big dream however, is to find her way into the legal profession. “There are opportunities for that too, within human resources or the company’s legal department.”

Her advice, which was warmly received from the other women in the room, is “don’t be average don’t settle for less”.

### Building communities

“We must find ways to help the community,” says Titus, adding that women in particular must be acknowledged. “They are the ones that build the family, that build the nation.”

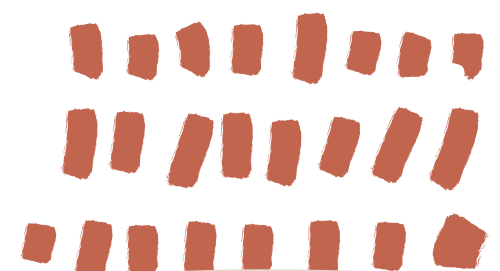
The impact of job creation must never be underestimated, it reaches way beyond that person who has found employment. Titus tells the group of a phone call she received that morning from a mother whose child started work that day. “She was in tears she was so grateful.”

The CPC often receives CVs from job seekers, but the applicants have no science subjects. “We need to emphasise the importance of technical subjects at schools.” To get into TASEZ, young people need the right subjects, Titus notes.

Masilela, who focuses on recruitment and the construction sector for the CPC, has found that women are often afraid of entering the construction sector. “The sector must definitely include more women – as managers and safety officers,” she says, adding that they need to tell themselves “I deserve to be here.”

Hard work is crucial, according to Segage, who sees her role as a bridge between the community and TASEZ. “I’m trying to help the community from the inside.”

Women need to support one another, she states. “We need to celebrate other women’s achievements. If I win, you win.”





# TASEZ: a focus on building a legacy

It is important that the Tshwane Automotive Special Economic Zone – and by extension all South Africa’s special economic zones – become legacy projects in their own right.



**BIANCA KORTENHOEVEN-JAGGER**

Although special economic zones are a fairly new concept in South Africa, it is imperative that planning for their development must extend beyond the here and now.

“The automotive sector in South Africa is exposed to a global market that expects world class standards. That means that we have to be competitive in what we offer,” says TASEZ’s Bianca Kortenhoeven-Jagger.

Kortenhoeven-Jagger, who is an industrial engineer by profession, is responsible to monitoring, evaluation and strategic planning with TASEZ.

Besides keeping a close eye on the delivering of TASEZ’s annual performance plans, making sure that the performance indicators and targets align with the budget, and that they are implemented, Kortenhoeven-Jagger has to also identify potential strategic risks to the company’s operations.

“I have to have a strategic focus on where the organisation wants to go and work closely with the executive management team to make sure these elements are incorporated into the targets and aligned with our shareholders mandates.”

With reference to the role of women in the SEZs, Kortenhoeven-Jagger notes that the automotive sector is focusing on bringing more women into the industry, with, for example, some tenants at TASEZ creating over 60% of the jobs for women. On a management level, there is a predominance of white males in the industry, but that is starting to change.

## Great opportunities

Describing how she got into the engineering space, Kortenhoeven-Jagger said she had attended a two-week programme at the University of Pretoria when in high school and went through all the engineering options available. “Industrial engineering just clicked, bringing product people and processes together in interesting way.”

She sees great opportunities for the development of South Africa’s special economic zones but adds a note of caution. “If SEZs are going towards excellence, more needs to be done in terms of infrastructure, particularly for those that are landlocked.”

Central to the work of the SEZs is the export of the products manufactured. Getting them to the international markets is vital. The SEZs will need to be part of the conversations that have to be had around the transport corridors.

If they are to deliver on their mandate of being catalysts for employment, transformation and socio-economic development and industry growth, the SEZs have to become self-sufficient and economically sustainable.

“In 20-years-time I want to be able to drive past a thriving growing TASEZ and say, ‘I was part of that legacy’,” she concludes.



# With courage, anything is possible

Brenda Chepape and Lethabo Moloko are two Tshwane women who are determined to succeed in a 'man's world'.



BRENDA CHEPAPE

"I love seeing women succeeding in a male dominated environment," says Brenda Chepape, a broad smile of achievement adding emphasis to her words.

Chepape is an operations manager at the TASEZ base of global transport and logistics giant DSV, having worked her way up from a data capturer to a team leader to a supervisor and now operations manager in various project. "I want to be a general manager," she admits.

Chepape has been in the automotive industry with the Ford Motor Company of Southern Africa for 14 years, and the explanation of the technical processes fly from her tongue with ease as she explains the just in time and just in sequencing that goes into the manufacturing of the motor vehicles. She oversees a team involved in the production of the harnesses.

Her success is something that her whole community in Mamelodi celebrates. "I hope that by sharing my story other women will see anything is possible as long as you have courage."

But she does not make light of the struggles women have to face, pointing to the issue of ongoing

gender based violence as one such fight. "Women must support one another," she says, adding that the patriarchal system needs to change.

## Being a role model

And putting her own words into effect, Chepape introduces Lethabo Moloko, who is one of the learners she guides and mentors.

The two women work in a high pressured job where trucks have to be loaded and leave the depot on a precise schedule to ensure

the components arrive at the Ford factory on time.

Moloko had tried her hand in various sectors before joining the Ford/DSV team at TASEZ in November 2022.

"I've been learning a lot and it's been great to be able to see things through (Chepape's) perspective," the 26-year-old says.

But her pride and joy are most evident when she showcases one of the skills she has acquired since working at TASEZ: as she climbs up onto a brightly coloured forklift her demeanour could not be brighter. "No one can say this is not for women," she remarks, as she carefully manoeuvres the forklift towards a waiting truck.

She has learnt some valuable life lessons along her path. "We are able to reach our full potential. We can sit in a board room or any other place with confidence."

Her advice to other young women could not be more apt: "Don't base your lives on what others may say and do – this is your journey."



LETHABO MOLOKO

# Building empowered workplaces

If you drive through the Tshwane Automotive Special Economic Zone you will see a large construction underway in middle of the hub – that project is being managed by Lebogang Zwane from the Motheo Construction Group.



LEBOGANG ZWANE

As the multilevel parkade begins to take shape in the TASEZ hub, Motheo Construction Group project manager Lebogang Zwane is aware that she is continuing to expand the legacy left by the group's founder, entrepreneur and businesswoman Thandi Ndlovu.

Ndlovu was instrumental in developing Motheo into South Africa's leading black women-owned construction company. Currently the company is 51% women owned and 54% black owned.

Zwane, who has been in the construction sector for 12 years, has been with Motheo for five years and is now a senior project manager and shareholder.

Although the industry was not her first choice as a career – she wanted to go into medicine – her sister convinced her to try civil engineering and she ended up “loving it”.

“Being in an industry that is dominated by men, I was determined to prove them wrong.” Zwane holds a diploma in civil engineering as well as a BTech degree.

She speaks candidly about the challenges she has faced on her professional journey: “There've been ups and downs.”

One of the challenges she identifies is that women do not get the respect they deserve. “You have to prove yourself, work harder than anyone else, and you cannot afford to fail.” She talks about the difficulty of being married with children and having to manage multiple projects across the country. Because the industry is inclined to not offer employment to women, those that are in the sector have to put in that extra effort.

While the sector is getting better in opening up the space for women, there is still a long way to go, she notes.

For her, the fact that she has been made a shareholder is significant. “It recognises my contribution and values my work.”

## Role models and education

Efforts to get more women in the infrastructure and industrial spaces must start at school level, she says. “The STEM subjects (of science, technology, engineering and mathematics) must not be trivialised for girls. They are not difficult subjects they just require consistent work.” She suggests that the school programmes in these subjects could be improved.

In addition, more funding should be put towards studying science and mathematics. “Girls must develop a love of maths and not opt for maths literacy,” she adds.

Zwane also points to places where women can expand their knowledge and skills base. For example, Motheo runs an academy for training and development within the company. Here they provide programmes for artisans and young graduates, offering practical experience and mentoring. “I'm one of their products,” Zwane announces.

Pondering on the role of women in SEZs, Zwane is not sure that many women know about SEZs in general, nor are they aware of the potential opportunities that exist in the space. “We need to spread the word and get information out into the communities, particularly to women within the communities.”

There seems to be little participation by women-owned companies in the construction sector, and this needs to change. Zwane notes that of the 24 small, medium and micro enterprises Motheo employs, only four are owned by women.

“We must broaden the platform and encourage women to get involved in training and in procurement.”

Zwane pauses as she summarises what she has been talking about: “We must carry out what the women of 1956 began when they marched on the Union Buildings to deliver signed petitions protesting the introduction of apartheid pass laws on black women.

“Women must become business moguls, CEOs and even presidents. This is something I hold very dear to my heart.”

# Meet some of the women who drive TASEZ

It takes a team to build something great, and that is exactly what is happening at the Tshwane Automotive Special Economic Zone. We would like you to meet just a few of TASEZ's extraordinary women who take their task of growing a special economic zone of excellence seriously. Each one has something to say about being a woman in the economy.



**SANTE ASCENSO**  
Executive assistant in the office of the CEO  
Ascenso began at TASEZ as an assistant in the business development and infrastructure units before moving to her current position, where she supports the CEO in his daily tasks.

"Be open minded and willing to learn. If you are asked to walk that extra mile, do it. Remember it's for the benefit of your country to make sure the SEZs succeed."



**LERATO DITSHEGO**  
Skills officer at TASEZ  
A relatively new department at TASEZ, Ditshego describes her job as creating employment opportunities in the SEZ – particularly for women. She is currently working on a training programme for the new financial year.

"What I do is close to my heart. This is my community, my home town, and I want to see women and the youth benefit from the next development phase at TASEZ."



**MOKGADI DONATUS**  
Facility manager  
A mechanical engineer by training, Donatus manages the daily requirements of a world-class automotive facility. She oversees the delivery of uninterrupted power, ensure the needs of the tenants are met and that any challenges that arise are dealt with immediately and seamlessly.

"TASEZ is home. We must own it and take pride in it. I want to be able to say, 'I was part of developing this'."



**ILSE IMMELMAN**  
Senior project administrator  
Immelman, who holds a Masters in project management, has seen TASEZ rise from a vast scrubland to the world-class automotive hub it has become. In her role at TASEZ she provides support wherever it is required.

"Stay knowledgeable, stay up to date with what is happening in your field and keep reading."



**NONHLANHLA MAHLASE**  
Marketing and communication intern  
A marketing graduate from the Tshwane North College, Mahlase assists the marketing and communication manager with administration, with preparing and branding venues for events. Since joining TASEZ she has learnt a range of different things including what SEZs do and what goes into manufacturing cars.

"I think that there should be visible development centres set up to help people acquire the skills they need to get into the economy."



**OKETSANG MODISELLE**  
Administrator in the business unit  
Modiselle provides support whenever required to the unit, including setting up meetings and helping with communications between the unit and its investors.

Women in the workplace have much to deal with, holding down a job and having to be a caregiver as well as facing multiple social issues.

"If we can unite as women, we have the strength and resilience to fight like the women of 1956."



**PHUMUDZO NETSHIDZIVHE**  
Business analyst in the TASEZ IT department  
It is Netshidzivhe's role to liaise between information technology department and business administration to analyse business needs and improve the quality of the IT services.

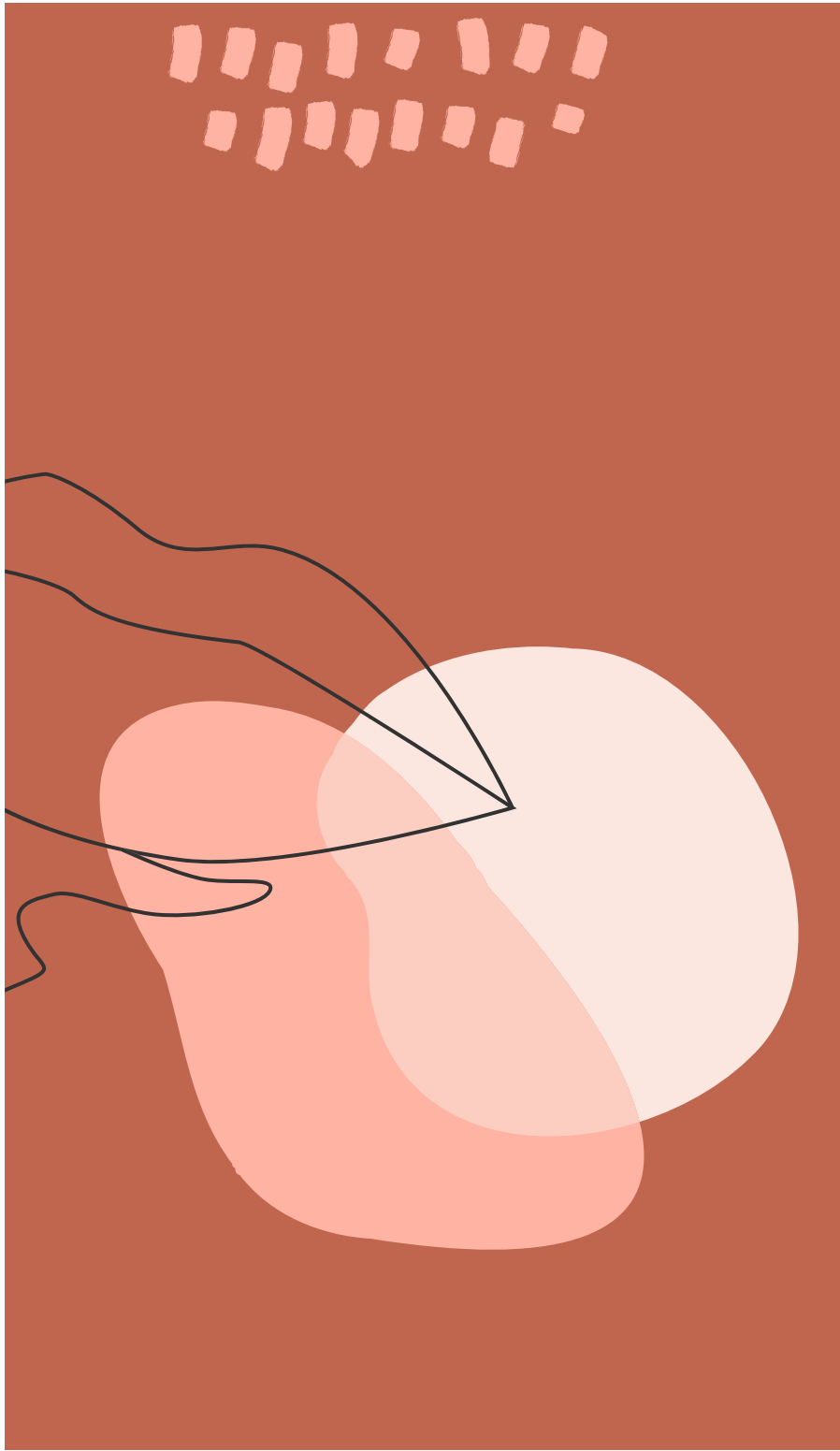
"Do not be afraid of failure because you learn from your failures."



**BOITUMELO PHETLHE**  
Executive assistant in the office of the CFO  
Phetlhe provides administrative support to the CFO, including setting meetings and collecting revenues from the zone's tenants.

Phetlhe describes an "a-ha" moment at TASEZ when she realised that she is part of history being made as the SEZ develops.

"No woman is an island; we must have a strong team around us."



**TSHWANE AUTOMOTIVE  
SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE**

AFRICA'S FIRST AUTOMOTIVE CITY