

HON. MEC TS THOMO
KEYNOTE ADDRESS: WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION DIALOGUE
MPUMALANGA PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT, NKANGALA DISTRICT
MUNICIPALITY
28 AUGUST 2026

Programme Director;

- Executive Mayor of Steve Tshwete Local Municipality, Councillor Mhlonishwa;
- President of the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa, Kgoshi Lameck Mokoena;
- Honourable Members of the Executive Council;
- Chairperson of Buscor, Dr Norah Fakude;
- Honourable Members of the Provincial Legislature;
- Provincial Director-General, Ms Maggie Skosana;
- Leadership of the South African Women in Construction (SAWIC), CIDB and NHBRC
- Senior Government Officials;
- Representatives of Municipalities, State-Owned Entities, Financial Institutions and the Construction Industry;
- Distinguished Guests;
- Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good morning, Sanibonani!

1. I am pleased to join you at this important Women in Construction Dialogue convened by the Office of the Premier in partnership with Provincial Treasury, the Department of Co-operative Governance, Human

Settlements and Traditional Affairs, and the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport.

2. The significance of this Dialogue extends beyond commemorating Women's Month. It reflects a deliberate policy position of the Mpumalanga Provincial Government that economic transformation cannot be achieved if women remain underrepresented in sectors that drive public investment, industrialisation and infrastructure-led growth.
3. Construction is one of the largest contributors to economic development. It creates employment, stimulates local economies, develops productive assets and unlocks opportunities across the entire value chain. Yet despite progressive constitutional provisions, transformative legislation and procurement reforms, the participation of women within this sector remains disproportionately low. Women continue to experience structural barriers that limit access to finance, procurement opportunities, technical skills, professional networks and leadership positions within the built environment.
4. Program Director, the Mpumalanga Provincial Government therefore recognised that these challenges cannot be addressed through policy instruments alone. They require sustained institutional collaboration, measurable interventions and continuous engagement between government, industry, development finance institutions and women-owned enterprises.

5. It is against this background that, we commend the Office of the Premier, for having resolved to institutionalise the Women in Construction Dialogue as an annual provincial platform for policy engagement, accountability and implementation.
6. The theme for this year's Dialogue, **"Building Inclusive Infrastructure and Expanding Opportunities for Women,"** speaks directly to the developmental priorities of the Seventh Administration. It challenges us to ensure that infrastructure development is not only measured by the kilometres of roads we construct or the number of public facilities we deliver, but also by the extent to which those investments transform ownership patterns, create sustainable enterprises and expand economic opportunities for women.
7. Programme Director, when we gathered at the Women in Construction Dialogue on 19 August 2025 at the Ehlanzeni Disaster Management Centre, Government, industry and stakeholders collectively acknowledged that while progress had been made, significant structural challenges continued to impede the advancement of women within the construction sector.
8. The Dialogue therefore adopted a clear implementation agenda. We committed ourselves to strengthening procurement opportunities for women-owned enterprises, improving access to development finance, expanding mentorship and enterprise development programmes, enhancing technical capacity through compliance and supply chain management training and establishing stronger partnerships that would

enable women to participate meaningfully across the construction value chain.

9. Importantly, we agreed that the Dialogue should not become an annual conversation without measurable outcomes. Instead, it should serve as an accountability mechanism through which Government reports on progress, assesses implementation of previous resolutions and identifies further interventions required to accelerate transformation within the sector.
10. I am therefore pleased that today's Dialogue is not beginning a new conversation. Rather, it represents the next phase in implementing commitments that we collectively adopted in 2025.
11. Program Director, The Mpumalanga Provincial Government has deliberately translated these commitments into practical interventions.
12. The Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport, working closely with COGHSTA and Provincial Treasury, continues to integrate women empowerment objectives into infrastructure delivery programmes.
13. Beyond awarding contracts, Government has focused on improving the readiness and competitiveness of women-owned enterprises through regular empowerment workshops covering Supply Chain Management requirements, procurement legislation, tender compliance, contract management and business development support.

14. The province has also continued implementing Resolution Three of the 2025 Dialogue by prioritising participation of women-owned construction enterprises within provincial infrastructure programmes working collaboratively with the Industrial Development Corporation.
15. Our progress demonstrates that these interventions are beginning to yield tangible outcomes.
16. During the 2025/26 financial year, the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport awarded 45% of its contracts to women-owned enterprises, while COGHSTA achieved 32%.
17. This momentum has continued into the current financial year. During the first quarter of 2026/27, Public Works, Roads and Transport increased the proportion of contracts awarded to women-owned enterprises to 57%, while COGHSTA reached 42%.
18. These figures demonstrate measurable progress. However, they equally remind us that transformation is a continuous process rather than a destination. The objective is not merely to increase statistical representation, but to develop sustainable, competitive and resilient women-owned construction enterprises capable of contributing meaningfully to provincial economic growth.
19. Government's commitment to gender transformation extends beyond procurement. Across the Provincial Administration, women now constitute 67% of the total workforce, represent 46% of the Senior Management Service and account for 50% of all Heads of Department. These

achievements reflect deliberate policy choices aimed at mainstreaming gender equality within public administration and leadership.

20. The challenge before us now is to ensure that similar progress is realised throughout the construction industry, where women remain underrepresented despite growing opportunities created by the Province's infrastructure investment programme.
21. Programme Director, as we deliberate today, let us approach this Dialogue with a clear understanding that its success will be measured by the quality of partnerships strengthened, the practicality of recommendations adopted and the commitments that each institution undertakes to implement.
22. I therefore encourage robust, honest and solutions-oriented engagement. Let this Dialogue critically assess the progress made since 2025, identify remaining constraints, explore innovative financing and procurement mechanisms, strengthen collaboration between the public and private sectors, and chart a practical programme of action that will further expand opportunities for women across the entire construction value chain.
23. Together, let us ensure that the 2026 Women in Construction Dialogue becomes another significant milestone in building an infrastructure economy that is inclusive, competitive and reflective of the full potential of the women of Mpumalanga.
24. I thank you.