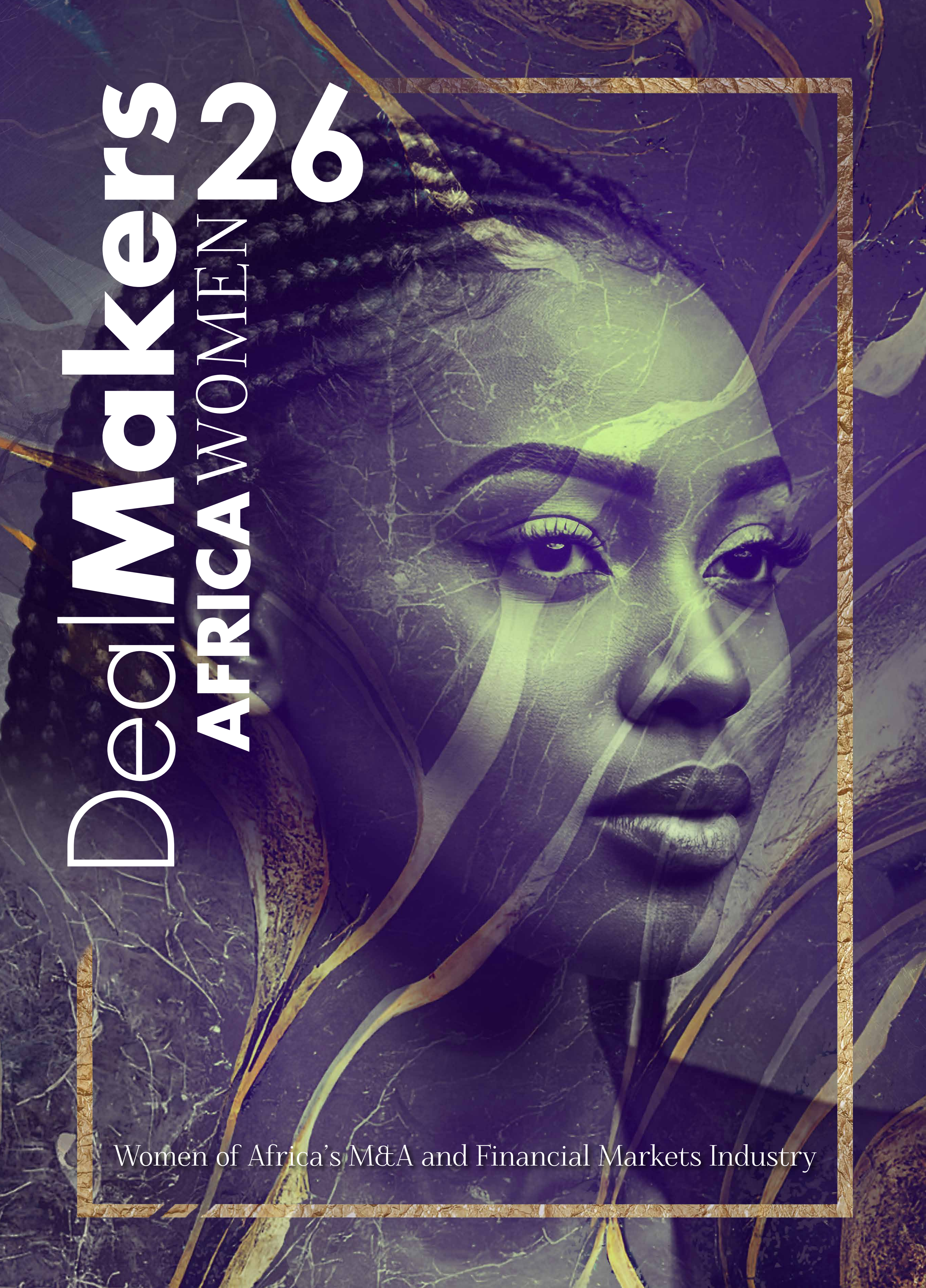
DealMakers 26

AFRICA WOMEN



Women of Africa's M&A and Financial Markets Industry

FOREWORD

Marylou Greig
Editor

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Africa is a continent of extraordinary diversity – in its people, cultures, economies, and the markets in which business is conducted. Yet across these differences are stories that resonate: stories of ambition, perseverance and resilience; of women who have entered industries where the path was not always clearly marked for them, and who have gone on to build careers, businesses and reputations of their own.

There is no single African experience. A woman working in Nairobi will encounter a very different professional and cultural environment from one working in Lagos, Accra, Cairo or Johannesburg. Yet across these varied landscapes, there are remarkable similarities in the experiences of women who have built careers in traditionally male-dominated fields like finance, law, investment and entrepreneurship.

The women profiled in this, the fifth edition of our Women's Feature, represent just a small part of the growing contribution women are making to Africa's business and capital markets. They come from different countries and professional backgrounds, and their journeys are uniquely their own. Yet common threads emerge: the challenges they have faced, the opportunities they have seized, the people who have supported them and, perhaps most importantly, their determination to create opportunities for those who follow.

For many years, the conversation around women in business centred on breaking the proverbial glass ceiling. That remains important, but perhaps the conversation has evolved. It is now also about what happens once that ceiling has been broken: who comes through the opening, who holds the door, and how we ensure that the next generation does not have to fight the same battles.

As Kenyan social, environmental and political activist and Nobel Laureate Wangari Maathai observed in her 2004 Nobel Prize acceptance speech: "Those of us who have been privileged to receive education, skills and experiences, and even power, must be role models for the next generation of leadership."

The women featured in these pages are not simply succeeding within Africa's dealmaking, investment and entrepreneurial landscape; they are helping to shape it. Through the transactions they lead, the businesses they build, the capital they deploy and the people they mentor, they are contributing to a more diverse, dynamic and inclusive African economy.

Their stories remind us that progress is rarely achieved by individuals alone. It is built collectively, woman by woman, opportunity by opportunity, and generation by generation.

As Africa's economies evolve, so too does the face of those shaping them. Increasingly, that face is female.

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The feature is available for download - **www.dealmakersafrica.com**

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Q&A

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Tactical blueprint for the next generation

What would you say to a young woman at university looking at the long hours and intense pressures of M&A and thinking, "I don't know if I belong there"?

Yes, you are absolutely right – the pressures of M&A are intense, and the hours are often long; however, the payoff is unmatched.

M&A is demanding and will challenge you at every turn, but that is precisely what makes it so thrilling. The professional and personal growth you gain from one deal to the next will sharpen your skills – from business acumen, financial analysis, risk evaluation, identification of core value drivers (and the list goes on) – faster than almost any other career path. The opportunities to learn and evolve as a professional are truly continuous.

Succeeding in M&A requires managing your own expectations. Establishing a realistic baseline for what the role actually demands sets a good foundation to kick-start your career. As you navigate the industry, this insight becomes the self-awareness that enables you to set your own internal boundaries and manage your bandwidth, to allow you to strategically manage your career for the long haul.

Cultivate an unshakeable self-belief. When the high-stakes pressure inevitably builds up and the learning curve feels steeper than ever, that core confidence becomes your anchor – giving you the space to reset, adapt and trust in your ability to navigate through every challenge a deal throws your way.

The classic cliché still holds true: you have to love what you do and decide early on what you are willing to commit to, in order to thrive at it. Passion alone may not be enough to navigate a career in M&A, but it shifts your mindset. Passion reframes the long hours from a personal sacrifice to a deliberate investment in your career development.

We all need the reminder that belonging is built, not given – you decide where you belong. If M&A is the path you choose, and if ever the doubt creeps in, remind yourself that 'you are right where you belong'.

Beyond mathematical brilliance and financial modelling, what is the single most underappreciated 'soft skill' required to survive and excel in capital markets?

Relational agility is easily one of the most underappreciated soft skills in M&A. At its core, dealmaking is ultimately a people business, and building genuine rapport goes far beyond basic small talk. It is about connecting with diverse clients across regions, corporate hierarchies and cultures – on their terms. Relational agility forms the foundational cornerstone of trust, and trust is a necessity when navigating high-stakes dealmaking. In moments of friction or deal roadblocks, that trust is what keeps the buy-side and sell-side aligned, and may very well be the difference between closing a deal or a missed opportunity.

When your strategic advice or valuation is met with heavy scepticism by a traditional, old-school corporate board, what is your personal strategy for reclaiming the floor and defending your thesis?

When a Board or client representative meets strategic advice with heavy scepticism, my approach is not to defend a due diligence report, but to lead the conversation with emotional detachment, grounded logic and real-time adaptability.

Firstly, I take the emotion out of the room – starting with myself. Reminding myself that the Board's scepticism is not a personal attack on my intellect or hard work allows me to remain objective and refrain from stepping into a defensive posture.

Once the emotion is removed, actively listening to identify what is truly driving the Board's scepticism becomes my primary focus. Decision-makers simply want to be heard, and de-escalating the room's temperature often begins with a simple acknowledgement of the client's point of view. I make it a priority to explicitly vocalise that I have heard their concerns and understand their perspective.

Logical reasoning rarely fails. While providing strategic advice requires a level of professional judgement, every piece of advice must rest on a solid, logical foundation. Pointing directly to the facts, laying down the technical foundations step-by-step, and bridging them to the deal thesis often helps to naturally dissolve scepticism.

As someone who thrives on being prepared, I have had to learn that while preparation is essential, clinging to a script is rarely practical. The agility to pivot in real-time (abandoning the deck altogether, if necessary), is fundamental for addressing the precise conversation the room needs to have.