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# Leaking roof sets construction entrepreneur on new journey

My first project was at my own house, says Tshoke

By **Koena Mashale**

A leaking roof at home triggered an idea for construction industry businesswoman Juliet Tshoke to enter the roof repair sector and she never looked back.

Soweto-born Tshoke went to the extent of co-founding professional body for the sector – Professional Roof Repair and Waterproofing Association – in 2019.

She shares how she saw an opportunity in the roofing industry as the quality of workmanship in the sector was declining.

“My first project was at my own house,” Tshoke revealed.

“When there was a leaking situation at my house the people I had called to come fix it didn’t do a proper job. I believe that if you want something done right, you need to do it yourself.”

Tshoke is now a big player in the integrated sector of roofing, roof repairs and waterproofing within the construction industry.

“We shouldn’t only be focusing on construction in building terms. I have built and expanded my own house. I can tell you what happens from the foundation, the wall plates up to my roof,” she said.

Tshoke was among hundreds of women who attended the Women Indaba conference in Kimberley, Northern Cape, at the weekend, which was hosted by the department of human settlements.

The conference focused on the theme “accelerating socio-economic opportunities for women empowerment.”

Clara Sodulash-Mwenz, 57, who was a speaker at the conference, was granted her first project through the South African Women in Construction as a main contractor to build low-cost houses in Palm Springs, Gauteng, in 2004 and 2005.

“I built only a 100 houses. Whenever I see those houses when I pass by, a great sense of joy and pride fills me [to see those houses still intact].”

Sodulash-Mwenz, of Sedibeng district, said one of the biggest criticisms she got from working on



**Juliet Tshoke is co-founder Professional Roof Repairs and Waterproofing Association.**



**Thandi Solo is a contractor and developer at a company called Atisa Bokgabane.**



**Clara Sodulash-Mwenz, Nthoto Chonel and Lungile Zuma, executive members of the South African Women In Construction at the Women Indaba in Kimberley. / KOENA MASHALE**

the project was not from peers but from the houses’ beneficiaries.

“I have received criticism in terms of progress that was delayed by the lack of resources and material. If I am a beneficiary, expecting someone to finish my house, especially if I live in a shack, I’m going to constantly want to know what’s going on with my house.”

A panelist at the conference,



**Rosemary Rodrigues of Griqua Aboriginal.**

Thandi Solo, said she was an accountant before she went into construction. She shared that initially her intention was to assist her husband with his company.

“I resigned in 2010 and started helping my husband full-time and three years later, I started going on my own after participating in a development programme organised by the department of public works.”

“During the incubation peri-

od, I learnt a lot but at the same time, it is difficult to come out of that [programme] and enter the real world,” said Solo.

She said one of the many challenges she experienced while starting up was the perception that she knew nothing because she was a woman.

“They [industry men] sit at tables you’re not invited to and make deals where our input isn’t valued,” said Solo.

High commissioner of the Griqua Aboriginal, Rosemary Rodrigues, said she stayed true to her culture of strong women by going back to how the KhoiSan women used to build their homes.

“Dagga reeds were used to build Khoisan homes and they used that as it was one of the strongest materials accessible to them. We want to bring that technique back and we have signed an agreement with a university in Italy which will help with development of hemp blocks.”

“The [hemp] blocks homes are sustainable and strong. They don’t burn while they keep the building cool.”

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