With incredible business savvy, determination and resilience, many African women have succeeded in creating a name for themselves. Whether they achieved by moving up the ranks of the corporate world, through entrepreneurial innovation or fighting for social justice, these 20 Women represent the most powerful of the African business cohort across various industries.
"You have to think fast in business. If someone asks – Are you selling your blouse? Sell it!
You can always buy another one. The first day I opened my shop, I only had five bunches of roses. My first customer didn’t see the flowers I had – all he saw was water. So he asked me: Are you selling water? I told him – Yes! That 20 cents he gave me was my first income. You have to be brave. You have to be aggressive. Don’t be embarrassed." - DINAH BINAH, FLORIST, TANZANIA

Like Dinah, each woman’s remarkable achievement is the result of a combination of many elements: identifying and maximising opportunities, striving for excellence in everything and a refusal to turn from their vision. Maybe you’re just starting out in your career; perhaps you are 30 years deep, let something from these women drive you to be the absolute best in whatever you do – be it creating floral masterpieces or brokering contracts worth millions.

Siza Mzimela was appointed in 2010 as the first female Chief Executive Officer of South African Airways. After joining the company in 1996 as a Research Analyst, Siza moved up the ranks to assume her current position while garnering recognition for her work in tourism. She serves on the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy board and was a finalist for 2002 Nedbank Businesswoman of the Year award.

As the Chief Executive Officer of ArcelorMittal SA, Nonkululeko leads the South African branch of the global steel manufacturer which is the largest producer of steel on the African continent, a position requiring steely determination. Prior to this, she served as the Chief Officer in charge of Mergers and Acquisitions in the Vodacom Company.

First daughter of Jose Eduardo dos Santos, President of Angola, Isabel Dos Santos has made her mark as perhaps the most powerful and richest woman in her country. Deftly using family influence and financial backing by her father, she started her own business. Through strategic investing, she currently has holdings in diamond trading industry, media, retail and energy both in Angola and Portugal.

Former Managing Director of the World Bank group, Mamphele is a renowned academic and businesswoman. She has succeeded in her work as a medical doctor and anti-apartheid activist and she now sits on the board for the Rockefeller Foundation in New York, Mo Ibrahim Foundation, rewarding good governance in Africa and leads Circle Capital Ventures, a Black Economic Empowerment Private Equity firm.