



public works

Department:  
Public Works  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**Launch  
of the  
Department of Public Works  
Women Empowerment Advisory Committee**

*Diep en die Berg, Pretoria  
21 August 2015*

**Keynote Address:**

**TW Nxesi MP, Minister of Public Works**

## Protocol:

- Programme Director
- MEC (Ms Mayethula-Khoza: Gauteng Department of Infrastructure Development)
- Mayor (Not confirmed yet)
- DG and officials of the DPW
- Representatives of other government departments:
  - DHS
  - StatsSA
  - DPSA confirmed
- Chairs, CEOs and representatives of entities:
  - CIDB
  - CBE
  - IDT
  - Agreement SA
  - PSCC
  - CSCC
  - Construction SETA
- Professional, sectoral and other organisations:
  - BBCBE(Black Business Council in the Built Environment)

- NHBRC (National Home Builders Registration Council)
- SACPCMP (South African Council for Project and Construction Management Professions)
- NURCHA (National Urban Reconstruction and Housing Agency)
- Master Builders South Africa
- Sonke Gender Justice
- Tshwane Municipality
- Most importantly – women’s organisations:
  - SAWIC (South African Women in Construction)
  - WiEBEP (Women in Engineering and Built Environment)
  - AWIP (Association of Women in Property)
  - WPN (Women in Property Network)
  - WANFD (Women Achievement Network for Disability)
  - UJ WiEBE (University of Johannesburg in Engineering Built Environment)
  - SWiET (Students in Engineering Technology)

- DIVUSENI (Women with Disability Empowerment)
- DPW Women in SMS Forum
- Invited guests
- Ladies and gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to participate in this the launch of the Department of Public Works Women Empowerment Advisory Committee. My thanks to the organisers of this important event.

It is entirely appropriate that the launch takes place in August – Women’s Month – when we celebrate the contribution of women to the struggle for a free, democratic, non-racial and non-sexist South Africa. And we also take the time to remind ourselves that the struggle for gender equality is far from over.

In the time available I want to cover the following:

- To look briefly at the history of women's struggles in South Africa and why we celebrate August 9<sup>th</sup> as Women's Day: and then
- To consider the role of the newly-formed Women Empowerment Advisory Committee.

## **I. Women's Struggles in South Africa**

National Women's Day is celebrated each year on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August to commemorate the great march of 20,000 women to the Union Buildings on August 9<sup>th</sup> 1956 – so next year will be the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The march was organised by the non-racial Federation of South African Women to present a petition to government – signed by women all over the country - calling for the abolition of Pass Laws for women.

Of course this was not the first such protest. As early as 1912 a group of Black and Coloured women from the Orange Free State sent a petition against passes

to the then Prime Minister, Louis Botha. In 1913, having received no reply, the women resolved to stop carrying passes – resulting in their arrests.

Let us pause just to remember and honour some of those early initiatives and leaders:

- 1918 Bantu Women's League – founded by Charlotte Makeke
- 1933 National Council of African Women – again, first President: Charlotte Maxeke
- 1943 *I am ashamed to admit that the ANC only officially admitted women members in 1943*
- 1947 Transvaal All-Women's Union – led by Josie Mphama
- 1948 ANC Women's League – first president: Ida Mntwana
- 1954 Federation of South African Women – leaders included: Ray Alexander, Dora Tamana, Josie Mphama

- 1955 Black Sash – leaders included: Jean Sinclair, Ruth Foley
- 1975 Black Women’s Federation – led by Fatima Meer and Winnie Mandela
- 1981 The United Women’s Organisation – led by Dora Tamana, Mildred Lesi, Amy Thornton
- 1983 Natal Organisation of Women – led by Phumzile Mlambl, Nozizwe Madlala, Victoria Mxenge
- 1984 Federation of Transvaal Women – led by Sister Bernard Ncube, Jessie Duarte
- 1987 Relaunch: Federation of South African Women – General Secretary: Cheryl Carolus
- 1987 UDF Women’s Congress – led by Francis Baard
- 1991 Women’s National Coalition – convened by Frene Ginwala and Anne Letsepe
- 2006 Progressive Women’s Movement – organised by Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Mummy Japhta

So we are talking about a long history of organisation and struggle by South African women – both for national liberation – and to improve their conditions as women.

And yet today, after 20 years of democracy, despite many gains and advances, there are many areas of life – particularly in the economy – where women remain under-represented.

Statistics for South Africa indicate that:

- 60% of women live in poverty compared to 41% of men
- 40% of SA households are headed by women
- 75% of female-headed households are classified poor
- 60% of rural and 48% of urban African women are unemployed.

It is significant that, in listing its aims in 1954, the Federation of South African women listed its second



aim, just below political freedom, as follows: *“to strive for women to obtain the right to full opportunities for employment with equal pay and possibilities of promotion in all spheres of work.”*

So 70 years ago South African women were demanding full economic rights and equality.

So there is a sense that – in launching the Department of Public Works Women Empowerment Advisory Committee today – with the express intention of empowering women in the built environment sector – we are taking forward the demands of the women of 1954 when they called for full equality for women in every sphere of life – including the economy.

Now if this was a political meeting I would probably finish off by quoting from the SACP’s press release for Women’s Day – which would go something like this:

*We dip the Red banner in recognition of the heroic women who participated in and led the struggle - Dora Tamana, Bertha Mashaba, Lilian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Rahima Moosa, Albertina Sisulu, Sophie De Bruyn, and trade unionist Frances Baard who was also involved in the drafting of the Freedom Charter.*

*Throughout our struggle, women played a major role - Josie Mpama, Cissie Gool, Bettie Du Toit, Ray Alexander, Ruth First, Fatima Meer, Dorothy Nyembe and countless more. Women also swelled the ranks of the people`s army uMkhonto we Sizwe, and fought gallantly in the liberation struggle.*

*While we have made massive progress since 1994 in the transformation of gender relations, including social delivery, our society still remains largely patriarchal.*

*This is a result both of the pre-colonial patriarchal society which most of our people lived in and the social relations of capitalism in its historical context of*

*colonialism and apartheid. Under that regime, black women suffered threefold - the worst of class exploitation, gender domination and racist national oppression.*

*Therefore the entire struggle for gender emancipation requires the attention and activism of all of us, women and men, working as brothers and sisters in the struggle and struggling as comrades together to achieve complete social emancipation.*

*But once more women have a crucial role to play. The building of a progressive women`s movement is essential. Its importance cannot be over-emphasised. A strong ANCWL mobilising the rural poor, working class women, women workers and women in other sectors of society has a critical role to play:*

- in building such a movement; and*
- in the fight against the exploitation of women in any form in all centres of society!*

## **II. The launch of the Women Empowerment Advisory Committee**

That brings me to the main purpose of today's proceedings: to officially launch the Department of Public Works Women Empowerment Advisory Committee (DPWWEAC) and introduce its members to the Public Works stakeholders and the South African community at large.

As Minister of Public Works I have held consultative sessions with women organisations in the past, with the aim of establishing ways of ensuring that the Department responds to the plight of the marginalisation of women, while at the same time addressing the challenges of lack of transformation of the Construction and Property Industries.

After a series of consultations between the Department and women organisations, it was agreed that all

women organisations that are involved in the Built Environment and Property sectors would be invited to come together as a forum or advisory committee to the Department. The advisory committee will provide a voice for women's organisations in the built-environment, and its role will include:

- To provide technical advice to the Minister and the Department on issues of Women Empowerment in the Built Environment and the Property Sector.
- To establish the DPW Women Empowerment Advisory Committee (DPWWAC) that would represent all women organisations within the construction and property sectors and to chart a way forward for the establishment of a DPW Ministerial Accelerated Women Empowerment Programme (MAWEP)
- To develop the Terms of Reference for the DPWWAC to guide how the process will unfold.

- To advocate for the identification of projects from the existing DPW programmes that would form part of the DPW Ministerial Accelerated Women Empowerment Programme (MAWEP).
- To monitor and evaluate the implementation of the DPW Ministerial Accelerated Women Empowerment Programme (MAWEP)

The objectives of the DPW "Ministerial Accelerated Women Empowerment Programme (MAWEP)" include:

- To promote and facilitate the empowerment and active participation of women in the infrastructure delivery value chain through the allocation of set targets of the department's budget for women-owned companies (30% has been suggested as a target);
- To enhance entrepreneurial development and increase the number of women contractors, women property practitioners and built-environment

professionals, as well as women-owned SMME's providing goods and services to the department;

- To build partnerships with key sector stakeholders from government, NGOs and the private sector in implementing the DPW "Ministerial Accelerated Women Empowerment Programme" (MAWEP);
- To profile women in the Built-Environment and Property Sector.
- To identify challenges and skills shortages and develop support systems for emerging women contractors, women in property, built-environment professionals as well as other women service providers;
- To develop a research agenda on women-owned projects, monitor and evaluate progress on set targets towards women empowerment and thereby contribute to ending malpractices and fronting;

- To provide support and advise the Ministry and the Department of Public Works on providing and structuring opportunities for women.

The approach adopted by the DPW “Ministerial Accelerated Women Empowerment Programme” would entail both empowerment and participation in order to address the existing disparities in the Construction and Property industries.

Therefore, a gender approach that seeks to change existing conditions necessitates that women be empowered and afforded the opportunity to participate in the departmental development programmes and have equal access to economic resources to achieve a gender balance.

Key focus areas of the Programme include:

- Procurement
- Enterprise development
- Economic development



- Skills development
- Research and policy development.

In relation to procurement, the following critical areas are considered for intervention:

- Promote implementation and achievement of set targets for the proportion of departmental budget allocated to women-owned companies;
- Promote accessibility of tendering opportunities for women;
- An effective strategy for prompt payment of suppliers (which of course benefits all suppliers – particularly important for small suppliers and emerging contractors );
- Implement mechanisms to counter fronting and the abuse of targeting arrangements of the DPW and the Transformation Charters;

- Promote the compliance to the BBBEE Act and Transformation Charters;
- Enhance benefits of local communities, target where appropriate procurement from local enterprises; and
- Develop strategies - through the CIDB grading system - for the progression of women from emerging contractors to established contractors.

Skills development will focus on:

- HR and labour relations
- Planning, tendering and programming
- Business skills with emphasis on entrepreneurial and negotiation skills;
- Technical skills with emphasis on innovation;
- Legal compliance skills
- Procurement skills
- Contracts and contract management.

Research and policy development will take place in the following areas:

- Collection, documentation and compilation of research findings and recommendations pertaining to women in the construction industry for the use of planners, programme implementers and researchers.
- Follow-up and monitoring of the Women Empowerment Policy and its implementation.
- Carrying out impact research on other critical areas affecting the empowerment and advancement of women within the construction and property industries to gain a better understanding of the opportunities and challenges presented.

Let me conclude by assuring the DPW Gender Unit, the Women Empowerment Advisory Committee, and women in DPW and in the Built Environment generally – that this initiative has my full support – and that I expect everyone in Public Works and the entities – male and female – to work together to drive this programme and to support women empowerment. I thank you.