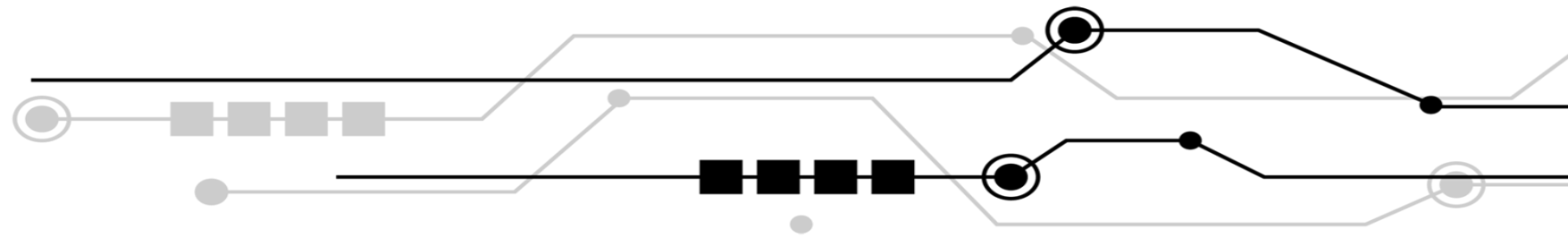




## Achieving equity within Life Sciences & Health Care Sectors

*Conversation summary*

25 August 2021



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Health equity is a crucial concern among life sciences and health care organisations. Business leaders in the sector recognise that their organisations must close gaps in health disparities by focusing on diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) within their own workforce. According to Ashleigh Theophanides, Deloitte Africa’s Life Sciences and Health Care Industry Leader, “statistics on women working in these sectors provides clear evidence that the sectors have considerable, unique barriers to overcome to make the necessary and positive changes to achieve gender equality. In particular to encourage and support women to pursue leadership roles”. In BioSpace’s 2020 U.S. Life Sciences Salary Report, it is noted that men out-earn women by 19.3 per cent in the life sciences industry, which climbs to approximately 47.6 per cent when looking specifically at health care<sup>1</sup>.

### Workplace challenges faced by women in health care

According to a study conducted by the United Nations (UN), 70 per cent of the global health workforce are women, a number that increases to 90 per cent with social care workers included<sup>2</sup>. These women have been on the frontline of the COVID-19 battle with data showing that more than 70 per cent of COVID-19 infections in health care workers in the USA, Italy, and Spain are in women. The study showed that the high number is partly attributed to the absence of necessary resources provided to these health care workers: women, and Black women in particular, have less access to personal protective equipment and training, says Theophanides.

In addition to exposure risks, female health care workers worldwide are also facing the downstream effects of their work, including mental health issues, increased physical violence, alternative arrangements for their families to not expose them to risk, and physical exhaustion. Against this background, a recent Deloitte Global survey on ‘Understanding the pandemic’s impact on working women’, found that nearly seven out of 10 women who said they were affected by the pandemic believe their career progression has been set back and will slow down<sup>3</sup>. “Efforts to mitigate these impacts will be essential to prevent rolling back gender diversity progress, and to help minimize the long-term societal and economic consequences the pandemic has had on women”, adds Theophanides.

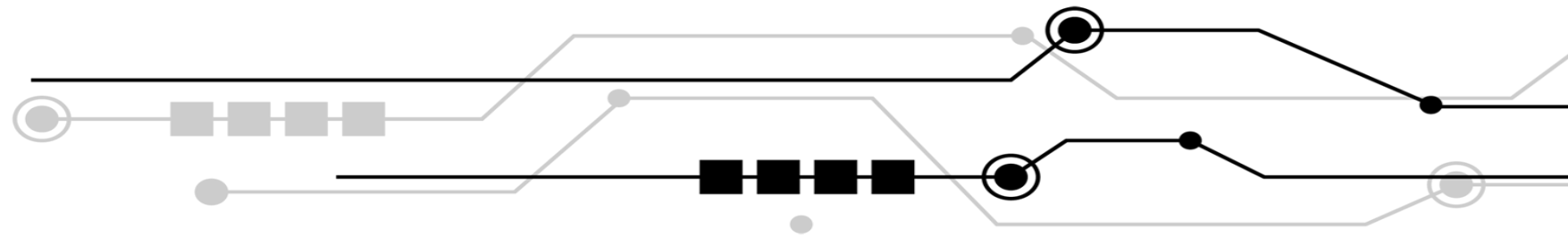
### Mainstreaming Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DE&I)

Notwithstanding the findings above, some organisations have achieved incredible milestones in creating opportunities for women in leadership within the industry. Vuyokazi Mjekula, Director for Policy, Communications and Public Health, Sub-Saharan Africa at MSD South Africa shares how MSD has focused on developing senior female leadership. Mjekula explains that MSD South Africa’s leadership team is comprised of 60 per cent female executives, of which 80 per cent are black. “Looking three years back, the MSD diversity structure looked different” noted Mjekula. The organisation embarked on a journey to create space for senior female leadership and to transform the organisation to reflect the society they operate in.

<sup>1</sup> BioSpace. 2020 U.S. Life Sciences Salary Report.

<sup>2</sup> World Health Organisation. Gender equity in the health workforce: Analysis of 104 countries. March 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Deloitte. 2021. Understanding the pandemic’s impact on working women.



*“Organisations have to ensure that there is no dominant group that has the potential to create echo chambers which might eliminate the richness of diversity of thought”*

Mjekula states that “DE&I is not just about woman, or black woman or black people, but it’s about creating an environment that reflects the society and patients that are served”. She further adds that DE&I encompasses the entire spectrum including race, gender, sexual orientation, and people with disabilities. “Organisations have to ensure that there is no dominant group that has the potential to create echo chambers which might eliminate the richness of diversity of thought”, says Mjekula.

“MSD had to change its recruitment process regarding how interviews are conducted. The organisation recognised that people often hire based on unconscious bias”. In response the organisation had to change the composition of interview panels, particularly for senior leadership roles. MSD’s interview panels currently ensure fair representation of race, gender, and diverse perspectives and thoughts. “This has helped unearth unconscious bias and has shown a much clearer and thoughtful process when considering talent and appointment” explains Mjekula. In addition, a representative from the employment equity committee is invited as an observer to make the panel aware of potential unconscious bias.

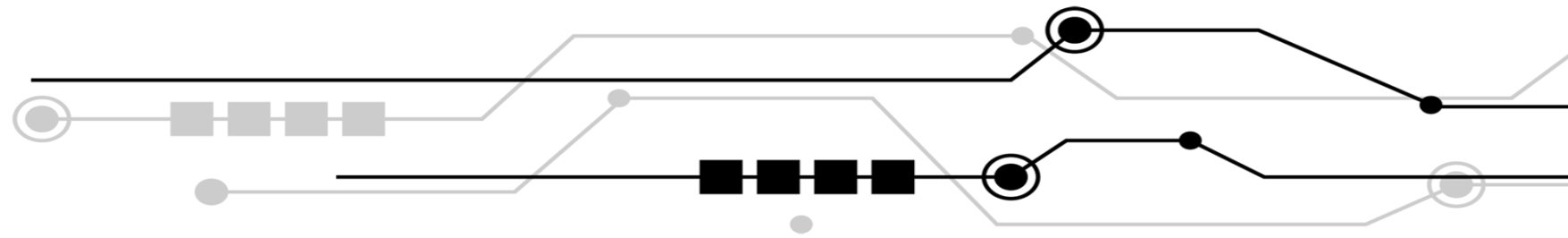
In addressing the topic of inclusion, she explains that people have different definitions for inclusion. For MSD an inclusive environment is where people feel they can bring their authentic self to the job and office. The organisation received feedback that there are spaces where some employees do not feel safe to speak up or feel a sense of ‘otherness’.

The organisation has established employee focused groups that are globally ideated and led locally by employees. These include forums such as:

- **Leaders of African Descent** focuses on Africans and Black people on their experience in the workplace;
- **The Nextgen Forum** focuses on engaging with young leaders in the business;
- **The Capabilities Forum** focuses on how to integrate and mainstream differently abled colleagues into the general culture of MSD i.e., the business held a session learning sign language;
- **The Women’s Forum** is a global platform for mentorship and networking

**Not for profit organisations (NPOs)empowering women**

In South Africa more than 80 per cent of the population are reliant on government for access to health care services. This means broadening access to primary care through innovative health care delivery models has become essential. Unjani is a non-profit company and registered public benefit organisation established specifically to raise funds, implement, train, monitor and manage the Unjani Clinic Network.



*“I believe we have a winning formula for an alternative, affordable service delivery model that creates ‘nursepreneurs’, permanent employment and builds sustainable businesses that add social value into communities”*

Lynda Toussaint, CEO of Unjani Clinics NPO, explains that “Unjani is a isiZulu word meaning ‘How are you?’ which encompasses not only health but an individual’s entire wellbeing”. Toussaint further states that “due to doctor shortages, the need to shift tasks to primary health care nurses to perform basic primary health care has really escalated in South Africa”.

Through the Unjani clinics NPO network, black female professional nurses are empowered to operate and ultimately own primary health care clinics as businesses in low-income communities of South Africa. The Unjani clinic network has not only empowered nurses as health care providers but has also taught these professionals to run sustainable businesses and create employment within their communities. “Nurses who are now businesswoman have become role models in their communities. The support of the communities for the services that Unjani clinics offer is evident in the number of patients that the nurses are seeing monthly”, says Toussaint.

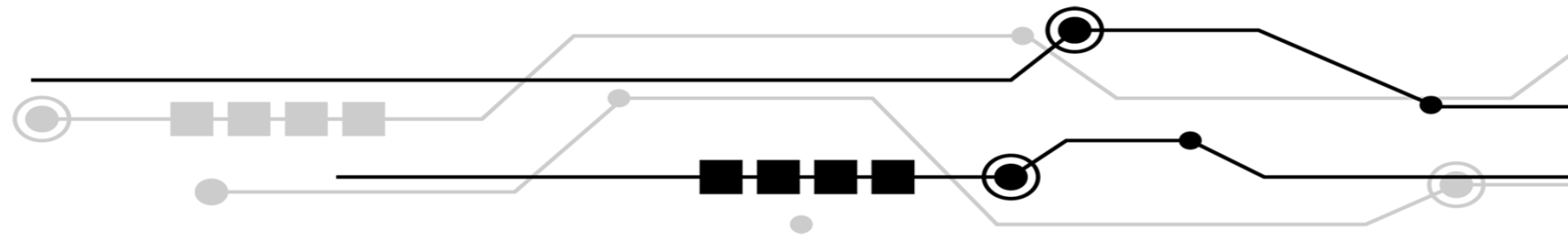
The Unjani clinic network piloted six clinics between 2010 to 2014 and have successfully deployed a further 94 clinics in South Africa since its inception. “I believe we have a winning formula for an alternative, affordable service delivery model that creates ‘nursepreneurs’, permanent employment and builds sustainable businesses that add social value into communities”, states Toussaint.

**Innovative models that solve health care challenges**

She further adds that Unjani clinics target market is the population that has access to some form of income to pay for primary care needs but cannot afford private health care providers. Unjani clinic charges R200 for consultation and medication. “As a result, Unjani draws a segment of the population from government facilities which assists in creating capacity for them to deal with the unemployed”.

The Unjani clinics have played a role in assisting local government clinics with family planning and COVID-19 vaccinations. Ultimately, Unjani clinics help strengthen the health care system in South Africa as they deal with the populations primary care needs. The network plans to build 100 clinics by end of the 2021-year cycle, with long term plans of 600 clinics by 2030, states Toussaint.





“Looking at the reason why there are not enough woman in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) related careers, research suggests that inadequate education is a key reason ”

### Socio-economic impact

As a result of the establishment of the Unjani clinic network, over 90 women have been empowered as business owners, nurses have returned to the nursing profession, and the nursing profession has been elevated through this model. “Within a period of 6 months the nurses on average enjoy better lifestyle, higher income, and are able to improve the lives of their families” says Toussaint. More than of 2.1 million patient engagements have been recorded by nurses since inception. Unjani clinics has permanently employed 350 individuals, and in addition benefits the communities because clinics reduce waiting time and cost of travel as clinics are in the community. The provision of correct medication to treat the nurse’s diagnosis and patient education improves the managing of medical conditions in the communities.

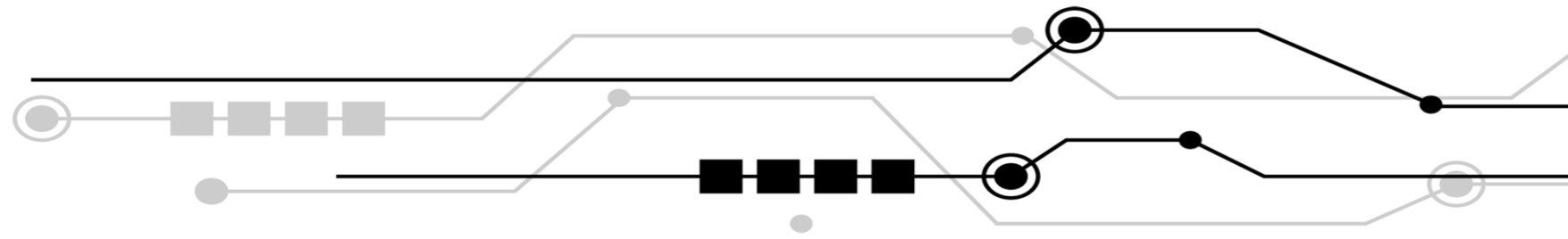
In South Africa, where unemployment remains unacceptably high, Small Medium Enterprises (SME’s) play a crucial role in empowering people and in employment creation. From a health care sector perspective, Toussaint adds that “there are other areas where innovative models can be established including laboratories, where for example lab technicians can be empowered in a similar way that Unjani has modelled”.

### Education remains key to equity in health sciences

According to the 2018 UNESCO Institute for Statistics report, women in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields represent less than 30 per cent of the study sample globally<sup>4</sup>. According to Theophanides, “this is a glaring indication that urgent attention and huge investments in women to pursue studies and make contribution to STEM fields is needed”.

Looking at the reason why there are not enough woman in STEM related careers, research suggests that inadequate education is a key reason says Theophanides. In the case of South Africa, Botswana, Eswatini and Namibia, while girls’ secondary education enrolment is higher than that for boys, many of them drop out before completing their secondary education. Of those who complete secondary education, many lack the required proficiencies in numeracy, science and the digital skills required to enrol and/or excel in many of the STEM related programs at the tertiary education level.

<sup>4</sup> We need to encourage girl learners to embrace STEM subjects. <https://www.news24.com/parent/learn/learning-difficulties/we-need-to-encourage-girl-learners-to-embrace-stem-subjects-20210225>.



““The J&J Analytics & Dreams Programme equips young women with leadership skills and employment opportunities. In the communities in which it operates, the programme has helped to cut HIV infection rates among girls”

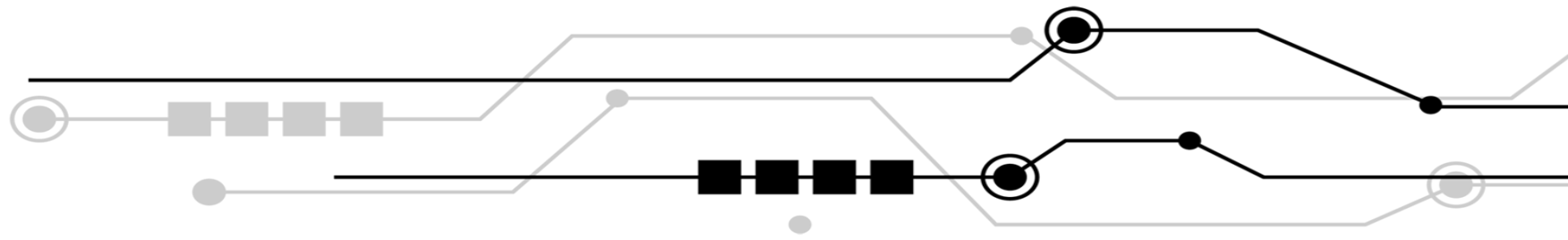
In addition to the education disparities, the Equality Equation Report states that gender norms, stereotypes, biases, and sexual harassment are among key drivers of low representation of women in male-dominated STEM fields. Gender biases and expectations for different genders, set by families, society, cultural norms, and the media tend to propagate stereotypes, discriminatory practices and policies which deter girls from pursuing STEM careers or lead to women to leave STEM careers. These challenges limit the chances of girls’ exposure to these fields, which in turn discourages more girls from pursuing STEM careers.

J&J’s Global Public Health Analytics & Dreams Programme Support, Sibongile Zwane explains how she joined the J&J Analytics & Dreams programme which focuses on young girls between ages 12-24 and aims at empowering them with both leadership and technical skills they would need in the long run.

Zwane initially interviewed with J&J for a finance Intern role with the organisation, and to her surprise during the final interview the Vice President asked her what she is passionate about, she explained that her true passion did not lie in the finance field but rather in working with communities and particularly helping young women. J&J were ready to launch the

Dreams programme and instead of appointing Zwane into the finance role, the business decided to appoint her into a role that best aligned with Zwane’s aspirations to serve in the community. She explains that the decision gave rise to her journey in the Dreams programme where she enjoys her work and finds fulfilment.

“The J&J Analytics & Dreams Programme equips young women with leadership skills and employment opportunities. In the communities in which it operates, the programme has helped to cut HIV infection rates among girls”. Zwane further explains that “Young people are a generation that want to make an impact”. She highlights the importance of having a mentor and being a mentor to create a society where young women can feel supported, loved, and cared for, which plays an important role in helping them succeed in their careers and personal lives.



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This insights summary is based on a webinar with the same title that was hosted by **Ashleigh Theophanides**, Life Sciences & Health Care Leader, Deloitte Africa on 25 August 2021. Speakers included:

- **Lynda Toussaint**, CEO; Unjani Clinics NPO
- **Vuyokazi Mjekula**, Director: Policy, Communications & Public Health, sub-Saharan Africa; MSD South Africa
- **Sibongile Zwane**, Analytics & Dreams Programme Support; J&J Global Public Health



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