

Businesswomen empowered at Summit

By Xpress Reporter

Women led and owned emergent contractors in KwaZulu-Natal were presented with opportunities and construction industry advice during a two-day summit solely aimed at empowering women in the Built Environment sector on 16 and 17 August 2019.

The Summit took place at Hampshire Hotel, Ballito, and is the brainchild of the Department of Human Settlements and Public Works which between them disburse almost a R6 billion Budget for infrastructure development and housing provision in the province.

The summit forms part of province-wide events commemorating Women's Month. The two-day Summit featured informative presentations and robust discussions towards the radical socio-economic empowerment of women through infrastructure delivery.

Speaking at the event, KwaDukuza Acting Mayor, Councillor Dolly Govender, paid tribute to Mama Nokukhanya Luthuli, describing her as a woman of fortitude.



OFFICIALS: KwaDukuza Municipality Acting Mayor, Councillor Dolly Govender (left) with officials at a two-day Summit held in Ballito

“Programme Director, I felt it was fitting that we pay a special tribute to Mama Nokukhanya and also unearth her story so that we as women begin to realise our pivotal role in society,” said Govender.

She added that Mama Nokukhanya was an outstanding farmer and grew her own vegetables, sugar cane and fruits. She supplemented her family's income through her farming activities during the time that

Albert Luthuli became Chief of Groutville and in later years, when political activities demanded much of his time.

“She never forgot the importance of grounding oneself in the basics of what society needs, but also, at a higher level, having a clear vision of the future we need.

“She led her community into each working day by waking up before anyone else ‘There goes MaBhengu. The fields are calling us’, the other

farmers of Groutville would say. She stayed loyal to Chief Albert Luthuli and to his dreams for South Africa, even after his death in 1967.

“Honourable Nkonyeni, the world of construction is being seen more and more as an attractive career choice for many South African women and an entrepreneurial opportunity for young women seeking to be employed and earn a living.”

Govender said that the construction industry in

South Africa plays a pivotal role in the economy of the country.

“The industry employs some 40% of the country's population, however, male employment far supersedes the employment of females. Because of the many boundaries women face in the industry they turn to becoming entrepreneurs and opening smaller construction companies, which bring along with it its own challenges. The industry is competitive and the rate of business turnover is high. The question therefore is do women have the necessary skills to advance in the industry?”

She said that she is confident that the Summit will introduce them to many women who have advanced and beaten all sorts of challenges thus becoming successful business owners and leaders in the industry who will in turn capacitate those who are emerging.

“It is also time for men to recognise these women and to work together to grow the industry and ensure that women also have a place at the boardroom table, are heard and recognised for their achievements and growth.