



## water & sanitation

Department:  
Water and Sanitation  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

### INTERNET ARTICLE

#### **Women make a clarion call for inclusive economy**

16 August 2017

Women are the essence of the South African economy. This summed up the sentiment of women who gathered at the Department of Water and Sanitation's Women's Month Dialogue at the CedarWoods Conference Centre in Woodmead, Sandton, on 15 June 2017.

The primary aim of the dialogue, which took place under the theme: "Committed to Health and Hygiene", was to create awareness and advocacy around the new sanitation policy that took effect in December last year.

The dialogue provided a unique opportunity for women from different persuasions to discuss and express their collective disapproval at being at the tail-end of economic benefits within the sector. These ranged from being on the margins of decision-making and disparities in skills development, to being viewed as economic juniors to their male counterparts.

Boasting a jammed-packed programme of women speakers with a wealth of knowledge on their respective areas, the dialogue was used as a muscle behind the clarion call for women to transform the patriarchal face of the economy.

Addressing delegates during her keynote address, DWS Minister Ms Nomvula Mokonyane said the dialogue sought to reflect on progress made and to engage on the opportunities presented in the new Sanitation Policy, meant to mobilize society, business and other water sector partners towards advocacy, innovation, health and hygiene in the sanitation space.

Minister Mokonyane said: "Sanitation education should be more than mere end-user education. Enterprise development should take place, so that women can participate in the sector as tap manufacturers and not only tap openers."

She said education needed to look at the impact on natural resources such as rivers, streams and other water eco-systems, calling on manufacturers and distributors to assist end-users with the correct disposal of their products.

Minister Mokonyane added that waste water treatments works should not be clogged by nappies and sanitary pads.

The Deputy Chairperson of the National Youth Development Agency, Ms Bavelile Hlongwa expressed concern about the rising number of youth unemployed, saying the majority of those who bear the brunt of unemployment were mainly women.

Hlongwa urged the government to tap into the potential that women have by skilling them to produce products such as sanitary towels and then buying these products from them.

Citing an example of a group of young people who are already producing sanitary wear in KwaZulu-Natal, Hlongwa said: "There are four cooperatives in KZN that are already distributing sanitary wear. This is an example that must be followed in Gauteng to support young people but we need groups that produce."



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Ms Lulama Nare, a Commissioner with the Commission for Gender Equality said the Constitution was unambiguous about on issues of discrimination, emphasising that no one and especially women should be discriminated against on the grounds sex.

Nare stressed that there was a great need to take into account the gender needs, saying that to give birth needs water and sanitation.

Dr Shela Mokgabudi of Genti BioSciences said as industry players they were making strides in addressing inequalities. Mokgabudi presented a Genti-She menstrual cup which she said was also an eco-friendly product.

Extolling the efficacy of the product, Mokgabudi said: “The menstrual cup is smooth which makes cleaning very easy. Because the tab of the Genti-She menstrual cup is flat, it does not collect bacteria. You can disinfect the cup by boiling it briefly in water.”

She also urged women to always wash their hands as this had a serious impact on their health.

Manager of Compliance at BBBEE Commission, Ms Busisiwe Ngwenya, said although issues of gender inequality were being addressed there was still persistent issues of fronting in some sectors.

“In some sectors of the economy must make way for women to be economically active, with ownership as key to achieving this transformation, Ngwenya concluded.

**Hosia Sithole**