



SPEECH BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE IDT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES (MS PUMLA RADEBE)

EVENT: PUBLIC WORKS COLLOQUIM ON WOMEN
IN CONSTRUCTION

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Programme Director

**The Honourable Deputy Minister of Public Works, Hendrietta
Bogopane-Zulu**

Officials from the Department of Public Works

Representatives from Partner Organisations under Public Works

Women Contractors

Ladies and gentlemen

GOOD MORNING, SANIBONANI, MOLWENI, DUMELANG, AVUXENI.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in this forum where we as women share experiences on the Construction and Built Environment Industry. I wish to salute and extend warm greetings to all women who are role players in the construction industry. I wish to say, you are our heroines for challenging the current reality of the industry being dominated by mostly white males. I salute you for entering this industry with confidence and for flourishing in various spheres. On a daily basis, we hear stories of women-owned construction companies being awarded multi-million rand deals to undertake complex construction work and they deliver successfully, thus contributing to improved service delivery and making the lives of South Africans better.

As trailblazers in this industry, I wish to say you are standing on the shoulders of great giants and history expects you to emulate the contribution of these great women. You need to overcome the challenges that are plaguing the industry, those that pertain to expertise and know-how, blatant and sophisticated discrimination and fronting in order to secure jobs and contracts, finance and resources and networks creation.

Government has opened many doors for women contractors and encourages their participation in all aspects of the economy, including construction. Despite all the successes that have been achieved, we still have more that we must do to ensure that women contractors get the deserved respect and opportunities as their male counterparts. The organisation I represent which is a partner with government in eradicating poverty and empowering women and their beneficiaries, is

also involved in working with women who are involved in construction. One of the core commitments of the Independent Development Trust (IDT) is to promote the participation of women in the construction industry in order to ensure gender equality. Through this commitment, the Independent Development Trust has introduced the Contractor Development Programme which is informed by its experiences in dealing with emerging and small entrepreneurs in the Construction Industry. The Contractor Development Programme implements various infrastructure programmes in a manner that contributes to the improvement of capacity of women entrepreneurs in particular to compete with established contractors and to bid for construction jobs of a higher value. This will help in creating a pool of self-sufficient contractors who will run profitable business enterprises.

Through the Contractor Development Programme we target contractors in CIDB Grades 1-5, with a view to ensuring that they are able to grow and move up to higher Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) grading. Moving up the grading helps the contractors to gain access to more job opportunities which will in turn sustain their businesses and make them to be profitable in the long run and also contribute to job creation. As women- owned businesses become profitable, we will be changing the face of poverty and breaking its cycle from continuing from generation to generation.

Specific Opportunities for Women Contractors in the IDT

As alluded earlier, one of the biggest challenges in the construction industry has been the gender equality and the availability of

opportunities for women entrepreneurs to benefit from the growth that has been experienced by the sector over the past few years. The IDT together with government have made a commitment to improve the participation of women in this industry. As part of its CDP, the IDT has also introduced a **Women Focused Contractor Development Programme (WFCDP)** as one of the opportunities available for women empowerment and providing opportunities for them to fully participate and benefit in the Industry. The WFCDP has the following objectives:

- to enhance and develop the capacity of women contractors in all the nine Provinces in South Africa;
- to target women contractors at CIDB Grades 1-5;
- to introduce a number of management interventions necessary to ensure successful achievement of contractor development objectives.

The lessons that we have learnt from interventions of this nature is that critical for a contractor development programme is access to finance, technical support/ mentorship and project opportunities. The WFCDP comes with all of these aspects and we joined hands with two other partners which are the National Empowerment Fund (NEF) and Siseko-Afrika Consulting Enterprises (SACE). NEF comes into this partnership to provide financial assistance to qualifying contractors whilst SACE provides the much needed mentorship and support. This intervention has three phases which cover these three areas:

- Capacitation of women contractors through training and skills development.
- Support in the form of assisting contractors to access project opportunities. With IDT managing construction projects of over R2

billion per year, the challenge of finding appropriate construction opportunities has been greatly minimised.

- Technical support, mentoring and coaching.
- Support for contractors awarded IDT contracts to obtain working capital funding through National Empowerment Fund (NEF).

The Programme was initiated in 2008 with the pilot phase launched in 2009. We initially set ourselves a target of enrolling 45 women contractors, but by December 2009 the demand was so great that 73 women contractors had completed the first phase of skills development and training based on Construction Education and Training Authority (CETA) unit standards. The first phase was piloted in North West, Eastern Cape, Limpopo and KwaZulu – Natal provinces. As we continue we can see that the need is great for women contractors to be trained in various skills that are necessary for the success of the business.

Success of WFCDP

We will determine our success in this Programme by the capability of the trained women contractor to access attractive opportunities in the construction sector. We will also determine the success of the Programme by the upward mobility of the contractors to higher grades in the CIDB grading system through:

- **Capability:** of contractors to perform contracts of significant scope and size and deliver quality end product;
- **Value:** achieve an increase in the value and number of contracts executed by targeted enterprises;
- **CIDB:** upward mobility of contractors to higher grades within the CIDB's Contractor Grading Designations.

IDT Contractor Awards

In recognising contractors who perform outstandingly throughout the year, the IDT has introduced the Contractor Awards. The IDT Contractor Awards go beyond recognition, they provide a vehicle for the IDT to reward and motivate for excellence in service delivery, promote meaningful development outcomes and capacity building for continued improvements. The winning contractors are selected from all the provinces where the IDT has engaged in infrastructure development programmes.

I am proud to say in the 2009 Awards, the winners in all three categories were women contractors who performed beyond our expectations and beat businesses which are owned by men. This is an indication that women out there are working hard and they are taking the opportunities given to them with both hands.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I wish to encourage each and every one of you to work with the government and the IDT so that we can promote women empowerment to the next level. We are urging all women contractors to take charge of the opportunities that are given to them and to continue on this journey of promoting women-owned construction enterprises.