

**Minister of Public Works
Ms Stella Sigcau
13 August 1999**

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Women's Day celebration

**“ A new drive towards economic empowerment of women focusing on the construction industry”
“Women in the built environment - participation and challenges”**

Master of Ceremonies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, ...

The Eastern Cape has certainly proved to have a strong drive and conviction in respect of the role, the contribution and participation as well as the upliftment of women.

Perhaps it is the calibre of us women from the Eastern Cape that is making its mark!

I know that women in this Province have suffered greatly in the past, they have been mistreated, abused and discriminated against. Yet it is these women who have managed to house, feed and educate our children, to instil with them values and aspirations, and to knit a community structure strong enough to survive the harshest of times, and strong enough to support each other in times of need.

In the aftermath of Women's Day, I would like to share with you some thoughts and suggestions on women in the built environment.

I would like us to reflect on women's participation in construction: The current, the realistic and the possible. Other speakers will deal with the future of women in construction in more detail - for now we will only identify a few of the very real challenges, and I will share with you, in broad terms, some of the programmes and projects in which the Ministry and Department of Public Works are engaged to ensure that women are integrated into accelerated development and delivery initiatives, working from the construction and property industries.

When I think about women in construction, I have a picture of traditional women, building their houses. It is so sad to think that this traditional occupation of women has not come to its natural fruition in active participation in the formal construction industry. Why did women not move in this direction spontaneously? Why are there so few qualified and practising women architects, engineers, quantity surveyors, planners, valuers and other professionals or technical experts within the built environment? What has happened to our skills?

The recent report tabled by the Commission on Gender Equality labelled construction, along with mining, as the two industries least likely to promote the representativity of women.

The few women actively involved in the construction industry are holding the torch (of hope) for the many who have the potential but who are still prevented to participate by the male-composition of the industry. Our tertiary institutions of learning also are now acknowledging that a redress in terms of gender equality has become inevitable in the composition of student numbers in these fields.

Within communities where sexism and oppression of women are still perpetuated, progress is slowing down because the power of women's contribution has not yet been unlocked. An integrated approach involving the Public Works, Labour and Education departments should embark on an awareness programme that will attract women into this sector. Bursaries targeting women in construction can also be used as an incentive to attract women into this industry.

The Department of Public Works is poised to play even a larger role in championing the cause of women in construction. As one of the founder members of the South African Women in Construction (SAWiC), an initiative of the Development Bank of Southern Africa, the Department, through my Office, will strengthen efforts to empower and grow women in the built environment.

Despite the odds, women in this sector have proved their ambition to be worthy players in the mainstream economy of the country. One such a woman is Thuli Manana, who already has been recognised as an essential role-player by the industry.

The Department of Public Works is committed to developing the emerging contractors, including women, in

the South African construction industry. A broad departmental programme entitled "creating an enabling environment in the reconstruction, growth and development of the construction industry" was articulated recently in the Department's published white paper for the construction industry. The Emerging Contractor Development Programme (ECDP), as an integral part of the overall Construction Industry Development Programme (CIDP), was developed to build capacity of the emerging contractors and to enhance their capability.

The CIDP aims to bring synergy among key role players in the construction industry. These include the Department of Public Works, technically competent emerging contractors, relevant industry associations, training providers and other organisations committed to the achievements of ECDP objectives.

The Emerging Contractor Development Programme has 1200 contractors registered on the database, of which only 7% are women. And most of these women are involved in the lesser support side of the industry by providing cleaning, horticulture and catering services. Less than ten women groups are actively engaged in construction work.

In spite of the indicting statistics, women contractors are proving their worth in the Eastern Cape. Bayethe projects is owned by women and the company profited R297 441, 29 from the ECDP since August 1998. As emerging contractor, Bayethe is registered for the provision of the following activities:

- Plumbing
- Solid water removal
- Domestic water
- Fencing
- General electrical works
- Painting
- Road works and Site cleaning

Another women-owned company has recently won a tender amounting to R187 025, 64 - pending the submission of technical capability and surety. This contractor is registered under the following fields:

- General building works
- Glazing
- Painting.

It has been identified that the most common listed stumbling block in the procedure to win contracts, is the preparation of quotations by women contractors.

Whereas this appears as a generic problem affecting all emerging contractors, our helpdesks have found that the problem is more pronounced among women contractors. To expedite the implementation of the ECDP, helpdesks were set up in Bloemfontein, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Kimberley, Johannesburg and Durban. The six regional offices are the operational arms of the Department of Public Works and are responsible for the continuous client relations and service delivery - explaining policies and processes and offering other assistance to the emerging contractors as well. Each helpdesk has a staff of two: a manager and an assistant who maintains the database and provides other supporting services. The database categorises contractors in three bands, according to their ability to manage contracts in the following price brackets:

- Category1: Maximum limit of value of work is R30 000
- Category2: Maximum limit of value of work is R200 000
- Category3: Maximum limit of value of work is R2million.

The programme provides access to training for emerging contractors. The training modules have been developed in conjunction with the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

The ECDP also identifies and negotiates better deals with potential moneylenders to enable ease of access to finance by the emerging contractors.

The ECDP compliments the Department of Public Works' Affirmative Procurement Programme (APP) and empowers the emerging contractors to take advantage of the APP. Consequently some small contractors are developed to rise to the roles of principal contractors instead of the traditional sub-contractor role. The APP

was developed to facilitate wider access to government contracts. It targets the previously disadvantaged individuals and gives more weight to women candidates.

The ECDP with its three categories is an entry level. Graduates are expected to enter the Strategic Projects Initiative (SPI) programme. The SPI demands a higher level of expertise and capacity to develop and operate as prime contractor. The Kokstad Prison is one of the Department of Public Works' Strategic Project Initiatives. There is a large number of women who are actively involved in the building of the Kokstad Prison. They are mainly involved in plastering, painting and a few in plumbing.

Another group of women, the Soshanguve Bakgoni Women in Construction, which is a product of the Women in Construction, have developed into big a group and are actively involved in the construction of the Maputo Corridor, the road leading to Maputo through Mpumalanga.

Construction is still by all accounts a male domain and meaningful women participation in the industry still lacks systematic support.

The Community Based Public Works Programme

The Community Based Public Works Programme (CBPWP) is a government initiative driven by the national Department of Public Works. The CBPWP is based on the principles of job creation, poverty alleviation and the creation of productive and sustainable community assets. The programme relies strongly on intergovernmental alliances as well as partnerships with local authorities, line departments, non-governmental organisations and the private sector. The programme focuses on rural areas.

The CBPWP involves a lot of construction related work. There is a need for training and support measures to enable women.

Since its inception in 1994 the programme has been constantly reviewed to achieve maximum refinement and realignment. Categories of project types are:

- Directly productive assets (e.g. community gardens, craft markets)
- Access to trade and services (e.g. access roads)
- Labour saving (e.g. creches)
- Social cohesion (e.g. community centres) and
- Environmental (e.g. erosion prevention and spring protection).

The programme targets poverty pockets with an emphasis on youth, the disabled and women as specified target groups.

Instead of funding single projects on a one-community-one-project basis, the Department has adopted the principle of clustering. This means that projects are clustered together to reinforce one another in order to ensure maximum impact and direct benefit. For example, a typical cluster could involve an irrigated community garden, a community market, a taxi rank and a road linking the garden to the taxi rank and the market.

The Department took a decision to engage local government as implementing agents of the CBPPW. This means that the funds for the CBPWP are channelled through the District and Regional Councils. The advantages of this approach are:

- Planning occurs closer to the ground, allowing for a community driven implementation process
- The objective of helping build the capacity of local authorities is served.

There are three levels at which women have been involved in the CBPWP, namely:

- Governing the implementation: women have been encouraged to participate in project steering committees.
- In the Eastern Cape province 42% of steering committees are women.
- Construction of assets: labour intensive methods are favoured in the construction of assets and women have, so far, constituted 41% of the workforce in the CBPWP in the Eastern Cape.

Usage of the end product: women are also playing a role in the operation and management of the assets after completion.

Some of the successes of the CPBWP in the Eastern Cape includes that projects have been created to improve the community infrastructure and generate income, while social stability has been improved in the violence-torn areas of Qumbu and Tsolo through getting the communities to work together. The Eastern Cape is one of the poorest provinces in the country. Its problems are compounded by the inherent infrastructural shortcomings such as the separation of the centres of activity and information from the communities. This affects women who must engage in developmental and income generating activities but take care of the household as well. The level of literacy and skills are low in the province, particularly among rural women.

In the 1997-98 financial year, the Department of Public Works funded projects in the Qumbu and Tsolo regions of the Kei District Council. These projects were completed in March 1999.

Currently, the Department is financing project clusters in the District Councils of Amatola, Kei, Stormberg and Wild Coast.

Projects in excess of R5, 1 million were initiated by women and are expected to be run by them after completion. These projects include:

- Dwesa Cultural Centre and Amazizi Cultural Centre in the Amatola District Council
- Zingcuka Community Garden and a Multi-purpose Centre, Lumphindo Craft Centre and Poultry Project in the Wild Coast District Council
- Tabase Community Garden in the Kei District Council.

For the future, negotiations are in process with the Western District Council with a view to funding more projects within this Council's area of jurisdiction in the 1999-2000 financial year.

The Department of Public Works will embark on a process of meeting with various line departments in the Eastern Cape with a view to achieve:

- General support of the concept of clustering within the province
- General acceptance of the notion of targeting women or women-headed households in government development initiatives.

Project facilitators will introduce regular District Workshops with a gender flavour. These workshops will be attended by councillors, amakhosi and members of the community.

Training on the Ownership, Operation, Management and Maintenance of community assets will be provided to enable communities, especially women, to sustain their operations.

Looking at the property and asset management pattern by women, we have to acknowledge that Women's participation in property investment and ownership, in particular that of black women, is often non-existent or limited. Some of the contributory factors are that traditional property ownership is along the male lineage and that males are often considered as the head of a household with property registered on their names.

Women also often lack resources and information to enable them to fully participate in property ownership investment.

There are no women property valuers, property investment analysts and only few conveyancers and senior property managers. Current statistics indicate that the number of qualified Black Women valuers is zero.

Women's involvement in fixed property seem to be mainly as estate agents and cleaners of buildings.

The Department of Public Works is formulating an empowerment policy which will address amongst other things:

- Distorted property ownership patterns
- Women's participation in property investment and ownership

- Women's participation in fixed property disciplines and professions
- Women's participation in all aspects of fixed property aspects where the government \ the State is involved.

Successes in this sector are very limited but nevertheless notable. Some of these include the fact that Black property practitioners in Gauteng have formed an Institute and that this entity, in 1996 contributed substantially in the formulating and drafting of the White Paper - Public Works Towards the 21st Century.

It is also encouraging to observe that since its inception this Institute has always had women in the executive.

Within the Department of Public Works as well, the Land Affairs Board which advises the Minister of Public Works with regard to property values and property transactions, had a woman vice chairperson for 2 years from 1994-1996.

The challenges of training and empowering women to participate meaningfully in the property and asset management sector remains.

The next four years will see major changes and strides to encourage and support women to participate in these sectors.

Projects like the valuer-in-training and town-planner-in-training initiative will support these, within the Department of Public Works.

Various property disposal, property leasing, property acquisition and property management projects and tenders flowing from the Department will target women and other previously disenfranchised people, in general.

To all women interested in the built environment, the challenges remain to keep abreast of new developments, to obtain sufficient information, to become a technological literate and to continue the networking processes. Then alone can we meaningfully learn from counterparts and contribute substantially.

We have to take events and opportunities like today further, right to the work face, and make sure that we participate.

CUTS:

THE EMERGING CONTRACTOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Background of ECDP

PROGRAMME 3

WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT

Property and Asset Management

Property and Asset Management is about ownership and management of fixed property.

Challenges facing the sector and the impact on women participation

From the property ownership aspect, the challenges are as follows:

- Large sums of money are required in order for an individual \ group to be participants.
- Commercial property ownership is currently concentrated on very few owners who control the market.
- Property as an asset class is management intensive and the returns are often very long term.
- Property as an investment is very sensitive to interest rate fluctuations

Property Management

Most women participate in the commercial property sector as marketing agents or (estate agents) and end up in that sector.

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