

REMARKS BY EASTERN CAPE PREMIER HON. LUBABALO OSCAR MABUYANE AT THE HUMAN SETTLEMENTS INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY HELD IN EAST LONDON ON MARCH 08, 2024.

Programme Director:

Minister of Human Settlements

Deputy Minister for Human Settlements

MEC for Human Settlements

Mayors of our Municipalities

Government Officials

Social Partners

Ndiyanibulisa nonke ngelithi Malibongweee....

Ingama lamakhosikazi.

Wathint' uMama.

Wathint' imbokodo.

Thank you.

We meet here in the Buffalo City Metro this morning to join the rest of the world in commemorating International Women's Day. As we all know this day is sanctioned by the United Nations to celebrate the achievements of women in the world.

The theme for this year's celebrations which is: **COUNT HER IN: INVEST IN WOMEN, ACCELERATE PROGRESS**” resonates with the Eastern Cape Provincial Government.

This day reminds us of the indomitable spirit of our women who have been the pillars of our society, politics, and economy. Today we celebrate you the women of our country because you have demonstrated strength, resilience, and leadership. From the academic halls to bustling business hubs, from community development to policy formulation, from working the land to taking care of families, you have been paramount. You have combated oppressive stigmas of male masculinity and tackled the dark shadows of Gender-Based Violence and femicide. You fight patriarchy in your homes and discrimination in your workplaces. Your resilience is phenomenal.

Manditsho zisuka ukuba akekho, kwaye akakazokubakho umbutho wezopolitiko onokuxhobisa abantu abangomama njengo rhulumente we African National Congress. As the ANC led government, we know that by nature women are builders, not

destroyers. Sinamakhaya nje afundumeleyo ngoMama. If we want this nation to prosper women must be at the front leading.

As the Eastern Cape Provincial Government, we acknowledge the need to empower women to excel in all avenues of human life, particularly in fields where they were excluded in the past such as construction.

Our progress report to date signifies both achievement and learning curves, particularly in the construction of housing. The Provincial government has proudly empowered 150 youth through a brigade program, training them with vital job preparedness and technical skills for construction, thanks to collaborations with the National Home Builders Registration Council, NHBRC and NYDA. Remarkably, 74% of these participants were women, underscoring their invaluable role and eagerness in this transformative endeavor.

Moreover, the incubation of 159 women owned SMMEs in financial, project management, and tendering skills represents a crucial step toward economic empowerment and inclusion.

Our incubator and mentorship programs, supported by National Public Works and Infrastructure, are vital in nurturing these enterprises, despite the challenges of dedicated funding for SMME development. These collaborations are not just about funding; they are about building ecosystems that support sustainable growth, mentorship, and the successful navigation of the construction and human settlements sectors.

The progress in training and incubating women owned SMMEs is a crucial element of our broader economic empowerment strategy. Yet, the challenge of dedicated funding for SMME development remains. In this light, our strategic partnerships with entities such as the ECDC, NHFC, Masisizane, and SEFA are more critical than ever.

In our mission to upgrade informal settlements, we have seen the tenacity and contribution of women, not just in participation but in leading key activities—from community liaison to the supply and installation of essential infrastructure. This endeavour is not merely about improving living conditions but about nurturing community engagement and ownership.

The Human Settlement Development Grant construction budget to designated groups in particular youth and women contractors is a contractual value of R539.6 million. The designated groups have benefited as follows: Black Owned SMMEs with a contractual value of R508.4; Women SMMEs with a value of R84.6 million and Youth SMMEs with a contractual value of R35.5 million.

We also have women benefiting meaningfully in road construction projects currently implemented in our province by SANRAL. We have 299 women-owned entities benefiting from R2 billion worth of road construction packages. More than 240 women have also been capacitated in road construction by SANRAL. But even more important is the fact that more than 1600 women are working on road construction projects in our province. These numbers are set to grow as the Eastern Cape implements more socio-economic infrastructure projects in the next five years.

Honourable Minister, our resolve to complete housing projects and our ongoing efforts to ensure project close-out remain unwavering. The lessons learned here are invaluable for future projects and underscore the need for enhanced contractor management and quality assurance.

MEC Mani-Lusithi has led a successful crusade of unblocking historically stalled projects and has already achieved significant progress, with the Department successfully reviving 58 out of 87 blocked projects.

This achievement not only demonstrates our capacity to overcome administrative and logistical challenges but also highlights the importance of collaborative efforts with implementing agents to bolster human resource capacity. However, challenges persist, including payment delays due to various administrative issues, and the impact of budget cuts.

Furthermore, the escalation of building materials prices has necessitated additional funding applications and strategic partnerships to mitigate these impacts and ensure the continuation of projects. In addressing these challenges, the government is committed to enhancing our communication strategies and partnerships.

By leveraging collaborations with all stakeholders, we aim to amplify the contributions of women contractors and showcase the transformative work underway in our communities.

Minister, in summary, while we acknowledge the challenges faced, our achievements thus far and the strategies we've employed to address setbacks underscore a future of promise and potential for the Eastern Cape Province.

Our resolve to improve service delivery, functionality, and collaboration within the Department and with external partners will propel us towards achieving our vision of accessible, dignified, and sustainable human settlements for all. We continue to work together with determination and unity of purpose to realize this vision.

As we look forward, let us embrace the lessons learned, celebrate the progress made, and renew our commitment to overcoming the challenges that lie ahead. Together, we can achieve a future where every citizen of the Eastern Cape Province has access to safe, sustainable, and dignified housing.

Let me thank all the women gathered here for your unwavering support and dedication to making a difference in the lives of the people we serve.

Happy International Women's Day.