

Mimi Women seeks to close the gap between women and economic independence

By  Sindy Peters

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Ramona Kasavan is the founder of social enterprise [Mimi Women](#) - an organisation that aims to help keep South African girls in school by providing sanitary pads in rural parts of South Africa. It also empowers unemployed women by equipping them with entrepreneurial skills via its Empower Me programme.



Ramona Kasavan, founder and CEO, Mimi Women

We interviewed Kasavan to find out more about the model behind the Empower Me programme and her long-term goals for the business.

Why is women empowerment an issue so close to your heart?

Ramona Kasavan: Women are the backbone of our society. We, as Mimi, have seen the gap in society in terms of economic independence and women. Thus, I have made it my mandate to change the narrative of as many women as I can and being the change I want to see.

Do you believe government should be doing more to ensure girls have equal access to education by investing in their healthcare needs - particularly those from vulnerable communities?

Kasavan: I believe that government are working towards 360-degree change, putting women and children first through various initiatives. It is a work in progress but it will turn around eventually.

 ***What sort of entrepreneurial support, if any, does Mimi Women provide women in the Empower Me programme who start a MimiBizBox venture in their communities?***

Kasavan: Mimi provides all women who join the Empower Me model support in the form of marketing material and t-shirts to add extra awareness, plus an open-door policy at our offices. They are able to call or visit the Mimi head office team whenever they need assistance or advice.



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■ **What sort of presence, in terms of the Empower Me programme, does Mimi Women have in SA currently?**

Kasavan: Women that fall under the Empower Me programme are currently active in their communities, selling Mimi pads. These women are mostly from Gauteng and a few are from KZN, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and the North West province. We are hoping to expand into other areas in terms of acquiring more women in other provinces after having done CSI roadshows in all nine provinces. Although we have not been to all the areas in the provinces, we do know that there is a need. Many women and young girls are desperate for sanitary pads and do not have access to them. Therefore, we want to grow our Empower Me business to empower those women and to help young girls.

■ **What is the long-term goal for the initiative?**

Kasavan: My global vision is to have a Mimi agent in every community or neighbourhood, stocking and selling Mimi sanitary pads. We know that women struggle to find pads close to their houses, and our solution seeks to kerb that problem with affordable, high quality pads.

ABOUT SINDY PETERS

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