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Department of Public Works
North West Provincial Government
Republic of South Africa

**Address by North West MEC for Public Works, Jerry Thibedi,
delivered during the `` *Indaba with Women In Construction*'' held
at Tusk Hotel, Mafikeng , on Thursday, August 23, 2007**

DATE: Thursday, 22 August 2007

- **Programme Director: Mme M Ntshabele**
- **The Reverend: Pastor Fasu Amoa**
- **All Senior Managers of the Department present here today**
- **Representatives for various our stakeholders**
- **Representatives from financial institutions present here**
- **Women in business including the construction sector**
- **Distinguished guests**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is indeed an honour for me, to address this important gathering which represents, a festival of ideas, from our women and stake-holders doing business with our Government and the private sector.

I am made to understand, that in celebrating ``Women's Month'', the theme for today's ``*Indaba With Women In Construction*'', organised by my department is:

Building Unity Of Women In Their Diversity.

For me, this theme is very appropriate. Particularly so, if one has to reflect on our past and the contributions, sacrifices and the central role, our heroines played in transforming our country.

In the decades before South Africa achieved democracy in 1994, the apartheid government systematically excluded Africans, Indians and Coloured people- collectively known as ``black people''- from the meaningful participation in the economy of the country.

As we pay tribute to the heroines of our struggle during this month: ``Women's Month'', the immense legacy of the 1956, left by that historic march to the Union Buildings in Pretoria should forever be cherished and revered year after year.

We have a duty to move forward faster with regard to this important matter of women emancipation in our era.

We must expedite the process of empowering women and assess, whether we are doing what we should, to advance the objective of the emancipation of our women.

Today's festival of ideas, in the form of this important Indaba, clearly demonstrates that is not possible to realise the full economic potential of this country and province while we continue to marginalize women who constitute the majority of our people.

Programme Director:

Women empowerment does not only relate to high positions in the public or private sector. Black Economic empowerment (BEE) is not simply a moral initiative to redress the wrongs of the past.

It is a pragmatic growth strategy that aims to realise the country's full economic potential.

Therefore, empowerment must mean that ordinary people especially women in the rural areas and those out of our sight in the remote areas of the province also benefit to push back the frontiers of poverty.

We must, as matter of urgency, continue to increase the participation of women in the economic life of our country.

Among others as government, we have to strengthen our tender processes, so that women can participate meaningfully in the economic and social opportunities that are available in our country.

Programme Director:

The time is now, for the inequalities in ownership, control and benefiting in the industry to be dealt with.

This will enable our people, from all walks of life, to participate meaningfully and fully in the country's economy so that we can unleash South Africa's full economic potential.

In line with the dictates of B-BBEE and the Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act, my department during the previous financial year awarded tender bids to the value of more than R110.3million (about 23% of the total tenders awarded) to women contractors.

This was a 4% increase compared to the 2005/06 financial year during which tenders awarded to women contactors amounted to more than R95.1 million (19% of the total tenders awarded).

Clearly we have answered the call. We do not just talk about women empowerment because it fashionable to do so.

We must continuously measure the progress we are making in this regard, so that we can determine what we should do next. I am very optimistic that we can still do better.

In giving realistic participation in achieving the Provincial Growth and Development Targets;

Our department, as the lead coordinator of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in North West , has a huge responsibility.

Part thereof is to ensure that the programmes' objective of poverty alleviation, skills transfer and job creation and are met.

For this reason, we have a contractor development programme, wherein emerging contractors are annually invited through adverts in Regional Newspapers to apply to be trained on Labour Intensive Construction methods.

For contractors to be selected, the following requirements must be met:

- Contractor must be registered at CIDB level 3-5
- Training is restricted to North West Contractors only
- Each contractor must at least have 2 people who would be trained on NQF Level 2 and level 4

It is therefore our target that a large number of emerging contractors in the province are trained in EPWP labour intensive methods in order to qualify for EPWP Contracts.

Programme Director:

I am pleased to announce that by the end of September 2007, 28 supervisors and 14 contractors will be trained on Labour Intensive Methods.

These contractors were selected from 27 applications.

Success of EPWP rests not only with government in addressing the challenges of expansion of our economy but also with social partners, of which women contractors are part of.

For all contractors to have consequential contribution towards provincial growth, I humbly request that all contractors in attendance respond to our call for applications whenever we publish public notices in the newspapers.

In recent years our country's economic status has been one of the most promising in the entire African continent given our political history.

Figures from Statistics South Africa show that our country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by 4.7% in the first quarter of 2007 and thus making this the 34th consecutive economic growth since 1998.

Already our government has invested more than R400 billion on infrastructure development over the next three years. This is for the improvement of roads, power plants, and stadium, some of which are in preparation of the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

While the construction industry is experiencing a boom, we need to ensure that all our people benefit particularly the previously marginalized groups which include you the women of our country.

Through policies and laws such as the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE), the Construction Charter which was signed into operation by our late Minister Stella Sigcau and the Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act, our people including women must benefit.

We appeal to our women to seize and exploit the opportunities that our government continues to create for them and urge off with a passion in the construction to register with the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB), in order to be considered for our tender allocations.

The CIDB, which reports to our Minister Thoko Didiza, is a statutory body that provides leadership to stakeholders and aims to stimulate sustainable growth, reform and improvement of the construction sector for effective delivery.

In conclusion: Programme Director;

What is of great concern, especially in the construction sector, is what is commonly referred to as fronting.

There are people who have gone out of their way, to undermine our government's sound policies and laws by luring unsuspecting women, to pose as company owners or big shareholders.

This is tantamount to violating and undermining the rights of our women.

I hope this session will find time to deliberate extensively on this matter and come up with solutions. There is no way; women can be fully empowered if their human rights are violated.

Women must stand up and refuse to be used as pawn by the fronting brigades who are only interested in getting the lion's share of the spoils.

Let us not, because of greed, betray the vision and the spirit that saw the likes of Helen Joseph, Rahim Moosa, Lillian Ngoyi and our own Ruth Mompati, lead the 1956 Women's March.

This Indaba therefore should point us in the right direction on how to effectively deal with fronting.

Our partnership in this endeavor is of great importance in terms of the empowerment of women for the benefit of our government's economic targets as set out on the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (AsgiSA).

May the best come out of this important gathering of festival of ideas, to advance as a collective, the objective of the emancipation and unity of women.

I thank you.

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