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Long road ahead for women in construction



Public Works Minister Thulas Nxesi says more work remains to be done for women to progress up the construction industry ladder.

According to the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) statistics, there are 437 women-owned contractors in grades 7 to 9, which is only 1% of the total 40 065 women-owned contractors, the vast majority of whom are still in grade 1.

Speaking at a session jointly hosted by the Department of Public Works and CIDB in Pretoria on Friday, Nxesi said although the figures are not enough, progress is slowly being made. “There is a lot of work to be done in terms of training and mentoring, and the CIDB plays a major role here, as well as in incubation and providing opportunities from the bigger players in the sector and from government.

“We have to make the most of what we have including using policy, regulation and advocacy to support women contractors,” Nxesi said.

The Minister said he will start by imploring the big contractors in the higher grades to support women through subcontracting work.

“The PPR [Preferential Procurement Regulations] 2017 now allows departments to designate tenders, amongst others, for emerging companies that are at least 51% black [and women-owned],” Nxesi said.

Nxesi said women contractors need to ensure that they are registered with the CIDB and that they are registered on the Central Supplier Database of National Treasury and have their tax matters in order with SARS. “If all of this is in order, then they are eligible to tender,” he said.

According to Nxesi, in the first quarter of financial year 2018/19, his department awarded 30 tenders (above R500 000), with a combined value of R54 million, to women-owned enterprises, mostly in construction. The department has also awarded 578 quotations (below R500 000) with a combined value of R43.5 million to women-owned enterprises.

“As Public Works, we are also guided by the CIDB, which has developed standards to support procurement in terms of building development goals into contracts,” Nxesi said.

Getting rid of corruption

Public Works has taken a hard stance on poor performing contractors that tarnish the image of the industry and has established its Restriction Committee, which will restrict service providers from doing business with government if they breach contract conditions or are involved in any fraudulent or corrupt acts.

“This is in line with the stance of President Ramaphosa in seeking to root out fraud and corruption. It will also contribute to ensuring that ethical standards are maintained in the sector, which must be good for the construction industry in general,” Nxesi said.

He said his department is committed to supporting women contractors and to encouraging other client government departments to do likewise.

CIDB board chairperson Nonkululeko Sindane said there is a need to celebrate women who are in construction.

“We need to acknowledge that there are many ways to get in the industry. Even though there are challenges, it is possible.”

Sindane said women have contributed and continue to contribute to the economy.

“I am impressed that women constructors are also getting work,” she said.

The CIDB as an implementing entity for Department of Public Works tasked with driving enhanced delivery management, capacity improvement and contractor development in the construction industry through strategic interventions and partnerships to ensure quality and durability of buildings on behalf of the State.