**NEWS ARTICLE**

Transforming industry one brick at a time

**4 August 2****022:** In celebration of [Women’s Day](https://www.gov.za/WomenDay2022) on 9 August, Corobrik highlights five women and how their diverse roles contribute to this year’s theme of ‘Generation Equality: Realising Women’s Rights for an Equal Future’.

“When women work in non-traditional roles, it is still seen as something of a novelty,” says **Karabo Motsepe-Marutla**, Government Development Manager at Corobrik. This means many women feel there is a lack of social, emotional, and work support available to them. “The underlying assumptions surrounding gender roles has had a negative effect on organisational culture, putting females at a disadvantage.”

Karabo’s role is to provide an interface between the public sector, business development, and sales functions at Corobrik to grow market share. In addition, she focuses on staff training and development. As a market leader, Corobrik takes a much broader view by providing mentorship to young women.

“Engaging in conversations with a mentor can help women feel more comfortable expressing their career goals,” says Karabo. “While it is certainly important to have a support system, one of the most impactful things you can do to propel your career is to believe in yourself. Recognise your potential and go after what you want.”

Karabo stresses that young women need to cultivate confidence and be assertive. “It is very important to back less experienced women for new opportunities,” she points out. Senior professionals have an obligation to develop more junior employees. “It is critical to focus on providing women with opportunities to gain additional experience. Use your position for good by advocating for less experienced women to be included in new projects and joint teams.”

Assistant Factory Manager **Lerato Mokgotsi** leads the operations team at the Midrand factory, which manufactures premium FBX, FBS, and special shaped bricks to cater for specific market segments. She has an N6 qualification in electromechanical engineering and is currently studying towards a diploma in operations management.

Lerato started her career at Corobrik in 2010 as a cashier at the Fourways Sales Centre. “It has been my greatest pleasure to work for a well-established manufacturing company. I have developed and am growing continuously within the business.” She adds that Corobrik is widely diversified in terms of culture, race, and gender, which is a significant driver in its ongoing success.

“The industry is slowly transforming as more women are appointed in operational roles at our factories. I generally believe women who want to make it in the industry can do so by being driven, dedicated, committed, and brave. It is not easy, but it is possible, depending on yourself and your character,” says Lerato.

Dispatch Manager **Rahab Mathobela** is another example of a long-term employee, having started at Corobrik in 2002 as part of its first intake of women employees. She is currently studying towards a business administration degree and is confident of progressing to a managerial role in the near future. “We must never underestimate our capabilities. We must stand our ground and be strong and courageous as women, for then we can achieve anything.”

“We are an inclusive workplace, as we have people at different levels and functions with diverse cultural backgrounds, all collaborating as part of a team working toward a common goal,” says **Charlene Premraj**, Laboratory Manager at Corobrik Central Laboratory. “Each brings their own unique skill set to the table. Corobrik encourages greater team diversity as it leads to more innovative and creative outcomes for the business.” Charlene, who has a Bachelor of Science in Biochemistry and Microbiology, is the first female Laboratory Manager at Corobrik.

“I have seen the industry evolve and become more receptive to women occupying more senior roles. However, I still believe we can incorporate more women of colour and transform the industry even further. This will foster a more equitable culture by bridging the gap between ethnic diversity to create a new dynamic shift in the industry,” says Charlene.

**Segopotso Mashego,** a registered scientist with a master’s degree in development practice**,** works shoulder-to-shoulder with Charlene as a Geologist in terms of product mix development. “By now I am used to the general surprise expressed by people when they learn I am employed at a manufacturer.” However, because Corobrik utilises various clay deposits for its raw materials from a range of surface mining operations, it falls under the legislative ambit of the mining industry.

Sego is no stranger to mining, having worked underground at a gold-mining operation, which she says was very challenging as a woman in terms of issues such as tribalism and gender power dynamics, before moving into consulting and corporate mineral resource management. However, her true passion lies in research and mining geology. “Science is a toy God gave us to figure out what She is doing,” she says.

Sego comments that a main barrier still facing women in industry is shattering the perception that we are not as capable and not as strong as men, especially in physical tasks and leadership. To her younger self, she would say: “Do not be under pressure, as it is not a race. Be kind to yourself. Forgive yourself and keep moving. Be sensible, and do not lose yourself in the quest to be number one. I want to be accountable to myself and make myself proud.”

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**Notes to the editor**

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**About Corobrik**From small beginnings in 1902, Corobrik has evolved into South Africa’s leading clay brick and paving manufacturer. Corobrik’s product quality and performance attributes remain key to the company’s success.

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