



water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

INTERNET ARTICLE

Women in DWS's Women incubation programme breaks barriers

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Two of the women who are beneficiaries of the Department of Water and Sanitation's Women in Water Entrepreneurship Incubator Programme are set to break the glass ceiling in water and sanitation and claim their place in a sector still dominated by men.

The two women, Zanele Mjadu and Refilwe Molele, could not contain their excitement during the launch of the programme which took place at Destiny ICC, Kempton Park in Ekurhuleni.

Mjadu of KwaZulu-Natal, who is the owner of Khazimula Investment, said she hopes to make a name for herself in the water sector, dispelling the myth that the sector was only the domain of men.

Mjadu said her selection in the construction category will propel her to new heights by applying the skills she would have gained to grow her business's turnover.

She said: "The programme of the Department will assist me and others to use the skills we are going to receive to expand our horizons as women in our businesses and to access opportunities we would not have had."

A brainchild of the department to ensure inclusivity in the water sector, the programme is aimed at facilitating a safe and supportive environment for new entrepreneurs. It targets especially the previously disadvantaged groups to start-up and sustain their businesses and to help them access available opportunities.

Mjadu's counterpart who hails from the Western Cape, Refilwe Molele, described the programme as a miracle and a dream come true.

"I have been running around in circles", said Molele. "My business was not growing and I was not being able to access any financial help".

Molele, an owner of Victmol Construction, who hopes to spread her company's footprint, oozed optimism saying the programme would enable her to employ an engineer and to set up a professional office.

"With this opportunity, the department is holding us as women by the hand. Through this programme, we will tap into multitude of opportunities. This is truly a breakthrough for me, and especially to venture into the water sector," said Molele.

DWS Minister, Mrs. Nomvula Mokonyane, said there were barriers to women to enter the water sector, making it necessary for her department to conceptualise programmes such as the incubation programme.

Minister Mokonyane said historically, access to water in South Africa like access to many rights and privileges were determined by the dictates of race and gender.

"Access to water was further complicated by the link between access to land and access to water," said Mokonyane.



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She said since access to water was inextricably linked to access to land, the right of Africans and women to access water was further limited by their limited access to land, of which 13 % was reserved for Africans under apartheid policies and legislation.

An investment in women is one of the most important investments we can make to address the triple challenge of poverty, inequality and unemployment. In turn, such an investment will bring about the triple benefits of growth, prosperity and international competitiveness, Minister Mokonyane said.

Sophia William-De Bryn, the last surviving of the women leaders who marched to Union Buildings against the pass laws in 1956, said there was still much to be done to remove the glass ceiling. She thanked Minister Mokonyane for her efforts to bring women into the water sector.

De Bruyn appealed to women to start committing towards assisting each other, saying that nothing was insolvable when women worked together.

“Never find yourselves guilty of not supporting each other,” said De Bruyn.

Hosia Sithole