



Deal Makers[®]

AFRICA

WOMEN 2025

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



FOREWORD

Marylou Greig
Editor

DealMakersAFRICA WOMEN 2025

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

Across Africa, Women's Day is more than a celebration – it is a recognition of the strength, resilience and leadership of women who continue to shape our continent's future. It is rooted in a collective history of resistance, renewal, and rising above structural barriers.

In the world of mergers and acquisitions, private equity and financial markets, women across Africa are carving out space in industries long shaped without their voices. They are increasingly leaving their mark, building the next generation of leaders and, with it, a legacy of excellence.

The barriers faced are complex: structural inequality, limited access to capital and networks, cultural expectations, and underrepresentation at decision-making levels. Yet, in the face of these challenges, a growing number of women are not only participating; they are also leading, negotiating, investing, and transforming markets.

These trailblazing women can be found in the pages of this year's compilation. Each brings a unique perspective, shaped by local contexts, cultural complexities and economic realities. Yet, a common thread

binds them: relentless work ethic, belief in their own potential, and an openness to guidance and support.

Mentorship, community and strong networks emerge as key themes. These women remind us that success in this space is rarely a solo journey. Support structures, both formal and informal, are critical. And while progress remains uneven across the continent, there is no doubt that transformation is underway. Slowly, boardrooms and deal teams are beginning to reflect the diversity of the continent they serve.

When African women rise, communities transform. So not only is this feature a celebration of those at the forefront, it is also a call to action: to support, mentor and open doors for those still finding their path.

Uplifting women in the workplace isn't just equity, it's a catalyst for economic growth, innovation, and lasting change across the continent.

In the words of the late Kofi Annan, "There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women." 📖

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

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DealMakers AFRICA is published by the proprietor Gleason Publications (Pty) Ltd, reg no: 1996/010505/07 from its offices at 31 Tudor Park, 61 Hillcrest Avenue, Blairgowrie, Randburg 2194.

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Q&A

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What was your first deal or transaction like, and what did you take away from it?

I could write a book about the transactions I have had the privilege to work on, but I choose to reflect on my first public transaction because it shaped me in ways I'll never forget.

It was an intense and eye-opening experience, marked by several rigorous demands from both the client and potential investors. It pushed me to my limits by testing my resilience, attention to detail, and my ability to perform under pressure.

Through it all, I gained invaluable insights – not only into the technical aspects of the deal, but also with respect to the importance of collaboration.

I learnt that nothing compares with the power of a strong team, that experience is irreplaceable, and that no matter how challenging a transaction may be, it will eventually come to an end. And when it does, nothing beats the feeling of knowing your transaction has gone through and has been officially announced. It is a moment of pride, accomplishment and relief.

Have you faced any gender-based challenges or biases in your career? If so, how did you navigate them?

Contrary to most people's expectations, some of my biggest cheerleaders in the M&A space have been men who have not only achieved remarkable success in their own careers, but who have also broken glass ceilings in their own respect.

They have played an instrumental role in my career trajectory by offering guidance, affording me opportunities to deliver on high-impact and career defining transactions, and actively speaking about my contributions. They have also provided me with direct and constructive feedback, which has helped to position me for long-term success. I remain indebted to them for the incredible trust and mentorship they continue to extend to me.

This experience has reinforced the importance of paying it forward. As a result, I have become intentional about actively identifying potential within my own teams, and creating opportunities for them to contribute meaningfully and grow.

What's the hardest lesson you've learnt, and how did it shape you?

One of the hardest lessons I've learnt in my career is that not every client wants to hear the details or red flags of a transaction. As advisors, it is not enough to simply identify issues, we must also be attuned to how we communicate them.

Reading the room, understanding the client's perspective, and presenting the findings in a thoughtful and solution-oriented manner is critical. Not only must we highlight the risks, we must also propose viable paths forward.

This key learning has shaped the way I apply myself on projects and navigate complex situations. It has also taught me how to lead with insight and tact while being intentional about how I engage with my clients and guide difficult conversations.

Have your views on work-life balance changed over time?

At the start of my career, I was focused on achieving the elusive work-life balance. But, as I mark a decade in my professional journey, experience has taught me that life is less about balance and more about integration and acceptance. There are times that work will follow me home, and times when family becomes part of my workday, and that is okay.

Embracing this perception has also allowed me to lead with greater empathy and extend grace in everyday interactions by recognising that we all navigate complex personal and professional realities.

How do you mentor or support other women entering the field?

I am intentional about cultivating individual, unique and meaningful connections with women breaking through the M&A space. I also share experiences from my own journey (both wins and setbacks) in a way that is relevant to them, so that they can learn, grow and draw strength from those experiences.

I also advocate for them to create systems and processes that support their long-term success. In addition, I often remind them that tough times don't last, and no challenge should ever be wasted.

Further, I make it a point to be available to them as a trusted sounding board, offering them support as they navigate key decisions and opportunities.

What keeps you motivated on tough days?

As a mother, I strive to set a strong example for my daughter, so that she grows up believing in her ability to overcome challenges. The nature of M&A work can be extremely demanding, but appreciating the significance of the opportunity to serve world-class clients, and the fact that my work plays a pivotal role in protecting shareholders' interests and driving sustainable value – whether through job creation, wealth management or bridging social gaps – keeps me going. 🌱



Q&A

Damilola Akinbami

Chief Economist: West Africa

Consulting Services | Deloitte Africa

What initially drew you to a career in M&A?

My love for mathematics when I was in school. To be specific, I loved advanced mathematics and working with numbers. This influenced my career choice to study Economics, as I realised I could work with numbers, analyse economic indicators and provide advisory support to people. And voila!!!

What did your path into this field look like — was it intentional, or did you discover it along the way?

Oh, it was intentional. From day one, I knew I wanted to play in the financial services industry, whether as a banker, an economic adviser or a financial consultant. I started my career as a banker and evolved into an economic adviser.

How have you built resilience in a high-pressure, male-dominated environment?

Working smart and efficiently has really helped me to avoid burnouts in a high-pressure environment. Also, having an escape route to let off steam has helped me build resilience. To thrive in a male dominated environment, I had to be the best at what I did, and I did it with confidence.... I looked, dressed, spoke and acted the part, like I belonged in those meetings and board rooms, and slowly but surely, I broke through the industry mindset.

How have you balanced your personal life with the demands of a career in finance?

I have tried to balance my personal life and my career by being more intentional and deliberate about creating time for what matters the most to me outside of work. Also, I have my escape routes for letting off steam, which include travelling far, far away from the work environment...lol

Did you have any mentors or role models? How did they influence your journey?

I do have a mentor, my former boss. Working with him gave me the solid foundation I needed on which to build my career. The

intellectual discussions on economic, policy and financial issues, and watching him handle client engagements, have partly shaped my career and the person I am today.

What kind of leader are you, and how did you develop your leadership style?

This is an interesting question. My leadership style keeps evolving, taking into account the work climate, colleagues, etc. Currently, I would say I am a democratic leader who encourages participation among my team members.

How has the landscape for women in finance changed since you started?

It is more accommodating. Initially, it was a man's world, but I'm glad to see how it has transformed. Women are beginning to hold more sway in the finance space. Women now hold top positions, are being called to share their opinions, are involved in ground-breaking deals and transactions; women are now being respected and seen as equals. It's heartwarming to see this in my time.

What barriers still need to be broken down for women in M&A or the corporate finance industry?

The mindset still needs to evolve further; women need to be given more opportunities for growth, and to be supported.

What advice would you give to your younger self starting out in this field?

Be more audacious, and step out of your comfort zone. It's ok to fail or be afraid, as long as you don't stop there; continue, keep pushing.

What keeps you motivated on tough days?

Encouraging words from mentors, colleagues, my family (who are my support system and biggest fans), and knowing that when all is said and done, my actions would have made an indelible mark. 🙌