
Ambassador Bridgette Motsepe

- **Founder & Executive Chairperson of Mmakau Mining (Pty) Ltd.**
- **Pan African Parliament Ambassador for Women Entrepreneurship and Economic Development in Africa.**

The International Businessperson of the Year 2008, Bridgette Motsepe is a heroic woman and a born entrepreneur who defied legislation to build a successful mining group. She is an economic activist, an agent of transformation, and a pioneer of change who has played a key role in changing exclusionary mining legislation in South Africa and who pioneered the implementation of empowerment mining models in South Africa, and all Mmakau Mining investments internationally.

Bridgette was born into an entrepreneurial family during the racist apartheid government era when black people were not allowed to own a mining license – or own mining rights and mining technical faculties were prohibited at universities. Her parents had to fight oppressive rules against businessmen, and this created the foundation for the spirit of economic activism in Bridgette and her family.

In the mid-70s, she and her tribe, who were robbed of royalty payments for mineral rights leased to a Canadian company, marched to the mine seeking justice. They were met with teargas, dogs, police, and guns. Bridgette swore that she would become a mining lawyer, but despite being accepted at Wits University, which was, at the time, in the 80s an exclusively whites-only university, her race prohibited her from studying there.

Banished to the University of the North by the racist apartheid regime, which provided an inferior Bantu education for blacks only, all black students who protested the racist Bantu education system were expelled ending her career in law.

This however did not deter her from pursuing her dream. In the late 80s, Bridgette defied legislation and entered the mining industry as the first black mining entrepreneur. All women were prohibited by legislation from owning mining rights and having a mining license. Women of all races were not allowed to be involved in mining construction, development, and production in South Africa. Her social entrepreneurial passion allowed her to persevere despite the odds. As a contract miner, her company produced minerals and built and managed mines and shafts for the mining conglomerates, acquiring the relevant skills and expertise critical to building an international mining business.

Mmakau Mining's first equity participation in the mining industry was in the coal mining industry and gold mining industry, and further developed ownership in the platinum mine industry and chrome mining industry. She is a former owner of Shaft Sinkers, a company that specialises in Shaft Sinking, Mining Construction, and Development worldwide.

Through her business leadership, Mmakau's prime focus is on investment in sustainable mining ventures through community-driven involvement, which provides for underprivileged communities' wealth creation through empowerment procurement practices, empowerment partnering and entrepreneurship development. This Integrated Resource Management model has created the equity ownership participation of many rural communities and has sustained the wealth creation process through public-private partnership models and policies.

Through her presidency of the South African Mining Development Association her pioneering models in creating sustainable mining communities and robust business and infrastructure development in rural areas, through integrated resources development programmes, have alleviated poverty and restored the dignity of indigenous peoples; thereby addressing the “resource curse syndrome”. This model is being adopted and adapted by various resource-abundant countries and mining chambers in Africa.

She is the former chairperson of the Russia-South Africa Business Forum in BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) and is one of the 5 nominated business leaders, nominated by the business confederations and business chambers in South Africa, to represent the country in the BRICS Business Council. She is the former chairperson of the Black Business Council (BBC), which is the over-arching business confederation that represents Black Professionals, Business Associations and Chambers. She was the Founder and a member of the Board of Trustees of the New Africa Mining Fund, which was a venture capital fund to aid Junior Mining Companies.

Bridgette is also a former Vice Chairman of The Minerals and Mining Development Board that advises the South African Minister of Minerals and Energy on Minerals, Mining and Energy Development Act and the sustainability of the mining industry. While serving on the Board, she also chaired the finance sub-committee on the creation of a resources bank and a flow-through shares stock exchange, which was investigating the creation of a stock exchange for exploration for oil, gas, and mining companies.

In her capacity as President of the South African Mining Development Association, Bridgette was instrumental in the lobbying and design of the Minerals and Petroleum Development Bill (South African Mining Legislation), The Mining Royalty Bill, and the Empowerment Mining Charter in partnership with the South African Mining and Energy Minister, Labour Unions, Congress of South African Trade Unions, the Chamber of Mines, Congress of Traditional Leaders in South Africa (CONTRALESA) and other stakeholders.

She was also appointed by the Minister of Minerals and Energy to serve as Director on the board of Mintek, a South African National Research and Development Organisation for all aspects of Mineral Processing, extractive Metallurgy, and related technology.

She was appointed by the Minister of Science and Technology to serve as a board member of the National Research Foundation of South Africa.

She served as a director on the Tourism Board of South Africa, appointed by the Minister of Tourism. She also served as a board member at the North West Development Corporation.

In the mid-eighties, she was the deputy head of Public Affairs and soccer development for the National Soccer League, which is now called the Premier Soccer League, under the South African Football Association (SAFA) which hosted the FIFA World Cup 2010 in South Africa. She is a Founding Member and founding president of the International Women’s Forum South Africa and has been nominated as one of the 20 Most Powerful Women in Africa by ‘Forbes’ Magazine. She is one of the ‘Fortune’ most powerful 200 women and often participates at Fortune Most Powerful Women Conferences, and serves on various boards and has served as a director on the Sappi Limited Board, the biggest Paper and Pulp Company in the world.

Motsepe received an “International Businessperson of the Year Award” in May 2008 by the Global Foundation for Democracy. This award recognises businesspeople that have made a difference in the world of changing economic, political, and environmental landscapes.

In August 2019, she was appointed to serve in the Pan African Parliament, which is the African Union's parliament, as a Goodwill Ambassador for Women Entrepreneurship and Economic Development in Africa.

In September 2019, she was honoured with the International Humanitarian Award by the Andrew Young Foundation in the United States of America. The award is in recognition of her dedication to the socio-economic development of the African continent and the diaspora.