

**BBQ**

PROFILE

# A historic CEO appointment

Raubex's appointment of Felicia Msiza is a rubicon moment for the industry and South Africa, writes Webster Mfebe.

**I**t is an unprecedented milestone in the history of the construction industry in South Africa. Raubex Group, a diversified infrastructure development and construction group, and currently one of the JSE's best performing construction companies, recently announced the replacement of current CEO Rudolf Fourie with a black female candidate, Felicia Msiza.

Msiza becomes the very first female, of any race, to become CEO of a JSE-listed construction company.

A humble but incisive, self-driven and results-oriented individual, Msiza (47) hails from Soshanguve, Tshwane. Her simplicity and humility are the most defining characteristics noticed upon first interaction with her.

## Professional profile

Msiza holds a BCom, HDip (Tax), and MBA degree, and is a qualified Chartered Director (SA).

She joined Raubex as an Independent Non-Executive Director in February 2011, and in 2017 was appointed as Executive Director responsible for governance, risk, and compliance.

She previously served as Group Chief Audit Executive at Denel, Director of Risk and Assurance at City Power, Head of Internal Audit at the Independent Development Trust, and as a Partner and Director at SizweNtsalubaGobodo VSP.

Msiza also held directorship positions within the Institute of Internal Auditors of

South Africa, where she served on the audit committee and public-sector committee, and as a Non-Executive Director of the Institute of Directors South Africa, where she served as Chair of the Social and Ethics Committee and Member of the Audit and Risk Committee.

## Outreach

On 12 April 2022, in my capacity as the CEO of the South African Forum of Civil Engineering Contractors (Safcec), I met the current CEO Rudolf Fourie, who was accompanied by Msiza at their head office in Highveld, Centurion, as part of my 'CEO to CEO Outreach Initiative', with a view to strengthening relations and communication between member companies and their industry body.

At that successful meeting, Fourie mentioned to us that he had big plans for Msiza and all of us. Msiza herself looked perplexed about what those plans might be. There was a passage of almost a minute of dead silence in the boardroom. As we looked at each other, expecting Fourie to elaborate, he instead forged ahead with the purpose of our joint meeting.

The big announcement on 12 May 2022 confirmed that Msiza would take over from Fourie with effect from 1 August 2022. Msiza herself was surprised by the development, as she revealed to me in my congratulatory teleconference with her and Fourie.

Having recommended Msiza's appointment to the Raubex board as his successor,

it is clear that Fourie is confident that he is handing the reins to a safe pair of hands, as he remarked during our teleconference: "If Felicia fails, it means I have also failed."

## Silent mentor

It turned out that during the five solid years that Msiza worked closely under Fourie's tutelage with continuous guidance and support, the silent mentor who never revealed nor raised any expectations on Msiza's part, indeed had big plans for her.

Since I set foot in the construction industry 11 years ago, I have known Fourie to be a man of integrity and compassion. He has now proven to be the first CEO in the construction industry to devise a succession plan to hand over the baton of a successful JSE-listed company, not only to a female, but an African female.

Fourie revealed to me that he was impressed with Msiza's strong work ethic, competence, and professionalism. I think these are some of the attributes that can be emulated by all who aspire to climb the corporate ladder, provided that there are many silent mentors like Fourie out there, to break down the barriers of entry into meaningful corporate positions by previously disadvantaged groups, especially women.

## Implications for the construction industry and beyond

This is a milestone to be celebrated by all in the industry; it is a rubicon moment that has been successfully crossed by Fourie and the Raubex board.

The Safcec Transformation Declaration, aimed at encouraging member companies to, inter alia, ensure inclusive industry participation by all, with special emphasis on designated groups, was adopted by the Safcec Council on 26 June 2019, at the time when we had the first female president, Isabella Makuta. And three years later we now have one bold JSE-listed construction company with its own transformation agenda appointing a black female CEO.

This also impacts positively upon and adds impetus towards the achievement of the elusive employment equity in South Africa in terms of corporate upward mobility of black female executives, in particular, and blacks in general.

Lest we forget, the purpose of the Employment Equity Act (No 55 of 1998 as amended) is to achieve equity in the workplace by means of:

- Eliminating unfair discrimination in the workplace, and
- Achieving equitable representation of employees from designated groups by means of affirmative action measures.

According to a Business Unity SA (Busa) study in 2010, black corporate executives and directors were still lagging far behind as some of the major findings revealed that:

- Of 269 CEO positions, blacks occupied 9% (Africans 4%; coloureds 3%; Indians 2%) and whites 91%;
- Females accounted for 3% and males 97% of 219 CFO positions, blacks occupied 8% (Africans 2%; coloureds 1%; Indians 5%) and whites 92%;
- Females accounted for 7% and males 93% of 245 non-executive chairperson positions, blacks occupied 28% (Africans 24%; coloureds 1%; Indians 3%) and whites 72%;
- Females accounted for 6% and males 94% of 1 664 non-executive director positions, blacks occupied 36% (Africans 29%; coloureds 3%; Indians 5%) and whites 64%; and
- Females accounted for 18% and males 82% of 339 top executive level positions, blacks occupied 18% (Africans 15%; coloureds 1%; Indians 2%) and whites 82%.

While there may be some positive gains since the comprehensive Busa study, the reality is that the top executive level positions are still tilted in favour of white South Africans, who, by the way, were reported by the World Bank Inequality Report of 9 March 2022 as being the constituent part of the 10% that owns 80% of the country's wealth, making South Africa the most unequal society in the world.

In addition to the employment equity crisis of the low levels of blacks in corporate top executive level positions, is the grim picture of the high levels of women unemployment in South Africa as

evidenced by the 2021 Q4 labour force figures. They show that black African women, in particular, are still the most vulnerable, with an unemployment rate of 42.4%, approximately 4.2% higher than the national average.

The historic appointment of Msiza is a moment of great celebration that should precipitate an urgent and radical paradigm shift in order to achieve the objectives of employment equity in South Africa. [BBC](#)

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