

PRESS RELEASE

TO: NEWS EDITORS AND JOURNALISTS
FOR IMMEDIATE USE
DATE: 28 AUGUST 2025

Women-Led Businesses Take Centre Stage in Climate Action

JOHANNESBURG- As South Africa marks the close of Women's Month, the National Business Initiative (NBI) reaffirms its commitment to promoting gender equality and inclusivity in the economy.

The NBI, supported by the Ford Foundation, has released a new report, "[Financing the Future: Gearing Transition Finance to Enable Economic and Social Inclusion](#)". This thought-provoking publication seeks to empower early-stage SMMEs with strong Just Transition ambitions, as well as providing guided learning and actionable lessons designed to help SMMEs grow into investable, resilient startups capable of participating meaningfully in South Africa's green economy and climate transition.

"By bridging the climate finance gap for women-led businesses and driving systemic reforms in financial institutions, we can unlock the full potential of women as key economy drivers. Empowering women entrepreneurs to lead in green industries will not only foster sustainable economic growth but also build a more resilient society that benefits all South Africans," NBI Social Transformation Unit Head, Gugu McLaren-Ushewokunze.

Women at the Core of Inclusive Climate Solutions

Women-led businesses remain underfunded, despite their proven ability to drive innovation and social impact. Investing with a gender lens is not only a moral imperative, but also a strategic approach that aligns with Gender Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI) principles. GESI addresses systemic barriers that exclude women and other marginalised groups, from economic participation, equal access, decision-making power, and opportunity. By promoting inclusive policies and empowering vulnerable populations, GESI creates enabling environments for sustainable development.

The NBI, together with key stakeholders, have demonstrated how integrating climate finance with GESI principles enhances both bankability and social impact. Integrating climate finance and GESI must centre equity, agency and inclusion. Women and marginalised groups are not passive recipients—they are innovators, investors and leaders driving the green transition. Through this work we aim to highlight the urgent need for coordinated action to channel transition finance toward inclusive, gender-responsive, and community-anchored solutions, which is essential to building a resilient community.

Climate change and its impact on the economy

Climate change threatens to deepen inequality in South Africa. Under moderate warming scenarios, the country's **Gini coefficient could rise by 3 to 6 points** by the end of the century, exacerbating existing social and economic divides. Agriculture, tourism and water resources, sectors critical to livelihoods, are already under severe pressure from shifting weather patterns and extreme events. The NBI is scaling transition finance to unlock South Africa's Just Transition. When investors, policymakers, entrepreneurs and communities work together, we can not only confront climate change but also build an economy that is inclusive, resilient, and fair.

This call-to-action message emphasises the importance of empowering women and promoting inclusive climate solutions, while also highlighting the potential benefits of investing in women-led initiatives and driving systemic reforms in financial institutions.

-END-

Issued by the National Business Initiative (NBI).

For any enquiries, please contact: Nabeelah Khan, Communications Manager, NBI | +27 73 528 6614 | NabeelahK@nbi.org.za | www.nbi.org.za, Bomikazi Mdiya, Communications Coordinator, NBI | +27 74 636 7902 | Bomikazim@nbi.org.za | www.nbi.org.za