

Honouring our women in water

August is one of the important months in history of South Africa when we take our hats off in salutation to the great women of our country.

These brave and determined women are found in various fields of commerce, education, activist in the struggle for liberation and most importantly, our heroines in the water sector. These women always ensure that we have good quality water in our houses. These women of South Africa ensure that every drop counts. We know that water is life and that the scarcity of good quality water might not bode well for the economy of South Africa.

The Department of Water & Sanitation (DWS) Director: Gender Phuti Setati said the enthusiasm, vigor, creativity and perfect use of indigenous knowledge in the preservation of water by these women goes a long way in the management of this scarce resource

Equally important is that without the support and dedication of these women in water, people might end up facing total extinction.

However, the launch of the Women in Water Awards (WWA) in March 2002 marked the beginning of an important tradition in the water sector in South Africa. It is in this context that the DWS introduced the annual WWA to bring to the attention of all South Africans the importance of participating in water management across communities and in addition to honor and recognise the role that women have played and continue to play with regard to poverty eradication, education and sustainable development in both urban and rural settings in water management in South Africa

Post 1994, our Parliament has one of the highest proportions of women in the world – powerful, outspoken and committed women. We have ratified the Convention to Eliminate Discrimination against Women. We have women Ministers, women leading powerful government departments, women who are leaders in business and industry, women who lead their communities. And in the water sector we have many, many women who have made their mark.

It is in the main to recognise the role that women have played and continue to play in water management in South Africa that led DWS, the Water Research Commission (WRC) and the Water Institute of South Africa (WISA) to jointly develop the Women in Water Awards. This initiative aims to honour and celebrate the hard work of women and to highlight: The participation of professional and community-based women in water

management; and, the key role women play with regard to water and poverty eradication, education and sustainable development in both urban and rural settings.

South Africa's available freshwater resources are already almost fully-utilised and under stress. At the projected population growth and economic development rates, it is unlikely that the projected demand on water resources in South Africa will be sustainable. Water will increasingly become the limiting resource in South Africa, and supply will become a major restriction to the future socio-economic development of the country, in terms of both the amount of water and the quality available.

The objectives of the Women in Water Awards are to encourage women to be more active in the water sector, facilitate greater community involvement in water management, encourage public and private organizations to promote a greater role of women in water sector related activities, to encourage young women and girls to follow water careers and to promote innovative and sustainable solutions to water management.

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