



**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE ERWIC
AWARDS SPEECH**

DELIVERED BY DEPUTY MINISTER NOXOLO KIVIET

24 August 2022

Hilton Hotel Sandton

Programme Director

The Premier of KwaZulu-Natal Mama Nomusa Dube-Ncube

Chairperson of the board Ntate Kulile Nzo

Board members

CEO Ntate Bongani Dladla

Management of the CIDB

Leaders of industry bodies

Past and upcoming winners of the ERWIC awards

Women of the construction industry and guests

Ladies and gentlemen

[all other to be confirmed]

Hearty greetings to one and all who are attending this great ceremony of joy and satisfaction. **Joy** for imbokodo that are making steady progress in this tough industry. **Satisfaction** that women are being celebrated by their peers for all the good works and great strides that they are taking in this industry. Let me first congratulate our newly elected Premier of KwaZulu Natal, Mama Nomusa Dube-Ncube. ***Dube Elimthende, Dube ka Bayisa, Khushwayo, Mbuyazi ka Thekeli, ongathekeli kwa Ndodakazi. Uzwakele ndoda, Ongathekeli emizini emincane, Othekela emizini emikhulu!*** Your election gives me even greater pleasure to acknowledge since it has taken place during this month of August which has been set aside to celebrate strength, resilience and dedication of women in our country.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is a singular honour for me to share this day with you on this great occasion, as the women's month draws towards a close. We would remember that in 1956 when more than 20,000 South African women of all races staged a march on the Union Building protesting against the Pass Laws imposed on black women, they implemented a perfect display of nonracialism, led by formidable & strategic team of women such as Helen Joseph, Lilian Ngoyi, Rahima Moosa, Sophia Williams- De Bruyn to challenge a system meant to control women even further and reduce them to passive beings, at the mercy of men. We celebrate this year's Women Month under the theme: "Women's Socio-Economic Rights and Empowerment: Building Back Better for Women's Improved resilience". We must never forget that the struggles of women have since multiplied.

We all know that Rome was not built in one day and so too women of our country are continuously chipping away at all stumbling blocks to their progress and it is befitting that we celebrate them today as stakeholders of the construction industry. It also is a pleasure for me

because it gives us a chance to listen to their views and ideas on how we, together, can recalibrate this industry and put it at the centre of a resolution to the biggest challenges that our country is currently facing: unemployment, poverty and stalled development.

We understand that this ceremony is for celebrating exceptional achievements of women role models. We are also excited that these awards started during our first year in the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure and have grown in prestige and stature. The Empowerment and Recognition of Women in Construction Awards should indeed continue to grow, honouring the trailblazing women in the industry. These awards should always serve as a clarion call for gender transformation within the construction sector, showcasing the strength of women and serving as a vision of what women achieve when given the necessary support. Always remember, we multiply!

The continued growth and success of women in this industry calls for all role players to commit to the cause for women empowerment by providing tangible action, leadership and opportunities for women contractors to grow and thrive in our industry.

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 construction, 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.

Award winners demonstrate that women don't just have the potential to contribute. Given the opportunity, they excel in every sector and every aspect of economic activity, including construction where participation has largely been the preserve of men, and men remain the predominant majority.

We must remember women like Dr Thandi Ndlovu a Medical doctor and a pioneer for black women in construction. Dr Thandi became uncomfortable in treating patients in a shack and decided to build a facility where other doctors could also work from. Upon learning the ins and outs of the industry she decided to build her empire in construction. For her we must recognise that it was not only building a business but changing lives and providing dignified life for our people.

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. But what is really worrying is that the statistics show a decline of women ownership right across all grades between January 2021 and January 2022. For example in January 2021, the percentage of women ownership for grade 9 was 17% but this declined to 10% in January this year. This trend is the same as for grades 7 & 8, five and six, and two to four. For these grades the statistics are 24% in 2021 compared to 15% this year, 26% last year compared to 17% this year and 28% in January last year compared to 19% this year. These statistics show a grand decline of 9% between last year January and this year in January. These statistics are not at all endearing ladies and gentlemen. How do we change this picture? I read a book, ***21 Yaks and a Speedo: how to achieve your impossible by Lewis Pugh*** which I would love us to read because it directs us to channel our energies and focus forward "if the desire is deep enough, you'll get it done." This is the spirit that we need as women, especially young women.

Our economy is in the shadow of dark days where all seems hopeless with the natural disasters being the biggest contributor, Covid-19 and the recent floods that were in 3 of our provinces.

I want to urge all of us to be true and alive to the critical and crucial tasks facing us in this country. Built environment professionals need to come to help government to bring to fruition the goals of the Economic Reconstruction & Recovery Plan. The Infrastructure Investment Plan of Government is critical to the ERRP, in terms of creating jobs and bringing this industry back to its critical importance. The support to client Departments that CIDB is providing in the rollout of infrastructure projects which contributes to the ERRP, must be greatly enhanced and deepened. This is important because moving projects from planning to implementation creates jobs and prevents underspending by the client Departments. We also note that CIDB has partnered with National Treasury on the Jobs Fund to implement the Construction Industry Small and Medium Enterprise Development Project. We understand that this initiative is gaining traction but we urge a faster and sustained pace as the situation calls for increased agility in fighting the scourge of unemployment.

We are also aware of the CIDB BUILD Programme and that it has been started across the country. This Programme involves the application of the CIDB Standard for Enterprise Development and the CIDB Standard for Skills Development and the contribution to the BUILD Fund. We really want to see this BUILD programme implemented to the T because it has great targets including the direction of billions of rands to developing enterprises per year with developmental support. Most of this support should be directed to women contractors and their enterprises.

We need more innovation from our built environment professionals on a whole range of issues confronting this industry and the country. Advancing transformation of the built environment system continues to be a national priority. Our country cannot afford to relegate a large portion of its population to be part players in the reconstruction and

development of our country. Women are a vital component of the South African population.

We must move at a high speed, by taking the following steps. Firstly, we need to continuously improve our policy instruments to ensure that government's goal of giving women more access to infrastructure budgets is realised. In this regard we are looking forward to conclusion of the national Procurement Bill which will strengthen policy coherence and empower agencies of government to be more direct and deliberate in their procurement targeting, particularly of vulnerable groups, such as women, youth and the disabled.

The second important issue is that clients with infrastructure budgets need to be required to tighten their own internal procurement policies to be more deliberate about advancing women, at all material times. The CIDB must do more to support clients in understanding existing procurement laws and how within the framework of these laws, we can sharpen internal departmental policies to be gender-biased, right now!

The third point that needs to be top of mind is for us to be conscious & conscientious about breaking industry practices that are disempowering to women. At the heart of these practices are stereotypical beliefs and perceptions that performance excellence in construction has a gender. Good business acumen has no gender bias. History has proven that women are just as capable as their male counterparts, to lead successful businesses and this is true in any sector of the economy, including construction. They are achieving excellence as entrepreneurs, as professionals, as mentors, educators, and technical experts, just as well as their male counterparts.

This is the same history that on Friday the premiers of Northern Cape and Gauteng, Minister and I will be visiting Preiska power reserve

project. This is a project developed by Mahlako A Phahla investment which is a women owned consortium. This project seeks to take advantage of South Africa's competitive advantage in the renewable energy market, through its abundant solar and wind resources, to deliver technologies for hydrogen production and ammonia linked to renewable energy, storage and distribution, and contribute substantially to South Africa's socio-economic development objectives.

Lastly we need to change perception that the jobs in the built environment are reserved only for males. This means changing working environment and enable women to participate fully. Be conscious of the behaviour of male counterparts (construction workers who use bad language towards women) that intimidate women industry and just thinking that women cannot do other things.

We also need to continuously address the practice of late payments that is disempowering to emerging enterprises and particularly crippling to women enterprises that are already so underrepresented in construction.

It requires us as clients, particularly in the public sector to embrace technology more in construction projects, not just to improve efficiency and competitiveness of the industry, but also to increase opportunities for women.

The industry regulators need to be vigilant of another very destructive behaviour that some people may see as a quick way of climbing up the social, which is actually detrimental to their enterprises and their own self esteem. This issue is the phenomenon of fronting. We need to be vigilant against fronting because it retards progress and undermines the genuine efforts of bona fide women in construction.

We are aware of the efforts that our public entities like the CIDB are making in developing the national prerogative of women empowerment

but as I have said earlier this requires us to garner all the resources at our disposal to support the development of women contractors. I am encouraged that the CIDB BUILD Programme is beginning to take off. It must lead development in this regard.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all the winners of these prestigious awards, who will be honoured today. And also, congratulate all the women who entered the contest for recognition in the 2022 awards. It takes courage and a great sense of confidence in your own abilities, to step forward, put yourself to the test and prove that you are the best, through these highly contested awards. Therefore, every woman who entered this contest is already a winner.

It is gratifying to know that the competition gets tougher each year, and winners must work harder to earn their stripes. It makes achievements such as those that we are celebrating today much sweeter and our pride in women in construction greater.

Real empowerment is sustainable. We need to protect the sustainability of women who are making us proud in construction by achieving excellence, like these women who are being recognised today through the ERWIC awards. Industry stakeholders, particularly infrastructure clients have a duty to support women to thrive and be sustainable. We also need to encourage them by rewarding excellence in the way we award projects as clients.

I am encouraged that ERWIC awards winners are now taking it upon themselves to actively agitate for change, and to collaborate among themselves for success. This will ensure that they remain not just winners in a tough industry but role models for other women. Indeed, true empowerment comes from within. I applaud you for launching your

collaboration with a seminar involving key stakeholders this morning, to start industry dialogue on gender empowerment in the construction industry.

I would like to commend the CIDB, with the support of DPWI, for establishing the Empowerment and Recognition of Women in Construction Awards as a platform for women to elevate performance as a vehicle for success, and to be recognised for it. ERWIC awards shine the spotlight on the important role of all stakeholders in promoting and enhancing women empowerment in the construction industry. We must keep the conversation on gender empowerment alive and top of industry minds.

We applaud the judges of these awards for ensuring that we have the highest quality of winners in the awards and the steering committee for putting in place meaningful categories and criteria for winning these prestigious awards.

Once again congratulations to the 2022 winners. Well done and keep aiming for the stars.

As I close I wish to remind ourselves of the 2017 UN International Women's Day theme "EMPOWER A WOMAN, EMPOWER A NATION".

This theme echoes the words of a famous author, Erick S. Gray when he said I quote ***"Whatever you give a woman she will make greater. If you give her a sperm she will give you a baby If you give her a house she will give you a home If you give her groceries she will give you a meal If you give her your smile she will give you her heart. A woman multiplies and enlarges whatever is given to her"***

Enkosi, thank you, Siyabonga. CONGRATULATIONS TO CIDB & ALL
THE WINNERS 🙌🙌🙌🙌

As professionals in the built industry, we have a duty and a responsibility to help the Nation to transcend the current stormy waters, to also live up to what our constitution so profoundly implores all of us in its preamble “to improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person”. Our public entities in the built environment play an important role in concretising our tasks of providing policy leadership to the wider construction and property sectors.