

**On the Occasion of the Ninth Women in Water Awards**  
**Speech by Deputy Minister, Ms Rejoyce Mabudafhasi of Water and Environmental**  
**Affairs**  
**At Oshabeni Sports Grounds, Port Shepstone**  
**Kwazulu Natal**  
**27 August 2010**

Programme Director

Deputy Mayor

Councillors

Chief

Chairpersons of the Water Boards

CEO's

Members of the Portfolio Committee

Members of the community

Members of the media

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is an honour for me to be here in Oshabeni, to celebrate women's month with you. Women from all nine provinces are here to celebrate with you. I would like to extend a special thanks to the mayor and the chief for welcoming us in the area. We decided to bring this event to a rural area to show that government is for everyone "where the people are that's where you will find us"

We are here today to celebrate with women, to honour them and to congratulate them for their hard work they are doing to address problems that we are facing as the department of water and environmental affairs they stood up and did something for themselves and did not wait for the government, nor did they wait for manna from heaven.

The Women in Water Awards (WWA) event is one of the intervention projects of the Department of Water Affairs aimed at empowering women to participate actively in the management of water resources and also to recognise their role and initiatives in addressing the challenges faced by the water sector. It started in 2002 and has become an important annual event during the Women's month, August.

Our country is looking for heroines, women who are proud that God has created them and given them hands to work. We need women who know how to work, who can grow gardens and feed their families, who can plant trees and flowers so that it can be beautiful where they live.

It is important that women protect and conserve water and environment, and be on the lookout for people who are polluting and endangering our rivers. We want people to write to us or even call us so that we can take legal action against the culprits. Women, let us be more vigilant to ensure our country's development.

It is important for us to recognise that our development as a country is dependent on water and if we don't do what is necessary to conserve this precious resource we will not be able to achieve our goal as government. It is for this reason that the president has mandated this department to ensure the sustainability of our water resources.

Hence the department engages in initiatives such as the national water conservation & water demand management awareness campaign called the "Be Water Wise" Campaign. Fellow South Africans let us conserve water, protect our rivers and the environment.

These exceptional women who are being awarded today have come out as the best not only in their local communities but are the best in the country. They have been selected out of 450 entrants from all the 9 provinces of South Africa. They

identified problems in their communities and then came up with innovative solutions to these problems.

We have to thank the judges for doing such a difficult task of sifting through all the applications in the different categories in order to find the best projects which we are awarding today.

The categories are as follows:

- **Indigenous innovation**

The women have revealed that you do not need to have the best technical tools & technical innovation to contribute to the water sector and that sometimes the old & simple innovations that were used by our fore fathers can be more effective.

- **Education and awareness**

Even the best technical innovations can not be sustainable with out the community or beneficiaries thereof being properly informed or educated.

- **Water Conservation**

As we all know that South Africa is not a water rich country, these women have come up with innovative but resourceful means of conserving water and have made a difference in the community.

- **Community Building**

Looks at initiatives that help the community using whatever effective means of spreading the message about water.

All these projects that are being awarded here were conceptualized because someone saw a need and then took a step to meet that need.

This is why we can not stop thanking you women for the dedication and the God given strength you have applied in doing the wonderful projects that we saw on the video. As a department we are committed to support all our winners.

In conclusion I want to thank our sponsors; Phakisa World, Umgeni Water and Simba.

I also want to thank the team that was responsible for coordinating this event, you have done well.

Enjoy the rest of the event and please look forward to the presentation about intensifying the department's public education and awareness programme,

“Phambili makhosikazi, Phambili”

Thank you.