



**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE CBE
WEBINAR**

**DELIVERED BY DEPUTY MINISTER NOXOLO KIVIET
05 OCTOBER 2022
VIRTUAL**

Salutations

Greetings to all the participants in this important meeting.

Hillary Clinton once said I quote “**women are the untapped reservoir of talent in the world.**”

It is my pleasure to address you today at this important meeting that should really provide us with a platform to thrash out one of the most

pressing issues on the transformation front. That pressing issue is the topic of this meeting: Women empowerment and gender equality.

I want to argue from the outset that this meeting is about the glaring failure of the built environment sector to empower women professionals. Actually I am not correct in saying that. I am being kind. The correct assertion is that the sector has not merely not empowered women, it actually has and is still keeping women underneath its boots.

If colleagues feel I am being harsh, well, the statistics tell a story. A horror story of failure, after years of freedom and supposed equality, the numbers are truly underwhelming. The theme of this webinar is “Women Forward: Shattering the Glass Ceiling” One is tempted to retort: Ja Right! This sarcastic retort is engendered by a sense of anger and disappointment that after such a long time and so many promises to empower women, the numbers of built environment professionals are so minuscule.

The CBE is a statutory body that has been in existence since the enactment of the Council for the Built Environment Act No. 43 of 2000. The CBE is responsible for regulating the following six Councils for the Built Environment Professions (CBEPs) - Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Engineering, Property Valuers, Project and Construction Management, and Quantity Surveying – and through memoranda of understanding these also include Town and Regional Planning, Land Surveying and Environmental Assessment.

The Act mandates the CBE to ensure consistent application of policies by the CBEPs. Although legislation recognises the CBEP as regulators of their respective professions, the CBE acts as an umbrella body whose functions are focused on facilitation and coordination across the

professions. The built environment professions and associated skills are of national interest and key to existing government infrastructure, meeting the infrastructure target set out in the National Development Plan (NDP) and the country's Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (ERRP).

Twenty-seven years later into democracy and post the covid-19 pandemic, our country remains as unequal as ever. Our country is characterised by rampant poverty and where people continue to live in penury and without employment, with the majority being the youth. For a long time South Africa was said to be second only to Brazil in terms of inequality. I wonder whether we have not overtaken Brazil as the most unequal society on earth.

Ladies and gentlemen, South Africa's Built Environment is arguably one of the sectors in the country that is most in need of transformation. Recent statistics and the latest Built Environment Throughput Report the 2014 to 2019 version is quiet revealing. It shows that the Councils for Built Environment Professionals (CBEPs) are still largely dominated by white males, at registered professional levels. The statistics that has just been reported by the councils during the last financial year 2021-22 leaves nothing to be desired in terms of transformation of the industry. Despite a high demand for professionals, many professionals remain stuck in the skills pipeline. Some of the hindrances include but are not limited to (i) a sharp decline in the enrolment and completion of qualifications of built environment students and graduates (ii) women account for more than 50% of the South African population; however, the professional registration statistics indicate that only 13% of professionals registered with the CBEPs are women. Let that statistic sink in ladies and gentlemen: the professional registration statistics indicate that only 13% of professionals registered with the CBEPs are women.

At the end of August we were invited to a heart-warming ceremony of celebrating women contractors during the CIDB Empowerment and Recognition of Women in Construction Awards. It was a heart-warming ceremony tinged with sadness because, even though women were being celebrated, the statistics still revealed that women are still grossly under-represented in the higher grades of the CIDB register of contractors. Statistics on the CIDB Register of Contractors show a skewed picture where women still occupy low percentage of ownership in the higher grades of 7 to 9, while the bulk of participation is concentrated in lower grades.

Women constitute half the population of the country. It is only right that they should claim their rightful and equitable share of economic activity, particularly in the built environment, where their numbers are still lower than desirable. As a country, our development can only be accelerated by the contribution of all our available productive capacity not just half of it. Michelle Obama echoed what Mrs Clinton said by saying I quote ***“there is no limit to what we as women can accomplish”***. All we need ladies and gentlemen is to tap on our reservoir and release the potential in us. It is therefore significant to continue celebrating and supporting the expanded role of women and diversity in the Built Environment given that women are still significantly under-represented. The CBE’s programme of addressing Women Empowerment in the Built Environment over long term is laudable in driving home the point that women’s issues cannot only be confined to just the month of August, instead it is an ongoing issue in need of redress.

With the background that has been sketched above, it is fair that we should now focus on what is being done and what should be done to

correct this ugly picture of the situation. The CBE's third Transformation Indaba held in 2019 produced a number of key resolutions in relation to challenges impeding Transformation in the sector. The CBE is attempting to address these challenges to ensure transformational progress; the main vehicle to drive these interventions are the Transformation Collaborative Committees (TCCs), constituted in collaboration with our Department. One such intervention, the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Transformation Collaborative Committee (WEGE TCC)", was established in terms of the following sections of the CBE Act:

- *3c: promote ongoing human resources development in the built environment;*
- *3d: facilitate participation by the built environment professions in integrated development in the context of national goals;*
- *4f: provide advice and consultation on national policy that could impact the built environment, human resource development in relation to the built environment professions, and the recognition of new professions;*

Moreover, the CBE has also developed a Broad-Based Transformation Strategy for the South African Built Environment. This strategy been adapted specifically for the Built Environment context. It details the framework that needs to be put in place in order to realise the process of change and to achieve the desired outcomes of Transformation. The Strategy is founded on eight steps or pillars which need to be put in place and made functional in order to realise the process of change and achieve our transformational goals. These pillars are:

1. A formal structure, the Transformation Collaborative Committee
2. Direction and coordination

3. Identify obstacles and hindrances
4. Set targets
5. Identify and promote enablers
6. Prioritise quick wins
7. Monitor and evaluate
8. Report

The WEGE TCC contributes to Government's Priority 2: education, skills, and health and Priority 3: Economic transformation and job creation. Furthermore, the work of the committee is aligned with DPWI's Transformed Built Environment outcome and the National Development Plan Implementation Plan (NDPIP) towards skilled built environment professionals and increased ownership and participation by historically disadvantaged individuals.

We recommit ourselves as a democratic government to develop a sustainable economy, state infrastructure through a proficient Built Environment that is women inclusive and progressively improves the quality of life for all South Africans. The CBE's WEGE TCC is involved in the following interventions to demonstrate this commitment:

We are committed to closer engagement with our stakeholders in this process of accelerated action. These stakeholders are women and our engagements will be actioned through a series of Women Empowerment and Gender Equality (WEGE) Webinars, like this one. In the history of CBE, this is the first time we will be hosting a series of webinars which will

focus on how to generate sustainable, innovative, and inclusive solutions to challenges faced by women interested in, or already pursuing careers in the Built Environment.

I also wish to congratulate CBE for organizing such a webinar whose main objectives are:

- i. To provide a platform for women to participate in interactive and hands-on sessions to obtain the skills of the future and stay ahead of the competition
- ii. To highlight the barriers and devise practical solutions to address challenges faced by women in the built environment professions
- iii. To profile women pioneers and trail blazers in the industry
- iv. To lobby for the empowerment and career advancement of women in the built environment professions

I do congratulate the ladies and the gentlemen that CBE Gender Advice Desk that has been recently set up (30 March 2022) whose main aim is to provide the Built Environment, construction and property sectors with a central point of contact for industry related requests for advice or guidance on queries and complaints relating to gender, youth or persons living with disabilities. The CBE Gender Advice Desk will establish a database on the nature and frequency of requests for advice and complaints received to inform and advise relevant stakeholders accordingly. An awareness campaign is underway to sensitise the built environment, construction, and property industries about this platform.

The CBE has an annual Performance Plan Target we are eyeing with a hawk's eye that it be successfully implemented by the end of this financial year.

I call on women, youth and people living with disabilities to make use of opportunities that are provided by CBE, through its WEGE TCC where partnered with Feenix, which is a crowd funding platform connecting indebted higher education students to potential funders. Feenix has the potential to provide these students with the funding they need to complete their studies, obtain their degree and become qualified professionals in the built environment. The CBE intends to extend its engagements beyond Feenix, to further partner with its various stakeholders and industry role players to provide educational support, capacity building opportunities and continuous professional development initiatives to address challenges that hinder youth development and participation within the built environment sector.

Lastly, the CBE through the WEGE TCC is also conducting a feasibility study of resuscitating the DPW&I Women Empowerment Advisory Council (WEAC). This Council will bring together all the structures that have been set up to drive women empowerment across different sectors of the built environment. No effort should be spared in turning all the wonderful words, strategies and undertakings, into visible actions to make women empowerment a lived reality for woman professionals. I urge all the stakeholders in our industry to live this dream and bring it into reality.

I would like to wish all this webinar well in all the deliberations.

Enkosi, siyabulela, thank you.