

# THE VALUE OF WOMEN IN TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS

The transport and logistics industry is transforming by recognising the potential that women bring. What traditionally was a male-dominated sector is now embracing the contributions of women to ensure a more diverse and inclusive future, shares IVECO SOUTH AFRICA

Historically, the transport and logistics industry has been associated with a predominantly male workforce because of its positioning as a masculine sector, but that's no longer the case. Times are changing, and women are breaking restrictive boundaries, making significant strides and claiming their place in the industry as drivers, logistics managers, engineers and leaders. This presents a unique opportunity for fresh perspectives and a different kind of dedication to the field.

A prime example of this is Nicci Scott-Anderson, founder of SaferStops Association, an organisation dedicated to enhancing the facilities and resources truck drivers rely on for their overall wellbeing. Scott-Anderson has more than two decades of industry experience and, after conducting her own research in 2019, found that women were heavily under-represented, making up less than 1.2 per cent of employees in the transport sector.

## CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS TO ENTRY FACED BY WOMEN

Although there have been some significant advancements since then, women in the industry still face numerous challenges and barriers to entry. For example, the widely populated narrative is that women can only do local routes, which makes employers relatively more reluctant to hire female truckers. Their male counterparts are also often not open to letting them take on cross-border routes for safety reasons, especially because of their lived experiences. They also feel compelled to protect women and avoid putting them in potentially dangerous situations.

Scott-Anderson says: "We have had to educate and reaffirm that women are not a risk. Unfortunately, because the entrance of female drivers is so new, operators are still unsure of how



Nicci Scott-Anderson

to incorporate them fully into their operations leading to career-limiting decisions as these capable women are not fully utilised. So, they don't send them on specific routes that they consider high-risk."

Beyond the workplace, barriers also exist within families and communities. "Women, historically, are unlikely to get their families to give them the R10 000-R12 000 it costs to get an extra heavy duty driver's licence. That money is more likely to go to a man," Scott Anderson explains.

However, the growing interest in ensuring inclusivity in the industry has led to the development of several initiatives aimed at funding women and upskilling them with industry knowledge. This is reflective of a broader shift in the industry towards

recognising and valuing the role of women and their contribution to the industry.

## PUTTING SAFETY FIRST

For long-haul drivers, both male and female, safety is a key concern. Responses to a commercial driver survey provided by Scott-Anderson revealed that of the 713 respondents to a question on the top three factors when considering a truck stop, 90.3 per cent prioritised safety. Women in transport and logistics are known to exhibit strong attention to detail and a meticulous approach to their work, qualities that are crucial in ensuring safety on the road. The emphasis on safety is not just limited to the physical wellbeing of drivers, but also extends to the overall efficiency of logistics operations, preventing accidents, delays and disruptions.

## EXTENDED VEHICLE LIFE AND LOWER ACCIDENT RATE

Based on local and international studies, data is confirming that women show higher levels of vehicle sympathy, improving bottom line earnings. Additionally, fuel consumption in women-driven vehicles tends to be better, and the accident rate is lower. In cases where an accident does occur, the cost of the damage is usually lower, suggesting that it might have been a minor incident.

## EMPATHY AND CUSTOMER RELATIONS FOR A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Contrary to popular belief, the transport and logistics industry is about more than just moving goods from point A to point B; it is also about maintaining relationships with clients and other stakeholders. Women's natural inclination towards empathy and effective communication means they often

excel in building and maintaining strong customer relations. This can be a competitive advantage for any company employing female truckers and other personnel.

## DRIVING THE ROAD TO INCLUSIVITY WITH #THANKYOU TRUCKER

IVECO is also doing its part in ensuring the industry embraces diversity and inclusivity. In May 2023, IVECO South Africa announced the return of its famed #ThankYouTrucker initiative for a third consecutive year, in association with the Road Freight Association (RFA). The initiative is just one way IVECO recognises the expertise of outstanding truck drivers who go above and beyond the call of duty in their daily activities. #ThankYouTrucker celebrates and honours the hardworking truckers who play a pivotal role in the country's logistics industry.

In October 2023, Cynthia Noneka Thala (40) was announced as the winner after a public voting round. She started her career as a bus driver and was first employed within Unitrans Total Alrode Operations in 2019. Thala's win was monumental – not only was she the first female winner of the #ThankYouTrucker initiative, but she is also an African female, a minority in the sector.

Commenting on history being made with Thala as the first female winner, IVECO South



#ThankYouTrucker winner Cynthia Noneka Thala.

Africa's product marketing manager, Elvis Mutseura, said: "We couldn't be happier to hand this award to Cynthia, who epitomises the drive, character and commitment we look to reward via the #ThankYouTrucker initiative. In a short trucking career, she has already made her mark on the industry, and her appreciation for the open road, transportation and logistics is clear for everyone to see."

the overall success and resilience of the transport and logistics sector. Now, more than ever, it is important to celebrate the value of women and the role they play in advancing progress.

Over and above inclusivity, IVECO is invested in a greener, more progressive future for the industry with various initiatives and an expansive network in place to achieve this. If you're interested in adding an IVECO vehicle to your fleet to operate your business more profitably and sustainably, contact us. ■

## THE JOURNEY AHEAD

As the automotive and transport industry moves towards a more inclusive and innovative future, women have a role in driving the industry forward. Embracing diversity and empowering women in the workforce not only nurtures individual careers, but also contributes to the overall success and resilience of the industry. Throughout 2023, IVECO South Africa has been using social media to shine a light on the women it employs and acknowledge their invaluable role in driving progress internally, on the roads and beyond. We firmly believe that embracing diversity and empowering women in the workforce enhances



Members of the IVECO SOUTH AFRICA team with Cynthia Thala at the #ThankYouTrucker handover event.



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