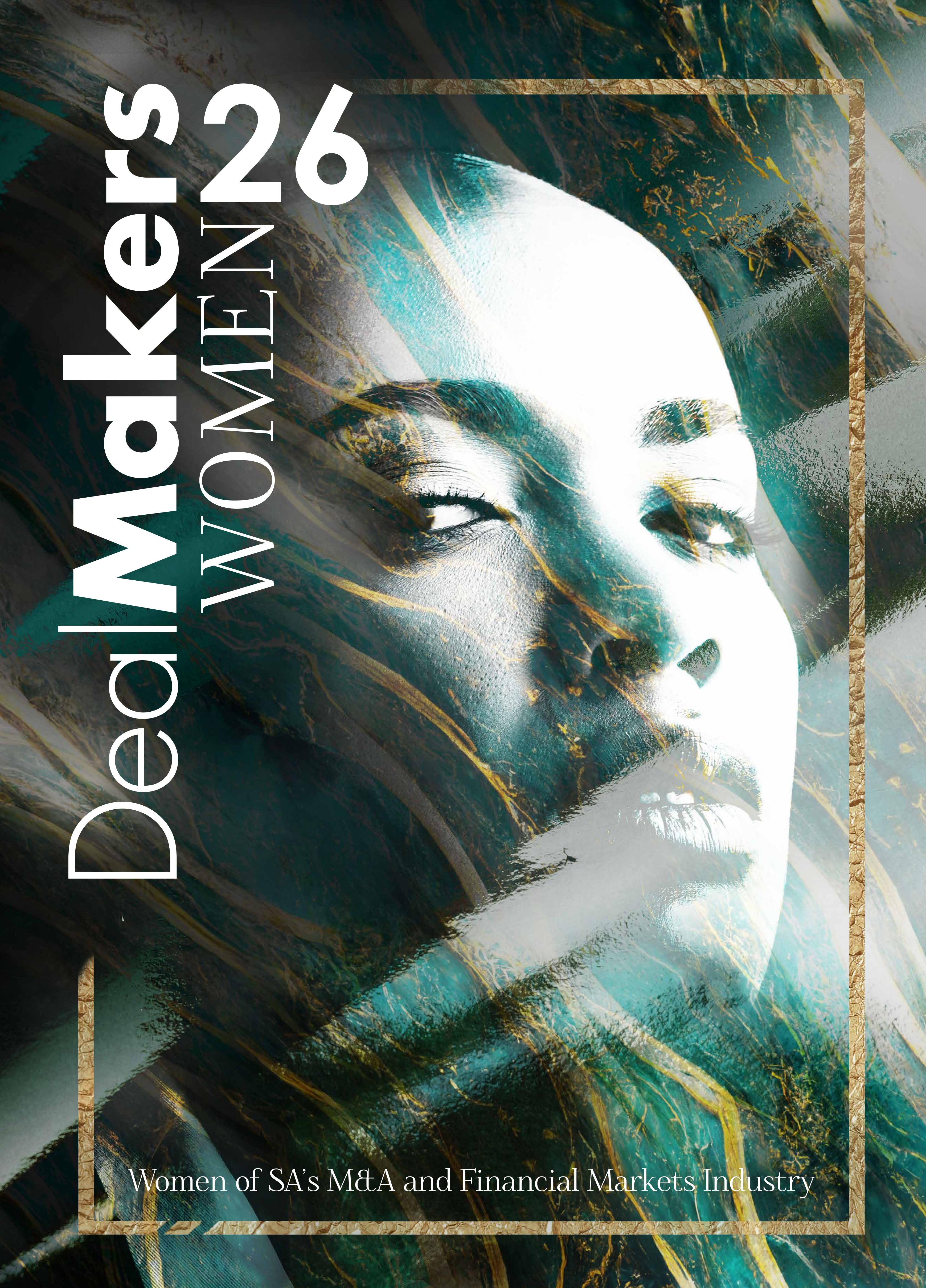

DealMakers WOMEN 26

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

FOREWORD

Marylou Greig
Editor

DealMakers WOMEN 2026
Women of SA's M&A and Financial Markets Industry

The idea of a just society is as old as time. In 375 BC, Plato was among the first to systematically explore the concept, one that has continued to be debated and developed throughout the centuries. More recently, in 1971, American philosopher John Rawls profoundly revived the discussion with the publication of *A Theory of Justice*, which set out his influential modern political theory of what constitutes a just society.

At its simplest, a just society is one in which everyone has equal rights, access to basic needs, and an equal opportunity to succeed. It is a society that treats all people with respect, rejects discrimination, and protects human rights. These principles may seem straightforward, yet achieving them remains a work in progress, particularly when it comes to equality for women.

Each year on Women's Day in South Africa, we pause to honour the courage, strength and resilience of women, past and present, who have broken barriers and paved the way for future generations. The day holds deep historical significance, rooted in the 1956 march of 20,000 women to the Union Buildings in protest against unjust laws. Seventy years later, that extraordinary demonstration remains both a tribute and a call to action: a reminder of how far we have come, and how much further we still must go.

The profiles filling the pages of this sixth edition offer words of courage, inspiration and wisdom. Each woman featured has a unique story to tell, and valuable advice to impart. There is immense power in women learning from and supporting other women who have worked hard, overcome obstacles, and gone on to achieve their goals. As American writer, professor, philosopher, poet and civil rights activist Audre Lorde observed: "It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognise, accept, and celebrate those differences."

What is increasingly clear is that deals are about far more than valuation, financial analysis and commercial negotiation. These technical skills matter enormously; they open the door and provide the foundation for a successful career. But it is often the skills beyond the numbers that determine how that career develops. Understanding people as much as understanding numbers; communicating effectively, building trusted relationships, showing empathy and resilience, and knowing how to navigate different personalities and perspectives are all essential. In an industry built on relationships, these so-called 'soft skills' are anything but soft – they are often what turns technical expertise into lasting professional success.

The feature will be launched at the fourth DealMakers Women's Day networking event, building on the success of the past three years and, once again, bringing together an inspiring group of women for conversation and connection. This year's panel comprises Logan Hufkie, a director at PSG Capital; Trishanta Dheepnarayan, a director at Metier Private Equity; Wairimu Karungu, Vice President, M&A Advisory East Africa at Stanbic Bank Kenya; and Nolu Mkhonza, Bephor co-creator and Hallyu co-founder.

My grateful thanks go to all those in the industry who continue to support and participate in this feature, and to my team: women who themselves juggle many roles, for their dedication, commitment and excellence in compiling this discourse. This feature is, ultimately, a collaboration and a testament to the talent, resilience and growing influence of women in the M&A and financial capital markets space.

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

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Q&A

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Senior Associate

Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer

Mentorship, sponsorship and 'lifting as you rise'

Who was the first person in the industry to take a genuine bet on you, and how did that sponsorship change the trajectory of your career?

As a candidate attorney, I was excited about the promise that my future career held, but was not clear on which specific practice area I wanted to focus. I had not initially intended to go into M&A, but I enjoyed the time in my corporate rotation more than I anticipated, and a partner in the team, with the support of other associates I had worked with in that team, took a chance on me. That was a defining moment of my career, and I have continued to practice in corporate M&A and projects ever since.

In addition to my direct supervisor, I was lucky enough to meet people early on in my career who have invested in me, and who I have been able to turn to for advice and guidance over the years. This support has allowed me to gain different perspectives from more experienced professionals, and has been instrumental in helping me navigate the challenges that have arisen from time to time during my career.

As a successful leader now, what standard do you set for yourself when it comes to mentoring the next generation of female analysts and associates?

I am not sure that 'successful leader' applies to me just yet, as I still have a very long way to go, but I try to do whatever I can to be a supportive resource and sounding board for those junior to me. I can still remember many instances at the beginning of my career when I wished that a particular person had given me support or guidance, or had provided some sort of insight into their journey to success, but instead I felt that the person was not willing to engage, or their advice was very superficial. I know that it can sometimes be difficult to carve out time for these discussions because we all get very busy, but I try to remind myself to stay approachable and reach out where I can.

I think it is also important to remember that the challenges of our industry are constantly evolving and, consequently, the advice and approach that might previously have worked for me may not necessarily apply to the next generation. Listening and understanding are key, as well as, where possible, providing specific constructive feedback in the relevant context.

What is the most rewarding piece of advice you've ever given to a younger colleague that you watched them successfully put into practice?

Seek out opportunities for learning, growth and development; don't wait for them to be presented to you. Speak to people, ask questions, and if there is a specific type of work or practice area that you would like to learn more about or be exposed to, make it known.

For women in particular, it's important to be visible. I encourage all juniors to speak up and share their thoughts in the office and in meetings because, in my experience, this can be a particular challenge for women who are beginning their careers. It has been very rewarding to see a younger colleague who is reserved in the work environment find their voice and present themselves with confidence and assertiveness.

Demonstrating that you are knowledgeable, capable and trustworthy will positively impact the trajectory of your career and your opportunities for growth.

Peer-to-peer support is vital. How do you build a strong network of allies among other women working in law, audit and banking to support your transaction pipelines?

I have learned that networking is a skill, and just like any other skill, you can and should work to get better at it. Attending industry events, and specifically those focused on women in practice, has been very beneficial for meeting like-minded people and creating connections. Once those connections have been made, the relationships need to be fostered and trust needs to be built, so that they can be mutually beneficial to all parties in the long term. It is also important to take up opportunities to hear from senior industry professionals about the challenges that they have faced, gain differing perspectives on how to tackle those challenges, and engage with them on the advice and insights that they have to share.

Our profession is based on relationships – expertise is a prerequisite; however, I have observed that the most successful people in business are trusted professionals who have built a reputation through hard work, consistency and referrals within their networks. We need to publicly champion one another, recommend one another when opportunities arise, and stay in touch with one another in order for the networks that we build to positively and tangibly support sustainable transaction pipelines.

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