



MINISTRY

**HUMAN SETTLEMENTS
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY MS. THEMBI SIMELANE, MP, MINISTER OF
HUMAN SETTLEMENTS ON THE OCCASION OF THE HOUSING
DEVELOPMENT AGENCY WOMEN WHO BUILD THE NATION
STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT DIALOGUE HELD AT MASLOW HOTEL,
SANDTON, GAUTENG**

15 AUGUST 2025

Programme Director

Deputy Minister, Ms Tandi Mahambehlala

Chairperson and Members of the Boards of HDA

Director General, Dr Alec Moemi

Chief Executive Officer of HDA

Deputy Directors General (DDGs) and Staff

Ladies and gentlemen

Good day,

Let me start by expressing my sincere and profound appreciation for the opportunity to address this important stakeholder engagement session, under the theme ***“women at the centre of sustainable development”*** which is intrinsic with the 2025 women’s month theme ***“building resilient economies for all.”***

As you are all aware, South Africa is part of the global community and the Women’s Dialogue coincides with the celebration of various international and national historical events. The Presidency of South Africa for G20 is driven by the goals of ensuring inclusive growth, women’s financial inclusion, leadership, and governance amongst others. The 30th anniversary of the Beijing Platform of Action as well as Chapter 5 of the Sustainable Development Growth, seeks to promote inclusivity in order to achieve gender equality.

Programme Director,

Let me pay tribute to the women that led the development of the 1955 Women’s Charter. The women played a key role in the struggle for the liberation of South Africa. The charter advocates for equal rights and

participation of women in the economy in order to achieve gender equality. Property is one of the key sectors of the economy expressed in the Charter. This Charter played a pivotal role in the development of the Freedom Charter adopted in the same year in Kliptown, Soweto.

The declarations made in the Freedom Charter states:

“The people shall share in the country’s wealth and have access to land”

“There shall be houses, security and comfort”

“Unused housing spaces to be available to the people”

“Shacks shall be demolished, new suburbs built, where all have transport, roads, electricity, playing fields, creches and social centres.

It is befitting that, as we celebrate women’s month, we remember the vision of South Africa, articulated in the Freedom Charter, seventy years ago (70), of a non-racist, non-sexist, democratic and progressive Country.

The price for freedom was not cheap, it came at a cost of dear lives, we still see the manifestation of the effects of physical violence characterising the country in this age. The oppressive apartheid regime has left deeply rooted scars. I can imagine, the elderly that fought alongside the prominent stalwarts and are still staying in mud houses

today, hoping that the dream to have their own house will one day be realised.

Hence, we should never take for granted the work we do, in creating sustainable human settlements with access to socio-economic opportunities. It is our mission as the collective to improve household quality of lives. The women of 1955 dreamt of housing, security, comfort, and access to basic services.

The Freedom Charter declares that the “aged, the orphan, the disabled, the sick shall be cared for by the state. Hence, it is our business to ensure that the majority of our beneficiaries are the elderly, persons with disabilities, families with dependants and military veterans remains the priority.

We recently celebrated the National Women’s Day on the 09th of August, and we reflected on the role played by the 20 000 women who marched on the 09 August 1956 against oppressive apartheid laws. Allow me to salute the 1956 Women Cohort led by Lilian Ngoyi, Rahima Moosa, Sophie DeBruyn and Helen Joseph.

I could imagine what was going through the minds of those women 69 years ago, when they took 30 minutes of silence. I could only come with one word in describing their act of bravery, it was about “sacrifice”. Whilst the march was peaceful, they did not know whether they will return home, alive or be sent to prison.

Programme Director,

I am taking this time as I want us to reflect on the past, the gains, assess the current status quo and map a clear way-forward for the economic liberation of women whilst we collaborate in creating sustainable human settlements.

Our Human settlements mandate, together with the HDA mandate of acquisition of well-located land and buildings for creation of mixed housing development are intertwined with the Freedom Charter. Hence our, mantra is “Housing, Security and Comfort”, it is our sacred prayer, so we can daily ponder upon in our endeavour to transform lives.

Programme Director,

HDA is not our catalytic developer by default, it is by choice, it is our deliberate efforts to transform settlements patterns at scale. Just like a

catalyst when it enters the molecule to speed up the transformation process, HDA has a huge mandate to promote accelerated action. Most of our catalytic projects are implemented by HDA in partnership with Provinces and Metros.

We should then ask, what are our deliverables? For the financial year 2025/2026 through the recent budget vote, we have been given R34bn out of which R30bn is allocated to Provinces and Municipalities through the Human Settlements Development Grants (HSDG), Urban Settlements Development Grant (USDG), Informal Settlements Upgrading Grant (ISUPG).

For this financial year, R42 944 housing units must be delivered, 32 250 service sites, provision of affordable rental and gap housing, strategic project implementation (SIP 7) and 80 000 title deeds.

We should then further ask, what is the role of women and how will they benefit and participate in this allocation? In the two past financial years; namely 2023-2024 & 2024-2025 at least 9bn was allocated to companies owned by women, youth and persons with disabilities from the

development grants. The procurement budget set aside allocation went to majority of women owned companies.

Over and above, all DHS Entities included the 40% procurement budget set aside for women owned companies in their plans.

For the financial year 2024-2025 the DHS entities procurement spent for women owned companies was remarkable. The HDA procurement spent was 45.4%, SHRA 50%, PPRA 51,6%, NHFC, 39%, NHBRC, 40% and CSOS 63%. I am deliberately mentioning all entities to demonstrate to women owned companies that there is room for diversification and partnership.

Diversification also include mainstreaming Innovative Building Technologies (IBT) in your delivery of human settlements. I can confidently say that in the context of disasters and climate change, the future will be IBT. Communities cannot wait any longer for a decade in order to receive a house. Communities will be given a choice of speedy service delivery.

We will work hard in demystifying community misconceptions about IBT and at the same time not undermining the indigenous knowledge building

methodologies. There are resilient historical buildings that were built through the knowledge of the Khoi and San that still exist to date.

Our quest is to disrupt the status quo by providing cutting edge innovative building solutions at speed especially during disasters. Women in particular, bear the most brunt during these disasters, imagine the situation of a pregnant woman and woman with disability. Families' lives have been shattered through these disasters.

Despite the adverse effects of Covid 19, the State of Transformation Report of the Property Sector Charter Council (2022) indicates that Student Accommodation emerged as a growing asset class. In the pre-summit deliberations held recently, HDA presented plans for a Student Accommodation precinct using IBT Model in partnership with SHRA and City of Johannesburg (COJ). I look forward to the physical walk about of the Student Accommodation Precinct once construction has commenced. Therefore, women should play a central role in the acceleration of delivery through Innovative Building Technologies.

In this dialogue, we should deliberate on strategies for maximising benefits from the construction and property sector value chain

opportunities. The percentage of women contractors migration level from CIBD level 1-4 and level 5-9; percentage of jobs created, percentage of women benefitting from enterprise development, percentage of women participating in skills development programme, percentage of women owned manufacturing companies, data scientist, land surveyors, awarded business through HDA catalytic projects.

In conclusion, I sincerely want to encourage women owned companies given opportunities from the human settlements value chain to plough back to communities through good corporate citizenship. This could be in a form of building a new house for an elder staying in a mud house, building a new house for a victim or survivor of GBV and instituting bursary programmes for orphans and other vulnerable children and so forth. These corporate investments projects will make a difference in the lives of vulnerable households.

Let us build a nation that works for all by emulating the women stalwarts such as Fatima Meer, who celebrated her birthday on the 12 August, and dedicate our business to be game changers, providing housing opportunities and restoring dignity. Let us contribute in building youth and

child friendly safer cities and communities. Building the nation is a collective effort, not the responsibility of the Department alone.

Aluta Continua!!!

Malibongwe Igama LamaKhosikasi!

I thank you.