



## Courageous Agents of Change Women's event in Kuruman

The Department of Small Business Development (DSBD) in partnership with its agencies the Small Enterprise Development Agency (Seda), Small Enterprise Finance Agency (sefa) and the John Taolo Gaetsewe District Municipality on 31 August to 01 September 2023 hosted Courageous Agents of Women's event themed "Accelerating Socio-Economic Opportunities for Women Empowerment".

The evening belonged to women past and present who have curved their names into the upper echelons of women's business in modern times. Captains of industry graced the occasion to share their wisdom and knowledge with aspiring female entrepreneurs.

Kuruman is regarded as the "Oasis of the Kalahari" and played host to the historic celebration of women in business. It is a small town in the Northern Cape province of South Africa. Kuruman is known for its scenic beauty and the Eye of Kuruman, a geological feature

that brings water from deep underground. The abundance of water

produces an unexpected swathe of green amidst the barren plains and is known as the Oasis of the Kalahari.

The Courageous Agents Women's event conceded with the Women's Month celebration, to honour the gallant women of 1956 led by heroines Albertina Sisulu, Lillian Ngoyi, Sophie De Bruyn and the 20 000 other women who marched to Union Buildings to protest the draconian and discriminatory Urban Areas Act law passed by the then apartheid government. Women entrepreneurs were honoured and reminded that more empowerment, investments, and mentorship of women are still far off the mark, and a lot still needs to be done for women to occupy their rightful spaces in the business world without any fear of discrimination.

Over 100 female entrepreneurs honoured the event to witness the commemoration of heroines in the business world.

Ms Florence Masilabele, MMC for Economic Development and Planning presided over the opening and welcoming of guests with a beautiful and warm welcome.

She called on women to take advantage of the business opportunities made available by the advent of the blue economy as well as partake in endeavours by government and the small business portfolio.

"If you educate a man, you educate one individual, but if you educate a woman, you educate a nation. These are the words of Ghanaian idiom which are applicable in this juncture as we celebrate hard working women of South Africa this evening," said Ms Masilabele.

"Seda provides development support to SMME's and Co-operatives that are not able to attract commercial credit and it is committed to providing these entities with the best service and expertise in innovative and creative ways," said Ms Masilabele.

Ms Ntokozo Majola, Enterprise Development Executive at Seda cited motivational words to all aspiring female entrepreneurs who came to witness and listen to their heroines as they narrated their stories to the world.

Ms Majola further enlightened the attendees on services rendered by Seda and how they benefitted female owned businesses such as SMME's and Co-operatives respectively.

"We are working very closely with sefa and they have financial products and services to qualifying SMME's and Co-operatives through a hybrid of wholesale and direct lending channels to service vast sectors of our economy like manufacturing, logistics, mining, agriculture, and construction etc,"

"In all the named sectors, we prioritise women entrepreneurs first and ensure that they do get all the support they need and deserve. It would be disastrous if we neglect women businesses as they are the cornerstone of our economy, just

as the women of 1956 who fought and defeated the apartheid government of those days," Ms Majola emphasised.

Seda Operations Manager, Ms Boijane Mshumpea from Free State narrated on Gender Responsive Procurement Policy (GRRP) initiated by government to prioritise procurement from female-owned businesses by the state departments.

"Women businesses have to be backed up so that they can grow and nowadays women owned businesses are doing well more than those owned by men in every aspect of businesses," she said.

Ms Ntokozo Majola, Enterprise Development Executive at Seda said "Women should conquer fear and show the world that they have overcome all forms of prejudice to become doyens of business and take up opportunities made available to fully participate in the mainstream economy as well as expanding their skills," Ms Daku elaborated.

"(DSBD), Seda and sefa are here to assist you to set up your businesses also organise favourable finance packages to suit your plans and pockets till you are able to service the package," said Ms Daku added.



“The Department and its agencies have a responsibility of stepping in and assisting women in business to access data about trade opportunities and on how to forge business linkages as through the SheTradesZA Hub that is aimed specifically at women owned businesses.

The mandate of the DSBD is to lead and coordinate an integrated approach to the promotion and development of entrepreneurship, small businesses, and co-operatives, and ensure an enabling legislative and policy environment to support their growth and sustainability,” she said.

“The SheTrades ZA platform enables South African women entrepreneurs to have access to global markets and its objective is to connect

at least 50 000 women owned businesses to markets by 2023. This is part of South Africa’s contribution to ITC’s goal of connecting three million women owned businesses to markets. Ms Daku elaborated.

“As women in business, we need to develop our own networks and workstreams that sustain our businesses and we must be as deliberate about building strategic networks and sharing information,” concluded Ms Daku.

