

SPEECH BY HUMAN SETTLEMENTS MEC, HONOURABLE VS SIWELA  
AT THE LUANCH OF WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMME,  
DWARSLLOOP, BUSHBUCKRIDGE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY.  
21 NOVEMBER 2014.

2014

Programme Director

Local Executive Mayor: Cllr R Khumalo (Bushbuckridge Mbeki Municipality)

Council Speaker: Cllr TP Selowe

Councillors

Acting HOD: Mr S.E.B Matsebula

The Administrator

Traditional Leadership

Department and Municipal Officials

Business Representative

Private Institutions

Members of the Media

Distinguished Community Members

## Introduction

Warm greetings to all residents of Bushbuckridge Local Municipality.

It is befitting that I embrace this opportunity to make interact with the community at this important occasion of the municipality, and largely for the Province.

This is an event where government is directly interacting with the community in the Spirit of service delivery.

Today we are celebrating and honouring women's contribution in service delivery.

When Mandela became South Africa's first democratically elected president in 1994, he realised the dreams of millions of black South Africans for political and social equality.

He took that dream one step further, when he said: "Freedom cannot be achieved unless women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression"

In 1995, he ratified the United Nations Convention to End All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which South Africa had signed in 1993.

This convention is often referred to as the International Bill of Rights for Women.

The rights of South African women of all races were enshrined in the country's world-leading Constitution.

The manuscript states the state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds where people find themselves.

The country has a world recognised Constitution that recognises the rights of women and gender equality.

It further calls on South Africans to side-by-side, lives that are free from discrimination.

### **Women in the struggle against apartheid**

While the most visible heroes of the fight against apartheid were men, South African women also made a mark in the fight against oppression.

As early as 1913, black women were protesting against laws that restricted their movements.

But it wasn't until [9 August 1956](#) that the entire world heard the voices of South Africa's women.

On that day, the country witnessed an unprecedented move where one of the largest demonstrations was staged in its history.

Thousands of women of all races marched on the Union Buildings protesting about unjust laws and practices by the then regime.

The drive behind the 20 000 women to the Union Building was about stating a case against the carrying of passes by women.

Since then, that march has since been celebrated throughout the country this month. After handing their petition, the women sang in unison – “*Wathint' abafazi, Wathint' Imbokodo*”.

This is a song which even resonates with all of us even today.

To embrace women development, the country passed laws that protect women against any form of discrimination.

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## Democracy

As the country continues to celebrate 20 years of freedom and democracy, it is a historic occasion that presents an opportunity on how the democracy was realised – amidst adversities.

Looking at the progress made – it remains critical that we also focus on how to develop the country further.

This is by ensuring the ideals of our plans through the implementation of Vision 2030.

As we reflect on the progress made – we must not be oblivious of the challenges that still lie ahead.

These will include poverty, inequality and unemployment.

## Women in Construction

In our quest to empower women and honour their contribution in service delivery, the Department today launches the Women in Construction Programme.

This is not just a nice to have or a Public Relation exercise, but concrete commitments which will be translated into action henceforth.

To this end, over R300 million has been allocated to the 35 women contractors appointed to deliver projects throughout the province.

Just this morning, we symbolically constructed and painted houses being delivered by women contractors here at this municipality.

Ms Zoleka Radebe of Zonatha Trading and Construction Project is one of the many the Department has appointed to deliver projects as part of this campaign.

In practical terms, the Department has dedicated 30 percent of its budget towards this programme to be undertaken by women contractors.

It must be said though, it is not just free for all projects – but they must deliver housing opportunities and other required services to communities.

This undertaking follows Minister Lindiwe Sisulu's pronouncements during her Budget Vote in Cape Town this year – that provinces must begin to embrace women – so as to participate in the mainstream economy and development.

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The programme requires provinces to commemorate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the women's charter and celebrate the women's march to the union building against pass laws.

Since its birth, the democratic government has introduced a number of policies and programmes which have contributed to the development and empowerment of women for them to play more meaningful role in the society.

It is this backdrop that the Department or government is pushing to meet its constitutional responsibility of ensuring that every South African has access to basic services, especially shelter.

This programme will go a long way in addressing the needs of the vulnerable and marginalised groups.

Now that women are beginning to make in-roads towards developmental programmes, it remains central that, they participate meaningfully in the economy and reclaim their space.

Over the next few months, the programme will be vigorously rolled throughout the province to benefit needy beneficiaries.

Gone are the days where men's issues were getting priority and highlighted – much to the detriment or exclusion of women.

*"Wathint` abafazi, Wathint` Imbokodo".*

**I Thank You.**