

**MEC FBP Makatong: Virtual Message on the launch of Women's Dialogue in
Build and Infrastructure by Department of Public Works in Namakwa District at
Okiep Hotel on the 12 August 2020**

Programme Director, Hon. Cllr Gillian Peter
Honourable Mayors,
Honourable Councillors,
Acting Head of Department, Mme Grewan,
District Management,
Fellow Women Colleagues in the Department,
Esteemed Women in Business, and
Ladies

Good Morning

Thank you for this golden opportunity to address you in this fashion as a direct result of unforeseen work commitments and more especially the COVID – 19 pandemic that forces us to adjust to the new normal. Once more thank you in anticipation for joining me in this virtual platform as a result of this deadly storm that continues to ravage our communities and families.

Programme Director, this inaugural dialogue targeting women in business is a targeted approach to give effect and real meaning to our pronouncements as we are commemorating the immeasurable historical contribution of women. The watershed National March undertaken by over twenty thousand (20 000) women of different races in 1956 against pass laws gave women voice in society.

Ladies, the great gesture by our Premier, Dr Saul in recognition of women capabilities by appointing two women myself as the Executing Authority and Mrs Grewan as the Acting Head of Department could not be left unnoticed, I indicated as such in my departmental message on Womens' Day. I further said it augurs well with our forebearers slogan "Wathint' abafazi, wathint'imbokodo". Therefore, failure on our part to launch a programme of this nature could have been a missed opportunity in exploring measures towards the upliftment of our fellow women.

Therefore, the launch of this programme seeks to increase the footprint of women in the boardrooms and further explore mechanisms towards total economic emancipation of women. This programme is simply intended to give an account of empowerment programmes targeting women and further solicit your input towards responding to issues constraining women participation in economic activities in our sector.

Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me to once more echo the commitment of our ANC-led government to fight for the rights of women as we continue to emulate fortitude of the noble women of 1956 towards total economic freedom of women. In our endeavours towards realising gender equality through economic empowerment in Northern Cape, by highlighting some of the programmes that seek to restore the dignity of women and advance gender equality.

Programme Director, the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) continues to provide hope and a financial income to struggling households as part of our endeavours to fight poverty and the high unemployment rate in the province. The overall provincial performance during the last financial year recorded 17 783 of the targeted 19 560 work opportunities created, meaning 91% of the target was achieved, with 80% women empowered as per the target.

However, the Department remains committed in ensuring that we reach 100% of the target during the current financial year despite the constraints of COVID-19.

Ladies, it is a known fact that poverty and the lack of opportunity breed inequality. Therefore, it is for this reason that the Department through various training initiatives under the auspices of the National Youth Services (NYS) provides opportunities for women development. I am proud to announce that through the Phakamile Mabija Artisanship Programme, the Department is currently training 24 women to become professional artisans in the field of Electrician, Millwright, Boilermaking, and Diesel Mechanics.

In total of 60 unemployed youth are enrolled in Provincial Apprenticeship Programmes which includes Diesel Mechanic, Rigger as well as Refrigeration Apprenticeship Programme of which 39 are women.

Programme Director, it gives me great pleasure to indicate that young women are being trained to become professionals in male dominated fields such as Carpentry, Civil and Building Construction, Electrical Renewable Energy and Construction Road

Works to name but a few. These various initiatives will allow women to be on the equal footing like their male counterparts in earning a living and sustainable income as they enter the formal labour market. Our collaborative partnerships with both the private sector and other government institutions serve as a true catalyst towards total economic emancipation of women more especially during these worst economic times.

Programme Director, during this current financial year 2019/2020, the Department spent 86.06% of the totalling to four hundred and sixty-one million nine hundred and twenty-two thousand three hundred and ninety eight rand (R461 922 398) on Black Owned Companies. 32.16% totalling to one hundred and seventy-two million five hundred and ninety-four thousand seven hundred and eighty-three rand (R172 594 783) on Black Women Owned Companies.

However, we've embarked on a routine road maintenance through a pothole patching programme and public infrastructure cleaning campaign in collaboration with our local municipalities targeting primarily unemployed youth and women particularly from poor households through our EPWP.

Secondly, the Department of Roads and Public Works is currently prioritizing entities owned and managed by designated groups, more especially women in construction and build environment. This will allows sub-contracting for both infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects. No less than 30% women owned entities should benefit from this initiatives considering the remaining period towards the end of the financial year.

Thirdly, the Department of Roads and Public Works through the Contractor Development Programme is key towards supporting emerging contractors, especially women contractors on Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) grades 1-6. Measures are in place to facilitate the spread of work through limiting the number of concurrently awarded tenders.

For all projects awarded to Contractors in CIDB grade 7 and above, sub-contracting of 30% is compulsory to designated groups (Youth, Women, Military Veterans and People Living with Disability) within the database from Grade 1-6. The Department plans to award remaining projects before end of the 19/2020 financial year with clear targeting of women entities as beneficiaries.

Programme Director, all these endeavours are attuned to the President's Womens' Day pronouncements a few days ago, on the 9th of August to be exact.

During 2019 the department empowered eight women contractors that have since progressed in terms of their CIDB-grading. Therefore, the above contractor development measures are geared towards increasing the pool of women contractors across the province before the end of the 19/2020 financial year. Most importantly, various road maintenance projects to the value of R10 million were earmarked for the capacitation of women in the construction industry with only one contractors per allocated per year.

However, contractors were encouraged to tender for other projects outside the department which enhances their opportunities for growth and development. Of remarkable improvement is the story of Atisa Bokgabane Trading that upon enrolment during 2019 at CIDB-level two, progressed to be registered on at CIDB level six during January 2020. We share these initiatives and successes in demonstrating the department's commitment towards ensuring that through training and mentorship the lives and the livelihoods of women in this industry can change for the better.

Fellow Mbokodos, allow me to end my message by reflecting on the widespread problem in our communities and country as a whole that impacts almost every aspect of our life. The Gender Based Violence (GBV) disproportionately affects women and girls. We know it is systemic, and deeply entrenched in institutions, cultures and traditions as a direct result of normative role expectations and unequal power relationships in our homes and our society. We must make a clarion call to men to stop GBV and Femicide by not keeping quite and shout that enough is enough. We must instill a culture of equality and mutual respect when raising both our boy child and the girl child. We must also call on society not to shame girls and women who are raped as this make it difficult for women to report this despicable crime.

Ladies and Gentlemen, our active participation on the Victim Support Services (VSS) Bill and the Domestic Violence Act reviewal processes through comments which seeks to combat the surge of crime, in particular gender based and femicide, will go a long way in dealing with this evil.

Wathint'abafazi, wathint'imbokod!! Malibongwe!!