

**Message by the MEC for Roads and Public Works, Ms BFP Makatong, MPL, on the occasion of the
Commemoration of Women's Day in the Department of Roads and Public Works in
Northern Cape, Kimberley**

09 August 2020

Acting HOD, Mme Ramona Grewan
Executive Management
Senior Management
Women in the Department of Roads & Public Works Family

Today, the Roads and Public Works community join millions across the world and particularly in Northern Cape in commemorating one of the most important day's in our nations calendar the Women's day.

Colleagues, due to the COVID – 19 pandemic as we are adjusting to the new normal I could not meet all of you in person but thank you in anticipation for joining me in this platform. We are harshly reminded that this devastating storm continues to leave a destructive trail in our communities and families across the nations of the world.

Colleagues, the devastating effects of COVID-19 pandemic to our society in general more especially to women and children in particular could not be under estimated, as every one of us has story to tell about this merciless virus as it continue to affect or infect us one way or other.

Colleagues, the reported PPEs procurements shenanigans continues to undermined the vision and values of our democratic state led by the African National Congress and continues to cause serious damage to the South African economy and to our society at large.

However, we are encouraged by the commitment expressed by our Premier, Dr Saul under the stewardship of President Ramaphosa, to decisively clench the nettle of corruption in our province more especially on the procurement of PPEs. On Friday we delivered our accountability report on the expenditure incurred as a result of COVID-19 measures that were put in place by our department to the office of the Premier for escalation to the Presidency. We remain hopeful that nothing untoward will tarnish the image of our department in this investigative process as we are navigating our way towards reclaiming our infrastructure mandate.

Colleagues, allow me to express my gratitude to our Honourable Premier, Dr Saul for his concerted efforts in disrupting the status quo in word and in action towards the full realisation of the sixth administration vision. His determination in realising the struggle of our women forbearers and stalwarts dreams and aspirations could be measured by entrusting the portfolio of Department of Roads and Public to women for the first time in the history of our province.

Colleagues, I don't take my appointment by our Premier, Dr Saul for granted as I view it as a direct culmination of women struggles dating back since 1956 towards dismantling patriarchy and repressive laws directed to women in our society. In further pursuit of our democratic ideals and vision of building a non-sexist and a just society our Premier, Dr Saul further strengthened the hand of women of our province by recently appointing Mrs Ramona Grewan as an Acting Head of Department for our department.

Colleagues, this great gesture in recognition of women capabilities in decision making structures cannot be left unnoticed as it augurs well with our forebearers slogan “Wathint’ abafazi, wathint’imbokodo”. Therefore, join me in welcoming Mme Grewan and wishing her well in her new role in directing the operations at the helm of our department.

Fellow women compatriots, as we reminisce the immeasurable historical contribution of women towards our democratic society with a none sexist character, can be ascribed to the direct result of the watershed National March undertaken by over twenty thousand (20 000) women of different races in 1956. These women gallant fighters defied apartheid government security forces by petitioning against the pass laws which restricted their freedom of movement, maintaining segregation and migrant labour system that disrupted family lives structures and forcing women to raise children alone.

Colleagues, as we commemorate this important day in our calendar we are reminded of our heroines and stalwarts of our struggle for women emancipation such as Mama Albertina Sisula, Charlotte Maxeke, Frances Baard, Dr Ruth Mompati, Dulcie September, Mittah Seperepere, Lillian Ngoyi, Rahima Moosa and Sophia Williams to mention but a few. These are among our forebears who paved the way for us with their fiery spirits and steel determination. We can be proud to have a path paved for us by these giants and so it is apt for us to continue celebrating their sacrifices today and into the future.

Colleagues, gradually step by step our society is moving away from its painful past as direct contribution of the above mentioned forebearers whom we stand on their shoulders towards building an equal and a just society for all, irrespective of one’s gender.

Esteemed Colleagues, it is with a heavy heart to note that there remnants in our society who continued to remind us of our painful past, through their evil and unjust actions that are patriarchal in nature and characterised by violence directed to women and children as well as sexual harassment tendencies in some workplaces.

According to well-known author, Justine Musk, who is also the spouse of internationally known entrepreneur, South African born Elon Musk. She sums up the meaning of patriarchy beautifully by saying: “The enemy of feminism isn’t men. Its patriarchy and patriarchy is not men. It is a system and women can support the system of patriarchy just as men can support the fight for gender equality.”

Colleagues, it is clear that our fight is not with men, but with a system that oppresses women’s rights, therefore, the need for men and women to stand together in the fight against the oppression of women and children, as well as all vulnerable sectors of our communities cannot be overemphasised.

Therefore, in our collective effort in fighting Gender Based Violence we should always keep in mind the aged, disabled and members belonging to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex (LGBTQI+) groupings. Let us not keep quiet to GBV incidents in our communities and workplaces. Furthermore, we need to take it upon us to teach our daughters and sons that gender-based violence is has no place in our society.

Colleagues, as we commemorate the Women's Day we should rally behind the vision of the Northern Cape Provincial Government's as championed by Premier Dr Zamani Saul of building a "Modern, Growing and Successful Province" based on our founding principles and values enshrined in our Constitution.

The ANC led government posture on women participation in decision making structures is informed by the heroic struggles and sacrifices of the generation of 1956. To this end we pride ourselves on the fact that we never drifted but rather continued to build on this great legacy of building an equal and just society.

During my budget vote speech I made pronouncements that are informed by our government broad vision of building a "Modern, Growing and Successful Province" based on our founding principles and values enshrined in our Constitution.

Colleagues, key among these pronouncements is the contractor development programme targeting women and young people towards improvement of public infrastructure in collaboration with local municipalities and all stakeholders in the build and infrastructure environment. This programme is geared towards building better communities and improving public infrastructure through pothole patching and continuous maintenance of roads and buildings. Last month we launched a province wide cleaning and pothole patching campaign in honour of Tata Mandela legacy and contribution to humanity. During the month of Imbokodo, we will extend the same campaign with the addition of Women in Construction dialogues in order to solicit their input in strengthening our women in business support mechanisms.

Colleagues, my above reflection on this initiative is informed by the fact that most of our Expanded Public Works Programme beneficiaries are women who need to be empowered with right skills and knowledge so that they can participate meaningfully in the mainstream economy.

On the same day I participated in the budget vote debate of our National Minister in presenting the 6th Administration vision I further lobbied for additional funding support so as to increase our resource envelope as we forge ahead towards total economic emancipation of women through our infrastructure portfolio.

Colleagues, our posture on women economic emancipation through our roads, public works and infrastructure economy was also highlighted in Minister Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma's speech which she delivered on the 30th July 2020 on Zero Based and Gender Responsive Budgeting.

Minister Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma said: "We must consider that when income is placed in the hands of women, research shows that they spend seventy percent (70%) of it on family. As opposed to men who spend thirty percent (30%) of their income on families. This means that our objective of building resilient, vibrant, sustainable and climate-smart communities can best be met by empowering women."

Colleagues, this view is not merely to reverse the economic disparities but rather to re-imagine and rethink our economic strategies and approaches towards addressing our current socio-economic realities in a more equitable way towards bringing women in the economic main stream for the betterment of our society.

Colleagues, the 6th Administration view women and youth empowerment as critical components in our fight against the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality.

Colleagues, our endeavours are geared towards strengthening the department of Roads and Public Works internal capacity through a process of assessing and reviewing the current organisational structure towards reclaiming and correctly responding to our infrastructure mandate as a department. This process is underpinned by improving the internal capacity of our district offices, depots and road camps with women component being at the centre of that internal repositioning exercise.

Colleagues, last month we launched a province wide cleaning and pothole patching campaign in honour of Tata Mandela's legacy and contribution to humanity. During this month of Imbokodo, we will be extending that same programme with the launch of Women Empowerment seminars with the sole purpose of creating a social dialogue and further solicit the input of women operating within the build and infrastructure environment. The shape and form of these dialogues will be communicated in due course considering the COVID – 19 regulation. Once more wear masks, keep social distance, sanitise and/or wash your hands regularly.

Colleague, allow me to conclude this message by assuring you and the Northern Cape community at large that, when we make an account of our successes and shortcomings of our department towards women empowerment "we shall tell no lies, we will claim no easy victories and we will mask no difficulties," as Amichar Cabral once said.

On behalf of the Northern Cape Provincial Government in particular the Department of Roads and Public Works, I would like to unwaveringly join everyone in wishing our women component a happy women day during this month of Imbokodo.

I thank you,

Baie dankie,

Ke a leboga!

Enkosi