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CIDB Puts Women In Construction Under The Spotlight

From **Construction Industry Development Board**. To celebrate Women's' Month, the **Construction Industry Development Board** (CIDB) held a Women's Breakfast at the Sheraton Hotel in Pretoria in August. Joined by Public Works minister Thulas Nxesi as a guest speaker, the primary agenda was developing women in the construction industry.

The breakfast, a vital platform joining women from across the industry, provided an opportunity to start a meaningful discussion on how best government, industry and the cidb can continue to support the growth of women in construction, providing them with much needed connections to ensure they are moved to the front of the line.

According to the latest cidb Annual Construction Monitor Transformation, the number of women-owned contractors in cidb Grades 2 to 6 has decreased, but the number of women-owned cidb Grades 7 to 9 - medium to large - contractors has increased. Women-owned contractors amount to around 30 percent of all contracting enterprises on the cidb Register of Contractors.

'The cidb had no figures for women-owned contractors Grades 7 to 9 in 2004 because there were hardly any. Today, they make up 24 percent of our members and while this is still not progress, we consider it good enough to celebrate as progress none the less. These women are the flagship of our industry and our democracy, which allows women to become who they want to be in the economy and society. However, they now also have a huge role to play in pulling up women contractors from the lower grades,' says Nonkululeko Sindane, cidb board chairperson.

'It is important and necessary for these women to look after those who are still growing. I think we can all agree that you do not get to the top without help from others. We must support their development, share our skills, ethics, competitiveness and wisdom, and also treat them well through joint ventures and sub-contracts and of course, pay them on time.'

Speaking on behalf of the Department of Public Works, Minister Nxesi congratulated the cidb on the success it has achieved so far in the growing number of women contractors, but agrees that more work needs to be done in terms of training and mentoring.

'Our economy is at best sluggish and, while we have narrowly missed a recession, it is in these kinds of conditions that construction is hit harder than other sectors. This also plays a role in the success of women in the

industry, but we cannot just throw our hands up in despair. We must make the most of what we have and use policy, regulation and advocacy to support women contractors and ensure their numbers continue to rise.'

The Department of Public Works currently has programmes and policies in place to guide its procurement regulations.

'The new Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act regulations allow us to designate tenders to emerging companies and those that are more than 51% black-owned, where 30 percent mandatory subcontracting is implemented in tenders above R30 million. We have also been advised that we can designate tenders for women, allowing us to continue to support this group with the appropriate legal and policy framework,' continues Nxesi. 'As client departments we have an obligation to translate legislation into procurement policies which consciously support women owned contractors.'

The minister also urged large contractors to play their part in growing women in construction through subcontracting, thus ensuring the continued development of small to medium contractors.