

Imizizi Evolution, a newly launched venture builder

 By [Imran Salie](#)

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Imizizi Evolution (IE) is working to re-imagine venture building and funding for small, female-owned businesses in Africa that focus on basic and vital products and services. IE was founded by Mponeng Seshea and her business partner Yolisa Tshabalala to help mentor and fund women-owned businesses.



Mponeng Seshea, CEO and co-founder of Imizizi Evolution (IE) | image supplied

Bizcommunity caught up with Seshea to find out more about more about IE and the goals of the company...

■ ***Can you share a bit about your personal journey and what inspired you to become an entrepreneur?***

My career journey started in the corporate space where my role morphed from business analyst to change manager, to business architect to scrum master and anything else the client required. By the time I left the corporate world, I was an operations manager.

Having worked as a contractor and being involved in some of the strategic client engagements and understanding business as an ops manager brought me to the realisation that there was a gap in how people were managed as resources and the misalignment between the individual's purpose and the client's objectives which impacts the client reaching their goals.

When the opportunity to be a bridge between contractors and businesses arrived (through Temporary Employment Services), I took the leap to solve this problem in the industry.

■ ***Can you explain the mission and goals of Imizizi Evolution in re-imagining venture building and funding for female-owned businesses in Africa?***

Our purpose is to eradicate poverty, create employment and invest in a future that cultivates inclusivity and a sustainable - growth mindset among entrepreneurs and one of our objectives is to fund women-owned businesses solving real-world

needs and have a positive domino effect in their industry.

Our strategy is in waves, but the low-hanging fruit is incorporating impact investment in the venture-building business model.

We also focus our attention on more than just the business by developing these founders through specialised women leadership development programmes. Lastly, our model is based off creating an eco-system by partnering with businesses that are passionately and innovatively solving essential human needs.

■ ***How does IE mentor and fund women-owned businesses, and what kind of impact have you seen so far?***

Women are the sine qua non [an essential 'ingredient'/condition] to achieving sustainability. As previously mentioned, we have customised leadership programmes, we have partnered with mentors and coaches in each industry and our investment approach involves us being advisors in the business to ensure agreed-upon objectives and milestones are met.

What we found is that the impact goes beyond successfully scaled businesses, and that micro eco-systems are created by founders who also start giving back in whatever capacity they have.

■ ***Could you discuss the funding gap that women entrepreneurs in Africa face and its consequences for their businesses?***

Recent data shows that only 2% of the funding available for small businesses in Africa goes to women. In South Africa, this still has a lot to do with legacy policies where women were seen as dependents and therefore marked as high risk by financial institutions.

Data also shows that where women-owned businesses are supported, the community grows, the economy is positively impacted and where they are not supported, the communities and countries suffer. This can be because 90% of women were reported to have started businesses for impact, whether it's feeding their families or combating unemployment.

■ ***What sets IE apart from traditional banks and funders in its approach to supporting women founders?***

90% of women start businesses for impact. We are those women. We find women founders who are solving for the prosperity of the planet and its people, nurture and develop them and their businesses to their desired goals. T

hey in turn, because of their growth mindset and scaling their businesses, contribute to the community positively, also nurture and develop other women and their businesses. And thus proving "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu" (I am because you are).

We consider more than the financial aspect of the business. However, as funders, we form part of the company's advisory board which means that strategies and objectives are actioned guaranteeing return on investments.

■ ***Can you share examples of how IE has supported women entrepreneurs in unlocking their potential and achieving success?***

As part of our onboarding, we do a thorough assessment of the company and its founder(s). In assessing one of the businesses, one of their challenges was proving previous work done. One of the strategies we used in solutioning for this problem was taking on the company as our supplier.

We were able to give them the experience, which also helped revenue generation and exposure to the market through our affiliations. Being our supplier gave us a broader perspective of their business, which meant we could also assist them with their foundational processes when dealing with clients.

We helped them navigate vendor management processes and how to grow their portfolio. That is the summarised version.

■ ***What are your long-term goals and aspirations for Imizizi Evolution and its impact on women entrepreneurs in Africa?***

Our long-term goal to be part of the policy-changing forums and platforms in the SME industries and venture-building industries with a focus on women-owned businesses. We envision getting into partnerships and having hubs in the most remote of places in order to reach more women founders in underdeveloped and developing areas providing 'essential needs' services/products.

For example, industries like agriculture/agri-tech are projected to be a 7 trillion-dollar business in the next seven years. By then we would have formalised partnerships, processes, and our overall model in how we support and scale these businesses readying them for the investment opportunities.

■ ***What advice would you give to women who aspire to start their own businesses, especially in regions where gender biases may be prevalent?***

I have learnt that your network is your net worth. It becomes very important for women starting out businesses to associate themselves with other women in business and if possible, get a mentor.

I have recently come across a notion that may be regarded as controversial in these instances but, the nature of an entrepreneur is to solution for challenges. I would challenge these women to not see these as barriers but rather as issues that have a resolution. It makes it easier to knock on the right door once you know what you want

ABOUT IMRAN SALIE

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