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Department:
Economy & Enterprise Development
North West Provincial Government
Republic of South Africa



Department Partners with Standard Bank Top Women, to promote equality and opportunities in the business sector



Mr Frank Thomelang, Chief Director for the Integrated Economic Development Services unit, delivered the opening address at the conference and stressed the issue of gender equality in the business environment

The North West Department of Economy & Enterprise Development recently partnered with Standard Bank Top Women, in hosting the North West Regional Standard Bank Top Women Conference at Sun City, on the 23rd May 2019. The regional conference platform provides enterprises operating in key economic sectors assistance in facilitating access to trade and markets for women in business. It will also aim to encourage enterprises with growth potential to become market leaders and to inspire many other emerging female entrepreneurs. The conference is innovatively designed to give attending entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs the rare opportunity to network and gain valuable exposure for their business ideas.

Central to the Regional Conference is the one-hour Fast Track Networking session in which participants can build meaningful personal networks, encourage business interest or partnerships, and gain knowledge. The regional conference also incorporated a two-hour Pitching Session whereby delegates with promising business models had the opportunity to explain their ideas to a panel of high-profile judges and receive helpful feedback. The winners will go on to the national conference and receive funding to use towards their business needs.



Ms. Gaorelathe Moboweni of Royal Jewellery Designs and Ms Happy Mokone of EED network to find possible opportunities for other women in business

Mr Frank Tlhomelang, Chief Director for the Integrated Economic Development Services unit, delivered the opening address at the conference and stressed the issue of gender equality in the business environment. "We as government and the private sector need to support women enterprises by identifying opportunities which they will utilise to access markets. One such mechanism which government needs businesses to take advantage of, are strategic events like these around the country," explained Mr. Tlhomelang. He further echoed governments' commitment to strive and uplift women in all sectors of the Provincial economy, and to assist in growing and sustaining their business. "Our support mechanisms include increasing capacity at the Bojanala Special Economic Zone, incubation programmes for SMME's, access to markets and

equipment funding to boost their businesses, although these SMME's need backing from both the private and public sectors to succeed," concluded Mr. Tlhomelang.

According to Standard Bank's Ms Palesa Kgatshe, women entrepreneurs make up less than 5% of South Africa's entrepreneurial population. "An increase in successful female business owners could have far-reaching positive economic impacts," she says. The bank has implemented direct customer service teams in the North West which are specifically formed to deal with small enterprises. This includes funding based on business proposals and any innovative business models an entrepreneur has, to cater for a need in the market.

The conference incorporated testimonials from industry leaders and small enterprises, in order to act as an inspiration to other women. Ms. Gaorelathe Moboweni of Royal Jewellery Designs in her testimonial spoke of her journey from starting small to being incubated through the SEDA platinum incubation programme. She began selling self-manufactured pieces of jewellery to students in Soweto where they were studying and eventually got noticed by the Platinum Incubator. She went on to do a fully-fledged course in jewellery manufacturing and then an internship in the jewellery game. She recently won a monetary prize from Lonmin for her 3D printing of jewellery, and still has big dreams for her business. "Everyone must start somewhere, even if its small, then day by day build themselves to the person they dream of becoming," said Ms. Mboweni.

Another speaker Ms. Madelain Roshier of PR Worx, gave an inspirational story of her life starting out in poverty to become a public relations guru. She started her career by washing cars at the age of 11 and by age 15 she was a cleaner in a fish and chip shop, all while schooling. She has since put herself through tertiary education and has grown to establish one of Africa's leading public relations firms. She realised from young that if you do a job, do it 100%. As a two time breast cancer survivor, she also drove the point home that what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. "Just like in business never give up," she resolved.

The Standard Bank Top Women Conference is a gathering of renowned thought leaders, mentors and change drivers dedicated to recognising the achievements of women in public and private sectors. The Department believes that by partnering with the private sector on projects like these, we are able to assist SMME's in even more ways, especially women in business. The Department further appeals to women entrepreneurs to take advantage of this opportunity and others like it, and utilise them as a stepping stone to growing and sustaining a successful business.