



water affairs

Department:
Water Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

SPEECH BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS, MS REJOICE MABUDAFHASI, ON THE OCCASION OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION (SAWIC) AT ARTSCAPE, CAPE TOWN

09 AUGUST 2013

Programme Director;

Cederberg Municipality Acting Mayor;

Department of Water Affairs: Western Cape Regional Head: Mr. Rashid Khan;

South African Women in Construction Executive;

Management of the Arts Cape;

Department of Water Affairs Senior Officials and staff;

Women in plumbing learners;

Members of the media;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good morning, goeie more

Today, the 9th August 2013 marks a very significant day in the South African calendar. It is a day in which more than 20 000 women marched to the Union Buildings in protest against the extension of pass laws to women. This is the time to appreciate the resilience, inner strengths and wisdom that is inherent in all the women of this country.

We should draw inspiration from women such as Helen Joseph, Lillian Ngoyi, Rahima Moosa, Sophia Williams De Bruyn and many other women who participated during the 1956 women's march.

*Our Government has since declared August as Women's Month. This significant day is being celebrated under the theme **"A Centenary of Working Together towards sustainable Women Empowerment and Gender Equality"**.*

It is pleasing to observe that the efforts of the heroines of 1956 were not in vain, initiatives such as the South African Women in Construction (SAWIC) are a demonstration that our society is making progress in terms of empowering women in particular those from the marginalised communities.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Women play a significant role in the preservation of water and the environment, and they are the ones who bear the brunt of its consequences if it is not preserved. We have achieved much in the area of empowering women within our sectors, but there is always more to be done.

Adopt a River Project

We brought rural women on board to prove that water resource management is not for engineers and scientists only. People with indigenous knowledge have a key role to play, hence the conceptualization and implementation of the Adopt a River project.

This project aims to clean polluted rivers whilst creating job opportunities and skills development for women. It also educates communities residing along river catchments about the importance of water conservation. During 2012/2013 financial year, twenty four (24) rivers were cleaned and 1148 job opportunities for women were created. In Western Cape we have fully fledged sites for this initiative in areas such as Khayelitsha, Khayamandi (Stellenbosch) and Khayeletu in (Knysna)

War on Leaks

According to the study conducted by the Water Research Commission, the country loses at least 37% of its water through Non-Revenue Water.

We are aware now that Non- Revenue Water is a product of many factors, these include poor planning, limited financial resources to implement the necessary programmes, poor infrastructure, asset maintenance and lack of capacity and water leaks.

It is for this reason that the Department of Water Affairs continues to implement the War on Leaks project. Through this project we continue to create employment and skills development for unemployed youth. Local indigent youth are trained and appointed as Water Conservation Warriors to implement the education and awareness programme as well as the retrofitting and leak repair initiative.

These Water Warriors undergo basic training on plumbing, water leak repair and other skills training that would help them to develop SMME's which would service the communities to create more permanent employment.

Women in Plumbing Project

One hundred and eighty-one (181) women from various municipalities of the Western Cape were trained in plumbing. They will be part of the War on Leaks teams in their respective municipalities. This milestone has been achieved through our partnership with the Development Bank of South Africa and the University of Stellenbosch.

Women in Water and Waste Treatment Works

Two hundred and fourteen women (214) from the nine provinces (9) have been trained as process controllers. A big thank you goes to the Local Government SETA for funding this project.

The Women in Water Awards is an annual programme launched in 2002. This year's awards will be presented at Mzilela village on 23 August in Giyani, Limpopo. This programme seeks to recognise, congratulate and honour the good work done by women and the vital role they play in the water sector, encourages perseverance in difficult conditions without resources and for communities to learn good practices of water management and change their attitudes for the better.

The awards are presented in four different categories, namely Adopt a River, Water Conservation, Education and Awareness and Community Development. The requirements for projects to be awarded prizes are that they should clearly support the

national objectives on water management and they should promote innovative and sustainable solutions to water management and demonstrate greater women's participation and involvement.

Throughout these initiatives and projects, women must be encouraged to share their knowledge, expertise, skills and success stories to increase impact and benefits of those still developing.

It must be noted that major sustainable development and economic growth can be possible through improving the economic, social and political status of women.

The primary purpose for our existence as a government department is the security of supply of water for the country. This purpose we intend not just to achieve but to maintain. This purpose is not to be achieved just for ourselves, but for generations to come.

Having mentioned the role women play in conserving our precious natural resource, I call upon you to mobilise and be part of our initiatives. I believe that the efforts of SAWIC will go a long way in assisting the communities and the construction industry to be able to respond positively to the ideal of a better life for all.

Let me end by thanking the South African Women in Construction for inviting us to come and share good practices that would further reinforce the emancipation of women.

Let water unite us. Water is Life, Respect it, Conserve it and Enjoy it!

I thank you.