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PROGRAM NAME: WOMANITY – WOMEN IN UNITY

GUEST NAME: MS FAITH KHANYILE – CEO OF WDB INVESTMENT HOLDINGS

SPEAKER	TRANSCRIPTION
DR. MALKA	Hello, I'm Dr. Amaleya Goneos-Malka, welcome to 'Womanity– Women in Unity'. The show that celebrates prominent and ordinary African Women's milestone achievements in their struggles for liberation, self-emancipation, human rights, democracy, racism, socio-economic class division and gender based violence.
DR. MALKA	Joining us on the line today from Johannesburg in South Africa is Faith Khanyile who is the CEO of WDB Investment Holdings, a women led group with a focus on funding and supporting female entrepreneurs. Ms Khanyile also serves on the boards of the JSE and Discovery Limited, to mention a few. Welcome to the show!
MS KHANYILE	Thank you Dr. Amaleya.
DR. MALKA	Ms Khanyile, the first thing I noticed on your website when I was preparing this show is that WDB is for women and by women and then the second thing I noticed is transforming South Africa's business and social landscape through the development and empowerment of women. As I mentioned, you serve as the CEO of WDB Investment Holdings, which was established in 1991, and allows the WDB Trust to be self-sustaining. The WDB Trust itself is modelled on the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh, which was conceptualised by Professor Muhammad Yunus under the philosophy that credit is a fundamental human right, with the bank offering loans to people who were too poor to qualify for traditional bank loans. Please tell us more about the origins of the trust and its deliberate focus on women.
MS KHANYILE	Well the WDB Trust was founded in 1991 by a group of women who wanted to play a constructive role in transforming South Africa. The women wanted to make sure that the women of South Africa were central to the economic transformation in South Africa. So basically the key focus of the WDB when they started was to empower women in rural South Africa because, you know, the women in rural areas were the most marginalised and unfortunately they continue to be marginalised today. So the whole idea then was to provide credit to the women entrepreneurs in the rural areas to allow these ladies to start their own businesses, thereby uplifting, you know, their families and communities ultimately.
DR. MALKA	And when we think about the name WDB Trust, does it stand for Women's Development Bank?
MS KHANYILE	It stands for Women's Development Business.
DR. MALKA	Business, so that's the "B".
MS KHANYILE	Yes.
DR. MALKA	And I understand that the founder and also your patron is Mrs. Zanele Mbeki?
MS KHANYILE	Yes, so Mrs. Zanele Mbeki was basically, you know, the key visionary in 1991 when WDB was established, she then approached other like-minded women to really help her to brainstorm on and the mandate of WDB and she continues to be very engaged with the WDB mission and vision and she is the patron of the WDB Group.
DR. MALKA	There've been several replications of the Grameen Bank Model and not all of them have been successful, but WDB Trust has been, can you tell us a little bit

	about this process and the model that you have deployed in South Africa?
MS KHANYILE	The model that we have deployed in South Africa is basically rooted in lending to women that already have got an existing relationship, but before we even find these women and lend to them, there is a process of entering those communities. So basically the processing involves the engagement with the chiefs of the communities, you know, introducing WDB, explaining why WDB wants to be part of the development in those communities and then once the chief blesses, so to speak, WDB then the process actually becomes even smoother because, you know, then WDB have got legitimacy in the community, so it's a long process but, you know, a really detailed process to ensure that WDB becomes part of the community. Also what WDB does is then engage also with local government and other NGOs in the community and develop partnerships and relationships with those other critical organisations and service providers in the community. So once that sort of like broad stakeholder engagement process is complete, then engagement with the potential clients or beneficiaries start and the ladies have to form themselves into groups because there's no security for this funding, so the basically the security is the trust between the ladies that form themselves into groups. Before WDB can provide funding to these ladies, they have to also go through the training so that they also understand the WDB way of doing things, they understand also this lending model, the rules and responsibilities or the risks, etcetera, and WDB provides them ongoing support.
DR. MALKA	Although it's a long process, I imagine though that once you become entrenched into the community that you're there for the long run and thinking about the trust dynamic that forms between women who participate in their various groups, it's a very strong social contract between individuals to hold one another accountable.
MS KHANYILE	Certainly, yes exactly, because how the model works is that in terms of then the loan repayments, the group is responsible for each and every member, so if for example one member is unable to repay the loan the rest of the other members who have repaid their loans and may be looking for additional credit, will not receive the credit, so it also fosters sort of like comradeship, you know, among the women and I guess, you know, the women then do not want to let each other down so they really do their best to make sure that they repay their loan.
DR. MALKA	Can you tell us a little bit about some of the success stories and how many women have been assisted to date through this model?
MS KHANYILE	Since WDB started in '91 with a first loan, it was a hundred rand, we've assisted over two hundred thousand women. One of the key success stories is actually Mrs. [Makula] who was our first client, we gave her a hundred rand, she was running a meat business and basically she wanted to buy a fridge so that she could grow her business to become one of the most successful businesses in Acornhoek, but what then Mrs. [Makula] was able to do was to also educate her children, send her children to university and actually one of her daughter's ended up working with WDB at one point. So, but there are other success stories, but that is the one that really just demonstrates that starting from almost nothing, you know, she managed to grow her business, made a difference within her family and also inspire and continues to actually inspire other women.
DR. MALKA	That has to be the hardest hundred rand worth of work that I've come across as a success story.
MS KHANYILE	Ya, ya.

DR. MALKA	But you know when you're talking here, this is something which is highlighted time and time again, that when women have been given the opportunity of being empowered and enabled, that it's not just a case of what they're doing for themselves and sure, the money and the finance aspect is going towards looking after her family and nourishment, but she has been able to invest into her children, she's been able to give them an education which has given them exponential benefits.
MS KHANYILE	Yes, correct, and I think for WDB this is why we continue to believe in the power of the woman to make a difference, not just within their families, but ultimately within their communities and society at large, because we have seen the type of difference and impact that just a hundred rand well invested and with the ongoing support that WDB can make, so we really, you know, we are huge believers in making sure that women across the spectrum are given the opportunities.
DR. MALKA	Now to continue creating those types of opportunities and financial enablement, initially the WDB Trust relied on donations, which is arguably a challenging approach to financing, especially when it comes to sustainability. So can you tell us how the WDB Investment Holdings component came about and its role in the Group's value chain?
MS KHANYILE	The WDB Investment Holdings Group came about to address exactly that challenge of, you know, relying on donations and you know also donations come, they come with conditions and sometimes the conditions do not necessarily align with the vision of the receiver of the donations. So the WDB founders wanted to be self-sufficient and independent, that's why they formed the WDB Investment Holdings, which is basically the commercial arm of the WDB Trust, it ensures that the WDB Trust is self-sustaining and its able to continue growing its impact, you know, in the communities where it operates. So, currently the WDB Investment Holdings, founded in 1996, is basically managing the portfolio of about thirteen companies, but WDB Investment Holdings is not just playing that role of being the self-sustaining arm of the Trust, also we play an active role in advancing women in our invested companies by serving on the boards of these companies and basically, you know, driving, you know, gender equity and gender diversity on the boards of our invested companies.
DR. MALKA	And we'll touch more on that dynamic a little bit later in the conversation, on thinking of this aspect of we've got the rural focus in terms of the Trust and if we look at the WDB Investment Holdings, that core interest on really transitioning and driving transformation of gender diversity. Financial independence contributes to women's empowerment, whether it's in the entrepreneurial space or in the corporate sector and the work of the Trust as well as Investment Holdings has clearly empowered thousands of women; you talk about two hundred thousand women, that's an incredible number. So in terms of the future and development plans, do you have plans to expand your model into other countries on the continent?
MS KHANYILE	Yes certainly and we are expanding into other African countries through the WDB Investment Holdings, we are looking to establish a private equity fund that will focus on investing in businesses outside of South Africa, but again, you know, with the key theme of making sure that women are at the centre of the strategy, so yes, and we are quite excited actually about this new development and the idea is that we will start by investing in countries such as Kenya and Ghana.
DR. MALKA	That's going to be a fantastic legacy to forge forward and start cementing as you spread your footprint across the continent.
MS	Yes, we are extremely excited, you know, to do something that, you know,

KHANYILE	we've never done before and obviously also again, you know, we're looking forward to partnering with like-minded women's organisations on the continent.
DR. MALKA	Thinking about the corporate space for a moment; women in leadership and the gender pay gap are two issues which WDB has prioritised on its gender agenda, can you tell us more about these important topics and the organisation's approach to drive meaningful change in these areas?
MS KHANYILE	Yes, WDB Investment Holdings have been pushing these two issues already in its invested companies, but what we obviously want to do now going forward, is to broaden our impact on these two issues and our intervention is underpinned by research, so what we have done in order for us to be really...to have credibility and to be informed about, you know, these two areas is that we have conducted research in partnership with Anita Bosch from the University of Stellenbosch and secondly we now also have entered into a collaboration partnership with key organisations that are also active in women's employment and development, the International Women's Forum is one of them and we are now putting together a strategy to start to engage the wider South African society.
DR. MALKA	They're both very important topics and you know we touch on them quite often in this show, on the notion that there are not enough women in leadership roles, that...
MS KHANYILE	...yes....
DR. MALKA	...there has to be this conscious effort that is always pushing forward and then when it comes to the gender pay, I think the pay discrepancy component is a complete injustice.
MS KHANYILE	Exactly, exactly and I think also what really concerns us is that there is so much evidence and research, for example, I just want to quote on the research that was done by McKinsey in 2014...2015 the report called The Power of Parity; basically, McKinsey estimates that bridging the gender pay gap in the workforce will add up to twenty-eight trillion US Dollars to global GDP by 2025, this is equal to approximately two times the likely contribution by women in the business as usual case. So I think for us that is really one of the key drivers of pushing that gender pay gap is addressed, because we understand the economic impact of addressing the gender gap for Africa and the world, it's just, you know, just too huge to ignore. If society, policy makers, business leaders, government can start to take this issue of the gender pay gap seriously we will really see our, you know, economy accelerating significantly.
DR. MALKA	Ms. Khanyile, thinking about female leadership, whether it's in the public sector, academic or corporate space or any other field for that matter, what are some of your views?
MS KHANYILE	My view is really that...let's start with South Africa, specifically the women on boards, representation there on the JSE listed companies, we're currently sitting at about 20% for over the past 25 odd years since democracy, we've managed to get to that 20 odd percent for JSE listed companies and then for SOEs and government institutions female representation on boards is a bit, you know, higher, I think it's around 40% or so. So I mean if you look at where we are, I mean I definitely want to commend that, you know, the country has moved to address the representation, but at the same time, I think that this is not enough. I really believe that we need to be pushing for parity in the next ten years and then if I go to the rest of the African continent, women hold just 12.7% of board directorship, this is nearly 5% lower than global averages and but

	more concerning is that a third of all African companies have no female directors. So for me this is basically that it really requires the type of scrutiny, attention, but unfortunately I don't think, you know, as a continent we are putting that limelight on the issue. So I think the future state really needs...we need to do things differently if we're going to have a different outcome in the next ten years.
DR. MALKA	You're completely right, really, and I often have conversations when people talk about an aspect of socialisation, that it takes time for things to change, but it shouldn't take this length of time, we shouldn't be doing this for our daughters and granddaughters, we should be doing this for us so that we do see parity in the next ten years.
MS KHANYILE	Yes.
DR. MALKA	You spoke about a third of companies in the continent not having any female representation; you are one of the few women that serve on JSE listed boards and in Professor Anita Bosch's recent report, which we spoke about briefly, which covers women on South African boards, she used a couple of descriptions and one which stands out for me was when she was talking about different phases of female board representation, and I quote "One woman on a board; the invisibility phase, two women on a board; the conspiracy phase, three women on a board; critical mass." What are your perspectives about some of these terms?
MS KHANYILE	I actually agree with Dr. Anita Bosch's assessment and from my own experience, where I'm the only woman on board, you definitely feel invisible, you try hard to obviously raise the issues, to try to get your voice heard, but it's very, very difficult, but once you've got two women then at least you know you've got another sister on board that, you know, you can also outside of the board meetings you can have an opportunity to caucus with to discuss critical issues that really impact, you know, diversity and women in the company and then once you've got three women, it's almost like it's complete and the voices of the three of you as women is more elevated and what I have seen from experience is that then, you know, you really get listened to, you get heard and the proposals that you put across, in most cases they are considered and implemented. So I agree one hundred percent and I think also even globally, some research has demonstrated the same issue that at least, you know, with three women on a board you definitely start to see also the changes across the organisation because I guess, you know, this issue of, you know, women's leadership it's not just about the board, it's also about, you know, senior leadership roles, executive roles, but you know, so once you have got three women at least, you know, you can start to make an impact in the wider organisation as far as women's leadership is concerned.
DR. MALKA	It's interesting that you say that, I'm always interested in ratios and percentages on how things operate and usually 30% is always a point of critical mass where things change and if we think about board composition, having three women, you've probably got a board of around about ten, thereabouts, on average, so hitting that magic number of three and that magic number of 30%, that's when you can drive change and see meaningful difference.
MS KHANYILE	Yes, agreed.
DR. MALKA	Today we're talking to the CEO of WDB Investment Holdings, Faith Khanyile. You are listening to 'Womanity – Women in Unity' on Channel Africa, the African Perspective, on frequency 9625 KHz, on the 31 meter band, also available on DSTV Channel 802. We would love to receive your comments on

	Twitter:@WomaniTalk.
DR. MALKA	In the previous section of the conversation Ms Khanyile spoke about the role of the WDB Trust as well as WDB Investment Holdings with respect to empowering women, particularly those in rural areas, and also how we're looking at driving change at a corporate level in terms of female leadership and addressing the gender pay gap.
DR. MALKA	Ms Khanyile, going back to our topic for a moment in terms of boards, in some of the conversations we've had with numerous women across the globe, they speak about the lack of female representation at senior or board level and they've often indicated that one of the main excuses is people will say oh, we couldn't find anyone suitable, so with that being said, who are suitable female candidates for boards and where can we find them?
MS KHANYILE	From experience, you know, suitable candidates are those people with some leadership experience, they could either have been, you know, CEOs, CFOs or COOs of their respective organisations, they should also have had exposure on the board so they have got, you know, government experience, but I think also most important is that it's people that are really eager to add value, to contribute to positive change of the companies that they want, you know, to serve on and they must have the energy and time to serve on the boards, so I think that is quite critical.
DR. MALKA	Very important assets and obviously when people see and experience women who live up to these capabilities, that in turn, inspires more confidence in us as women. We've spoken about financial empowerment, but education is one of those aspects which empower girls and women with knowledge to excel. You hold a BA Economics, you hold an MBA from Wheaton college and Bentley Graduate School of Business, respectively from the USA, you've also completed an HDIP Tax from the University of Johannesburg and participated in the Columbia University Executive Leadership programme and you've received an honorary doctorate in [laws] from Wheaton College in recognition of your role in the upliftment of rural women in South Africa through WDB. Please tell us what role education has played in your life?
MS KHANYILE	Education has played a huge, huge role in my life and as you pointed earlier, you know, I've been very fortunate to have, you know, been educated in America, but I think it's important Dr. Amaleya to understand that I come from a very humble background, you know, my parents who were not very educated, actually they did not have much education at all, they did not even finish high school, they wanted their children, the six of us, to be educated, so they really, they put a lot of pressure on us to always excel, to have good marks, they really believed in hard work and I think that's really what shaped my interest and also my appreciation of a good education. So as a senior when I was growing up at that time, we had apartheid, so I attended High School in KwaZulu-Natal and because I was working hard and, you know, I had good marks, I actually at the end of matric I applied for a scholarship to go to the United States and I was admitted to Emma Willard School, one of the top girls schools in America and that was basically the beginning of my Journey. After Emma Willard I received an academic scholarship to attend Wheaton College and then after Wheaton College I received a United Nations Scholarship to attend Bentley Graduate School of Business. So education really for me has been for me and continues to be a critical success factor.
DR. MALKA	It's an amazing launch pad and hearing your story it just reiterates that emphasis and importance of education and how it can open this world of possibilities. Given all of your experiences to date, in your opinion, what do you think needs to be done to ensure that women have a better future?

MS KHANYILE	I think focus on education is...educating young girls is really critical and I think Dr. Amaleya, for me the focus also must be a holistic focus on education, so it really has to focus on the mind, body and spirit because I think one of the key challenges that, you know, girls and then women later on in life face is that the issue of, you know, self-confidence, self-worth and you know so I think if that holistic education is introduced, that will go a long way to addressing some of the later challenges that we see that women face. Of course you have to also encourage, you know, women or young girls to take maths, to take science, because you know the world today, it requires those types of skills, you know, you want women to be able to code, you want women to be able to, you know, start their own businesses, you know, you want them to have the capabilities, you know, to solve problems, so I think, you know, you need both, you need that balance between, you know, the self and obviously, you know, the technical.
DR. MALKA	And the outcome is a rounded individual that is competent in all spheres of her life. Turning towards a more personal perspective, one of the questions that I ask all my guests on this programme who've made significant achievements in their respective fields is about the factors that they consider to have contributed to their success. Some people speak about hard work, others talk about perseverance or a particular person in their life, so can you tell us, what have been some of the key drivers to your success?
MS KHANYILE	Some of the key drivers to my success has been one; embracing change and really accepting that change is part of life, change is part of growth, if you want to grow you have to change and all of the change is not comfortable, so you have to then also embrace being uncomfortable and you know, facing your fears and overcoming your fears. The second one is that you have to be, you know, open minded, you know, do not limit yourselves, do not limit, you know, who you engage with because you don't know where the opportunities for your next break or for someone who can advise you will come from. Thirdly, you definitely, you know, have to be curious about people, about society, about things outside of your immediate sector or profession, because again, you don't know where, you know, that advice that will take you to that next phase in your life will be. And lastly, you definitely have to be resilient and ya, be able to bounce back, you know, from challenges and from failure. For me those are the critical success factors.
DR. MALKA	They're so practical, embracing change, being open-minded, being curious and having the resilience to see everything through. I'd also like to ask you who have been some of the strong women in your life?
MS KHANYILE	Definitely my mother, you know, my mother was a homemaker, but she actually ended up, you know, starting her own business in the community and my father ended up, you know, resigning from his job to join her in the general store that she started. Even today, you know, my mother is 80 years old, even today she wakes up in the morning, every morning I think she wakes up at like, you know, four thirty or five am, she's got her own garden that she works and she's got so much energy, so much passion, but besides that, you know, she really believed in giving back to the community, so when we were still younger and going to school in that village, she was involved in the school governing board and basically just, you know, being a leader, so my mother is definitely my strong role model.
DR. MALKA	It sounds like she had a lot of lessons to share, there's this entrepreneurial spirit, this essence of community and leadership. Whilst you were growing up, I mean you already mentioned that you grew up in the era of apartheid, that you won scholarships to go over to the USA, please share some of the pivotal moments

	that really had an impact on you.
MS KHANYILE	I think the pivotal moment in my life was actually when I had to leave my family at the age of 19 to study in the US, obviously before that, you know, the fact that I was successful to be chosen to study in the USA, was just like unbelievable for me, but then you know, having to then leave my family at that young age was a life-changing event for me, basically you know, having to go to the US, a new culture, having to make new friends, new connections, I had a host family that I stayed with, you know, during the holidays and basically ya having to adapt to the, you know, horrible weather in New England, also to the education system. As you can appreciate, you know, when I was still in South Africa, you know, I did not speak English and my English was mostly academic, so you know, so I had to learn to speak English obviously the school had these programmes for students who's English was a second language, so that really helped me a lot, you know, just to get myself up to speed, you know, with the language. But ya, for me that was really a life-changing moment and it taught me a lot about myself, it just, you know, showed me you know, how strong and resilient I was, you know, every time I'm facing significant downs in my life I just look back and just like, you know, you survived you know that sort of like seven years in America, you know, without your family, you can survive this.
DR. MALKA	That's a real source of strength to draw up on in down times. And finally, as we close out our conversation today, can you share a few words of inspiration or wisdom that you'd like to pass onto young women that are listening to us in the continent?
MS KHANYILE	I want to say to the young women that are listening today that your potential is unlimited. You must dream big, work hard, believe in yourself, speak up and be of service to others.
DR. MALKA	That's a fantastic statement, thank you so very much, we really appreciated you being on the show, listening to the work that you do, listening to your views as a person who's accomplished so much and still has so much left to do. Thanks very much for joining us.
MS KHANYILE	Thank you very much for the opportunity, have a good day.
DR. MALKA	You too.
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