



CEOs unite to Lead the Charge Against Gender-Based Violence and Inequality at the CEO Connect Forum

Johannesburg, South Africa – 31 March 2025. In commemoration of International Women’s Month, corporate leaders took a stand against gender-based violence (GBV) and gender inequality at the CEO Connect Forum, co-hosted by KPMG and Shared Value Africa (SVA) at the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE).

As gender-based violence (GBV) and gender inequality continue to undermine economic progress and social cohesion, leading corporations came together to act. This high impact gathering, themed “Accelerate Action: Urgency and Unity for Gender Equality,” mobilised top corporate leaders to confront GBV and promote gender equality in the workplace and beyond.

According to the previous Costly Impact of GBV report, South Africa’s GBV crisis remains a staggering challenge. The country’s femicide rate is five times the global average. Beyond the human toll, GBV has significant economic implications, costing the country in excess of 36 billion annually due to absenteeism, lost productivity, and healthcare expenses.

Despite increased awareness, a previous KPMG pilot study (2023) highlighted critical gaps in corporate response—revealing that 78% of South African companies lack GBV awareness training, while 94% do not have adequate workplace policies to address the issue.

The CEO Connect Forum aims to drive meaningful change by mobilizing corporate leaders to take decisive action in tackling GBV within the workplace and beyond.

“Businesses cannot afford to be bystanders in the fight against gender-based violence and inequality. This is not just a social issue—it’s a business imperative. Leaders must move beyond statements of intent and take bold, measurable action,” said Ignatius **Sehoole, Senior Partner and CEO of KPMG in Africa.**

The forum featured powerful keynote addresses and interactive CEO discussions. Attendees gained exclusive insights into global best practices, practical solutions, and tangible steps that corporates could take to accelerate gender equality.

Among the key event highlights:



- Exclusive Research Insights: Findings from KPMG's insightful study on employer readiness to tackle GBV.
- The Business Case for Action: How addressing gender equality fuels innovation, enhances productivity, and safeguards corporate reputations.
- Lessons from Industry Leaders: A deep dive into lessons from industry leaders, integrating GBV prevention into workplace policies.
- Top 5 Actions for Employers: Practical measures businesses can implement to drive change.

The CEO Connect Forum also set the stage for the imminent official launch of the End GBV Alliance in May 2025 - a collective of leading corporations committed to sustained action against gender inequality and workplace GBV.

"This forum was about more than just dialogue. It's about accountability, partnership, and real change. If we are serious about economic progress, we must be serious about gender equality," states **Joy Ruwodo, Head of the Gender Equality Unit at SVA.**

Join the Movement

The CEO Connect Forum brings together senior executives dedicated to driving meaningful change. This event fosters collaboration, encouraging business leaders to stay engaged and play an active role in shaping a gender-equal, violence-free future.

About the Shared Value Africa Gender Equality Unit

The Shared Value Africa Gender Equality Unit (GEU) is a pan-African initiative dedicated to advancing gender equality and addressing gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) in the workplace and society at large. Recognising the far-reaching impact of systemic inequality, workplace harassment, and domestic violence on individuals' well-being and economic stability, the GEU drives systemic change and positive social impact by equipping public and private sector organisations with the strategies, education, and tools needed to create safe, inclusive, and equitable environments.

Through advocacy, research, training, and strategic consulting, the GEU provides comprehensive, research-backed solutions that help businesses foster gender equality and a thriving workplace culture across Africa.



About KPMG in Africa

KPMG in Africa refers to the KPMG firms in the Southern, East, and West Africa regions. These are comprised of 13 countries from the 3 regional clusters, i.e. Southern Africa: Botswana, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe; East Africa: Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda; West Africa: Ghana, and Nigeria, who are in the process of establishing a formal One Africa Cluster to be called KPMG One Africa in 2025. The KPMG firms in these countries are member firms of the KPMG global organization of independent member firms affiliated with KPMG International Limited, a private English company limited by guarantee.

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