

Women making moves in the construction industry

More Matshediso

The construction industry has for a long time been perceived as the domain of men but thanks to pioneering women and organisations such as South African Women in Construction (SAWIC), this perception is being challenged.

SAWIC is a non-profit organisation that was established in 1999 to empower women to gain access to business opportunities, training, finance and networks in the construction industry.

The nationwide organisation has worked very closely with various government departments and entities over the years, including Human Settlements, Public Works and state-owned enterprises, to promote, support and uplift women in the sector.

One woman who has benefited from the initiative is Keamogetswe Kuypers (37), who is



■ Keamogetswe Kuypers received the assistance she needed from SAWIC to start her business.

the owner of Tshegadi Services, which specialises in general building and civil engineering.

“I gained most of my experience through a co-operative called Lentsoe Labasadi, which I found through SAWIC in 2016,” she said, explaining that the SAWIC model encourages various women-owned

co-operatives to work together on construction projects, by subcontracting into a job. “In that way, the organisation is able to teach and develop many women at once.”

After gaining suitable experience, Kuypers started Tshegadi Services.

Kuypers grew up in Soweto

and studied a BCom in Accounting at Rhodes University in the Eastern Cape. She also has a BCom Hons in Taxation from the University of Johannesburg.

Before embarking on her entrepreneurial journey, she worked for various multinationals and local companies in

the mining, food and beverages, consulting, manufacturing and automotive sectors.

Amongst the things that motivated her to start a construction company is the need for low-cost housing.

“I am hoping that we can design houses that are easy to extend while relieving the public purse and reducing lead times,” she said.

In March, Kuypers was elected as the Provincial Treasurer of SAWIC in Gauteng.

One of her aims is to address gender equality in construction and other male-dominated sectors. “Partnering with men and teaching them about labour inequality, especially unpaid labour and how it affects women at home and in the workplace, is the only way to achieve equality,” she said.

For Kuypers, equality means an appreciation of the skill set you bring to an environment without being expected to do unpaid labour as a result of your gender. **U**