



water affairs

Department:
Water Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY HONOURABLE DEPUTY MINISTER OF
WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS MS REJOICE
MABUDAFHASI DURING THE 2012 WOMEN IN WATER AWARDS
AT MAKWANE VILLAGE, QWAQWA, FREE STATE**

10 AUGUST 2012

Programme director
MEC
Mayors
Councillors
Traditional leadership
Chairpersons of the Water Boards
CEO's of Water Boards
Members of the Portfolio Committee
Members of the community
Members of the media
Representatives of 2012 projects
Members of the media
Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to be here in the Makwane Village, Free State 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 leadership 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 gathered here today just a day after Women's Day, to congratulate and honour winners of the 2012 Women in Water Awards.

The month of August has been declared women's month to celebrate achievements and also to get a better understanding of the challenges experienced by women. Women played a crucial role towards the development of our country and their secret to success is unity and prayer.

This year we are commemorating Women's Month under the theme: **56 years of women united against poverty, inequality and unemployment**. The campaign slogan is “**Forward to the Decade on African Women**”.

The appointment of Dr Nkosazana Zuma as the chairperson of the African Union further strengthens women’s voice in the continent and the world.

It is in this month that we as government and as a nation pay tribute and honour the heroines of the liberation struggle Charlotte Maxeke, Lilian Ngoyi, Bertha Qgowa and many others who marched to the Union Buildings in 1956 to protest against oppressive apartheid laws.

Our government has great plans for the development of women and we will not rest until women especially rural women are liberated from poverty, unemployment, crime, abuse, illiteracy, not owning land, their girl children not going to school, not having access to financial grants for their small businesses, not having access to water.

We need to gear up for awareness creation campaign for women out there in the rural areas for them to know that there are resources and programmes available for them and support them in ensuring that they participate in such initiatives. We need to spend more time there not sitting in our porch offices.

Our Department is faced with challenges, amongst others – water leaks, pollution of rivers, waste dumping, wasting of water, inadequate participation and decision making by communities, women, youth in water resource management, lack of awareness about water resource management.

Our Department is expected to reduce water loss by 15% in 2014. The Department cannot achieve this mandate, if the women of South Africa, as the custodians of water, as the people constituting a high percentage in demography are not key role players. You are known for being very good food producers; use the little water sparingly but continue to produce for the family, the community, the country and the World.

The Department of Water Affairs initiated Women in Water Awards (WWA) which is aimed at recognising the role and initiatives of women in addressing the above mentioned challenges faced by the water sector. It started in 2002 and is an annual departmental event for women’s month held in August.

We are here to honour and congratulate women who responded to our Call inviting them to be our partners in water resources management that will take full responsibility and support us in addressing the above mentioned challenges. These women did not fold their arms whilst our water resources are deteriorating because they know that Water is Life without it our country will go through hardship.

Ladies and gentlemen, I salute the women gathered here today as they changed the mindset of thinking that water resource management is for engineers, scientists, well educated people. They applied their indigenous knowledge to address the water related challenges in their communities. They identified various problems in their communities and embarked into action. When they saw that the rivers were highly polluted they initiated the Adopt a river project and whilst cleaning the rivers they grow vegetables to feed their families. They called the department to see their own initiatives and partner with them.

We came on board as partner and allocated approximately 20 million rands to the 11 Adopt a river projects implemented nationally. Job opportunities and training for women were created. Some of those projects registered for the awards and if they win the prizes will enable intensification of those projects.

Some women initiated vegetable gardens which feed their families, communities, crèches and hospitals. They also selling their products to the nearest stores and generate money. Others initiated the water conservation campaign projects propmoting efficient use of water which saved the country some water, Some initiated the home based waste management projects. All the above mentioned initiatives eradicated poverty, saved our water resources, created job opportunities, skills development, potential SMME's and financial empowerment

Even though we capitalise on the impact made by this projects, there are still challenges, we have not done well in conceptualising a funded after care comprehensive programme that will expose them to business opportunities, accredited training and financial resources. We want them to go higher and higher and become business women.

They will tell a story which goes like – I was an ordinary woman who volunteered to clean the river, plant vegetables, teach people about water conservation, Now I am a scientist, farmer, powerful business woman, etc.

Programme Director allow me to give a directive today to Ms Phuti Setati, Director Gender, - I need a proposal captruing my dream outlined above – these women get awards annually and then what? We need to have tangible stories and case studies, we need to market them to big companies willing to fund them. The proposal should be submitted to my office through DG's office by October latest.

Programme Director, allow me to appreciate once more all the women for leaving everything and come to honour this event. I am making a call once more –Be our water ambassadors look out for wrongdoings related to water and do something about it.

I am concerned about the number of nominations we received. They seem to be from the very same areas that participated last year. Our department will have to change the strategy of mobilising partipants, we need to bring on board the municipalities, NGO,CBO's and young people to be our partners so that they can play a role at local level in terms of mobilising women to participate and provide hands on support.

To those that made a shortlist, your projects did show a lot of potential. Polish the weaknesses and join us again next year.

To the winners today, go out there and use the penny allocated to you very well in order for it to generate more.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the judges for the difficult task of sifting through all the many quality applications in the different categories in order to find the best projects which we are awarding today.

In conclusion I want to thank our partners and sponsors, Rand Water, Trans Caledon Tunnel Authority (TCTA) and Maluti a Phofung Municipality for their generosity.

I also want to thank the coordinating team composed of officials from DWA and Municipality. The event is well organised we thank you we know it was not easy but you have made it.

Enjoy the event.

I thank you.