



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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Speech delivered by the Deputy Minister of Tourism, Tokozile Xasa, at the occasion of the Tourism Month Women in Tourism event

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In the year that we celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Freedom Charter, we are at a perfect moment to reflect on the meaning of freedom for all who live in South Africa.

Economic liberation and wealth creation are central to supporting that freedom, and it also sits at the heart of our work in the tourism sector to create a South Africa that advances the inclusive development of all its citizens – including women.

In doing this we need to take into account the needs, priorities and opinions of both men and women and ensuring that both can benefit equally from social change and economic growth.

Obtaining the full participation of women requires overcoming deeply entrenched discriminatory attitudes and challenging the existing power structures. Although we have made great strides as a country in the past 21 years, the tourism sector specifically has not seen the level of gender equality that reflects the demographics of the country.

The United Nations World Tourism Organization global report on *Women in Tourism 2010* found that women make up a large proportion of the formal tourism workforce. While they are well represented in service and clerical level jobs, they are poorly represented at professional levels, and typically earn 10% to 15% less than their male counterparts.

Tourism offers the potential for women's leadership, however, women still only represent one fifth of all tourism ministers and tourism board chairs globally.

In March 2016, the Department of Tourism will launch the Executive Development Programme for women in the tourism sector. This follows the study conducted in 2011 by the Tourism B-BBEE Charter Council to assess the state of transformation in the tourism sector.

Not surprisingly, the study found that there are a low percentage of women at board and executive management levels of large enterprises in the tourism sector. The low percentage was attributed mainly to the unavailability of women managers in the sector with the required qualifications, skills profile and experience for promotion to the executive management and board positions.

To address this challenge, the Department will partner with a distinguished South African business school to provide an Executive Development Programme for women in the tourism sector. We will provide in-depth training at the core of running a successful business such as finance, strategy, leadership, marketing, organisational dynamics and globalisation, governance and ethics etc.

The programme is envisaged to be accredited at National Qualification Framework (NQF) level 8, and tuition fees will be covered by the Department. Because the programme is meant to empower women, candidates will be drawn from all the nine provinces and local levels.

So what is it that stands in the way of meaningful women participation in our sector? Some of these include:

- Fewer educational opportunities and limited access to information.

- Skills development that is limited to certain occupations and positions.
- Segregation in occupations that carry low status and undermine self-confidence.
- Multi-tasking resulting in no free time or energy to participate in public affairs.
- Restrictions to access to finances due to lack of records for previous business success.
- Cultural constraints on mobility of women.
- Scarcity of job opportunities at local level resulting in brain drain in search of opportunities.
- What are we as the National Department of Tourism doing to make an impact on eradicating these barriers to women participating in our sector?

Our first priority is to involve as many of our stakeholders from within the sector, as well as those in education and academia to partner with us in programmes that provide skills development for our people – with a specific focus on women and the youth.

We start right at school level to impart a passion for our industry to learners doing tourism as a subject at school, and to students at TVET Colleges studying tourism and hospitality. Our National Tourism Careers Expo is a success story of which we are very proud, as it enters its 7th sustainable year in existence in 2015.

We have worked hand-in-hand with the Tourism and Education leaders in the Provinces, the hospitality sector, as well as our stakeholders at CATHSSETA to produce this annual Expo to educate our youth on the potential career streams available to them in the tourism industry.

Building the capacity of tourism sector human resources is also merged into our Rural Development initiatives. Based on a needs assessment, 5 capacity building workshops reached 500 individuals from local municipality officials, and community representatives, to SMME's, local authorities and traditional leaders. Work will be ongoing in the identified rural nodes of uMkhanyakude, Bushbuckridge, Vhembe, and Dr RS Mompoti, Pixley ka Seme Districts as well as the Maloti Drakensberg Route.

An innovative Food Safety Programme pilot has introduced a new career path within the hospitality sector. Unemployed hospitality and tourism graduates are being trained as Food Safety Assurers in hygienic food handling, preparation and storage in partnership with 65 hospitality establishments in Limpopo, Mpumalanga and Kw-Zulu Natal.

In 2014/15 we trained 100 Assurers, and a further 10 unemployed university graduates who have studied environmental health and food nutrition were trained and placed as mentors. This programme has been very successful, and is ongoing.

The Tourism Buddies, Chefs Who Share and Sommelier Programmes have all shown great success with the number of learners placed in experiential training positions in the industry.

Equally, we are empowering women in the tourism space to make their voices heard, and prepare them to take the lead in driving the sector forward.

In 2014 we held the inaugural Conference of what has become known as "Women in Tourism". Our themes centred on "Respect", "Representivity", "Recognition" and "Results. We have started on a national mobilisation that will see provincial chapters of Women in Tourism established.

In 2015 we will continue to lobby the United Nations World Tourism Authority to collaborate with us on the development of women in our sector.

Ladies and gentlemen, for as long as there are women anywhere in this country who have to battle every day to make ends meet to support their families – our job as women and as South Africans is not yet done.

The South African government has a clear vision and mandate to guide the processes of developing laws, policies and practices that ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men in all spheres - from government, to the workplace, the community and the family.

Tata Madiba once said: "It always seems impossible until it's done". Let us remember that as we continue to dedicate ourselves to the task of empowering the women in tourism to fill their role in the industry now and in the future.

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you.