



## Why do we need to have this conversation? Why is diversity so important?

*Many conversations about diversity and inclusion do not happen in the boardroom because people are embarrassed at using unfamiliar words or afraid of saying the wrong thing — yet this is the very place we need to be talking about it. The business case speaks for itself — diverse teams are more innovative and successful in going after new markets.'*

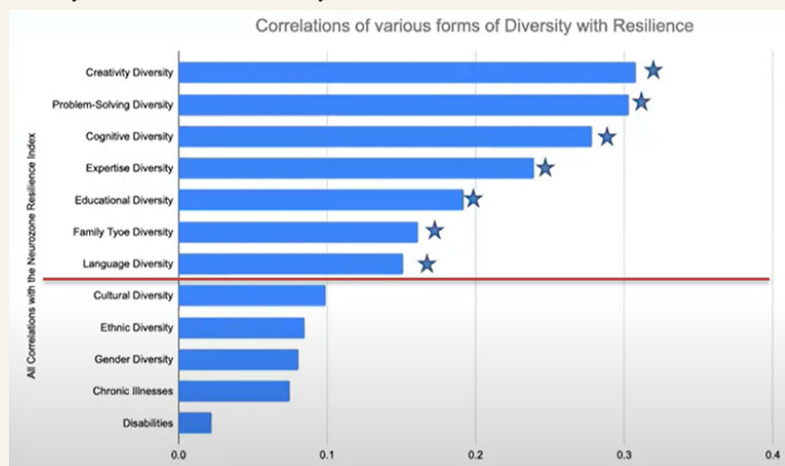
Inga Beale, former CEO of Lloyd's of London



Simply put, diversity is important because it leads to economic growth (European Institute for Gender Equality). Reducing the gender gap in STEM could help reduce skills gap, increase employment and productivity of women, and reduce occupational segregation, which will foster economic growth. Increasing the participation of women in STEM would contribute to an increase in EU GDP per capita by 2.2 to 3.0% in 2050. According to Christine Lagarde, head of the IMF, IMF research shows that adding one more woman to a company's management will boost the return on assets by up to 13%. Another IMF report concluded that banks are more stable when they have more women on their boards.



From a neuroscience perspective, there is a scientific need for diversity, so that we may increase our collective creativity and our collective knowledge (different knowledge). The MIT Center for Collective Intelligence found that equal gender brings empathy, innovative solutions, and more ways of doing one thing. They found that diversity and psychological safety equals the highest intelligence. The C Factor (collective intelligence) will always be higher in a diverse group than the intellect of any individual. Neuroscience work by Dr Etienne van der Walt has also shown that creativity, problem-solving, and cognitive diversity cannot be achieved without cultural, ethnic, and gender diversity. We need this diversity to build our own human resilience.



*'To build the best bridges, you need a diversity of people and perspectives'*  
Catherine Ladousse, President and co-founder of Cercle InterElles

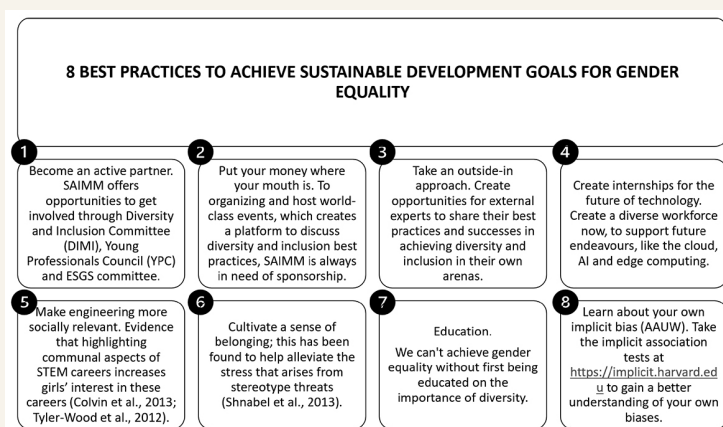
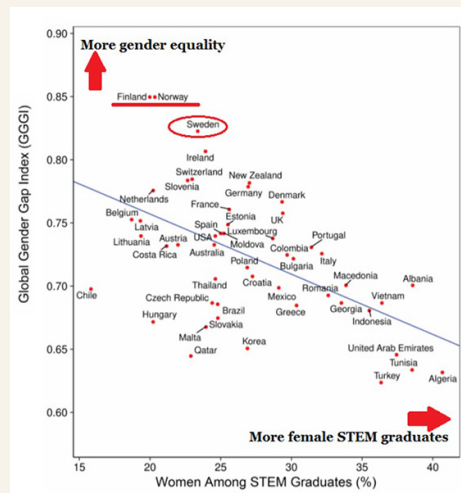
## President's Corner (continued)

Therefore, the message is clear. It is advantageous to have a diverse work force and to have female leaders, as well as male leaders, in managing positions. This is a balance, a bridge, a collaboration. Barbara Annis, CEO of Gender Intelligence Group (GIG), advocates the value of gender unity. We need both female and male leadership styles to survive, and that is why collaboration is so important. But if diversity and inclusion are so important, why are we not reaching our targets?

Why, in countries with equal education and opportunity, do women still choose not to enter STEM? This is known as the global 'educational-gender-equality paradox' (the more gender equality in a country, the fewer women in STEM). This paradox could have to do with the fact that women in countries with higher gender inequality are simply seeking the clearest possible path to financial freedom. And, often, that path leads through STEM professions. Experts do not have any clear answers; however, they did find that we should focus our efforts on those young, would-be STEM women and form programmes specifically aimed at creating positive environments for girls to interact with STEM ideas (Reinking, 2018).

We are all standing on a burning platform. Across the world, according to UNESCO, women with degrees in computer science represent only 40% of the total, and those with engineering degrees account for just 28%; cloud computing only 14%, and data and AI only 32%. It seems surreal, but women make up more than two-thirds of the world's 796 million illiterate people (Facts & Figures | UN Women – Headquarters). When looking at South Africa, since 1996, when women were first allowed to work in underground mining, women have come to represent only 14% of the total mining workforce.

How do we go about positive change? Most literature shows eight key practices that everyone must commit to executing as part of their sustainable development goals for gender equality. The SAImm already plays a role in each of these practices, by providing a platform for networking and dissemination of best practices in diversity and inclusion, by openly communicate drives for change, and by offering mentorship to young would-be STEM women.

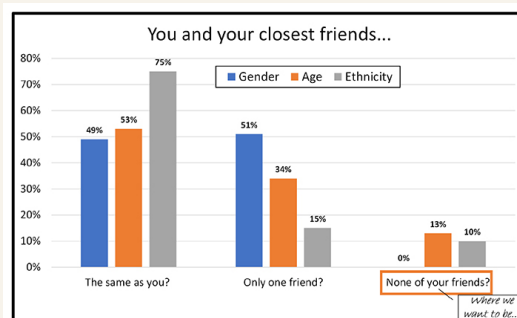


Let's take our own, personal test. If you look at your two closest friends, your square squad, are they the same gender, age, or ethnicity as you? These questions were asked at the SAImm AGM and although some delegates are seeking diversity in their own lives, most of us are still duplicating.

This month I want to challenge everyone to cultivate a sense of belonging for all and to work on courage enablers so that we can diversify in our own lives as well.

**Z. Botha**

President, SAImm



*For leaders, the challenge is to draw out the expertise and insights that come from different perspectives.*

Kelly McDonald, author 'How to Work With and Lead People Not Like You'