

Women fight social ills

They uplift city-owned rental stock areas through addressing environmental and socio-economic challenges

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THE Mother City has thrown its support behind women working to improve their communities.

Executive mayor Patricia De Lille yesterday visited women in Kewtown, who are rising above their adversities by getting things done in their areas.

The community ambassadors form part of the city of Cape Town's Women in Rental Stock Programme, helping to build safe and caring communities.

Last year the mayor initiated the programme in response to the needs in the city's rental stock.

The women find themselves assisting members of the community, which include the elderly and schoolchildren, as well as cleaning up their areas.

Speaking at the project yesterday, De Lille said: "The partnership stems from the city reaching out to communities, asking for help to address the social ills in our society."

"We discussed how it could be done and the community came up with ideas, which led to the establishment of this programme."

She said the city had empowered these women to implement their ideas in responding to social ills.

According to the mayor, the approach they followed was to ask the community for their help, as opposed to the government going into an area and dictating to communities what was best for them.

"As we set our sights on taking Cape Town to the next level, we realise that the people of our city are our best asset," De Lille said.

"They are our eyes, ears, hands and



GIVING A HAND: Mayor Patricia de Lille joins women in Kewtown to clean up their area.

feet and we are proud to partner with them in finding solutions to the social ills in our communities."

Since the launch of the pilot project in July 2016, 787 women have been recruited, trained and deployed in

nine areas to help uplift city-owned rental stock areas through addressing environmental and socio-economic challenges.

Thus far Women in Rental Stock teams have been deployed to Athlone,

Hanover Park, Lotus River, Lavender Hill, Manenberg, Uitsig, Ravensmead, Ocean View and Macassar.

The women are employed through the expanded public works programme.

They are tasked with identifying and

helping to address safety concerns in their environment, providing home-based care services to the elderly and identifying individuals at risk of social challenges like truancy, substance abuse and domestic violence.

"The programme empowers the women in several ways, including through training and education in disaster risk management, foetal alcohol syndrome, domestic violence, transport, wellness and health promotion, solid waste management, self-defence, assisting people with disabilities, and leadership," the mayor said.

The programme is said not only to be about improving the aesthetics of the areas through cleaning and expediting maintenance issues, but it is also designed to help mend the social fabric of these communities.

"There are so many people who need help, but they don't necessarily know where to turn," De Lille said.

"Our women are ambassadors who provide the link between the problem and the potential solution."

The project has brought about numerous positive changes in the respective communities, such as the walking bus initiated by the women where they escort pupils to school in the mornings and afternoons because the main cause of truancy is concerns about safety.

The Girls Matter Initiative was started in Hanover Park, where 10 girls attended workshops with the goal of preventing them from dropping out of school.

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