

Women ‘executives’ a threshold of diversity in a workplace versus service delivery

Report by Vusi Shabalala (3rd edition)

Images by Sane Khumalo

As we continue from the 2nd edition of our story, one would realise that the issue is not about the positive or negative assessment of women in senior positions but is rather about their bravery and the guts they have in facing their respective counterparts head-on. Otherwise, ‘no man is an island and all men are born of a woman’. Therefore one would seek to understand that women have a very critical role to play in the successes of any institution, being it child care, home, church, social network, work, education, disaster, divorce, love, politics, business, sport, you may name the list further. The following offices and managers are henceforth under a positive spotlight.

Ms Dudu Fihlela, the Regional Manager for eThekweni Region. She is one of a kind in that she manages quite a significant number of personnel cope and with the mandate to render overall responsibility and control over professional services, districts services, property management, administration, human resource management, supply chain management, Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), finance as well as Occupational Health & Safety (OHS) within the region. Two district managers also report under her leadership, namely, eThekweni and ILembe Districts.

One of Ms Fihlela’s major pockets of excellence which still remains within the media domain is the construction and launch of Public Works’ eThekweni Conference Centre in Mayville, Durban. This achievement came in the wake of several months of deliberations where after an old building was converted from a no-longer utilized existing concrete shed to a ‘state-of-the-art’ conference centre in just ten months. Construction commenced on the 23rd of May 2013 and was completed on the 31st of March 2014, at a cost of approximately R 11 898 821.13(Incl. VAT). The Conference Centre boasts one large conference with a seating capacity of approximately 550 delegates and three other different sized multi-functional commission rooms capable of seating fewer numbers and a Minister’s office suite facility. In addition to the conference rooms, an entrance foyer, exhibition space, necessary ablutions and minor function catering facilities is provided. The entire facility is also accessible to persons with disabilities. Adequate parking facilities are also provided for staff, visitors and paraplegics. The mission and the provincial government’s cost-cutting measures drive with this project was to provide meeting venues for the Department of Public Works, Districts and other Government Departments. Furthermore, the project impact to the community is that it promotes government initiatives such as women empowerment within construction, support to the National Youth Services (NYS) and other community upliftment projects in that 19 job opportunities has thus far been created.



Above (left) is Mrs Reinette Harris, Senior Manager: Risk Management and Compliance with Mrs Nokukhanya Mando, Senior Manager: Security Management on the right.

Mrs Nokukhanya Mando who heads the Directorate Security Management at Head Office has recently joined the ranks of Public Works and it would quite be unjust for one to express more on highlights of her component rather than to pinpoint the importance of her directorate within the system. The security management in any institution serves an integral part of an organisation. This means that security management should enable a department to implement an effective security management systems in accordance to the department's 'Vision', 'Mission', 'Strategy' and 'Culture'. It is with a high esteem to recognize that a very critical position is led by a woman. The expectations therefore are very high, such that Mrs Mando has to deliver on a structured and documented set of interdependent processes, practices and procedures that must be embraced and implemented by the entire staff compliment at all levels within the department in order to plan, direct and execute all required activities.

It is therefore every official's responsibility to understand and accept that the Directorate Security Management serves that part of Public Works' overall management system that provides the structure to enable identification of potential threats to the department and which will in turn establish, implement, operate, monitor, review and maintain all appropriate measures to provide assurance of effective measurements of associated security risks. In my opinion, the effective implementation of the security management systems by the directorate will contribute to the department's overall confidence levels and optimization of resources which will ultimately: enhance the department's credibility; improve the resilience of the department; enable the department to be flexible in response to security challenges; continually improve the department's capacity to manage security challenges and introduce a core language and processes for security risk management.

The Directorate Risk Management and Compliance which is headed by Ms Reinette Harris is also crucially attached with quite intricate mandates. This component has more to do with providing advice to the Head of Department on any potential risks to the existence of the department and its profitability. Furthermore, it identifies and assess threats and place plans accordingly for if things go wrong then implement informed decisions on how to avoid, reduce and transfer such risks. It can be safely stated that Mrs Harris is quite responsible to managing Public Works' risks as attached to all its employees, stakeholders, reputation, assets as well as interests of stakeholders. Naming and shaming of all alleged corrupt employees within an institutions normally stems from the service delivery output and outcomes through concerted efforts of risk

management and compliance. It would be safe to state that the directorate recognises that it will continue to systematically manage and regularly update its risk profile at strategic, operational and project level to explicitly address uncertainty and facilitate continuous good governance, quality and productivity improvement. As part of the risk management process, the Department appreciates that one of its core risks is compliance with statutory obligations. It is thus committed to not only identifying its mandate but also to monitoring the levels of compliance by all personnel and implementing change where necessary.



Above (left) is Ms Xolile Ntanzu, Senior Manager for Asset Management with Mrs Yandisa Mzotsho, Senior Manager for Contractors and Consultants Management (right), based at Head Office

Mrs Yandisa Mzotsho is the Senior Manager for the Directorate Contractors and Consultants Management which drives the leading role to the management of contractors within the built environment and infrastructure delivery sector on behalf of the Province of KwaZulu-Natal. Expectations are therefore high that the Directorate will significantly contribute towards skills development for contractors on certain capital infrastructure projects which will ultimately directly or indirectly boost the economy within the province through job creation. The recent highlight was the 2015 Provincial launch of the Eyesizwe Contractor Development Programme (ECDP) which through an established Contractor Forum will be able to undertake an activity whereby all individual contractor problems, stumbling blocks within the built environment are identified and amicable resolutions put in place for effective infrastructure service delivery.

The Directorate Operations Coordination is managed and led by Mrs Asanda Nene and this is one but a core position that possess a great deal of work and workload. This component is attached to collaborative planning, organising and coordination which involves shared planning, establishing priorities jointly with the team involved; assigning resources accordingly with sensitivity to the competing demands faced by the Chief Directorate Operations and Public Works at large. This office is expressed by building plans together prior to action and ensuring that plans and resources align with their evolving interests and needs. It further involves timely monitoring, evaluation and work refinement to deliver on the department's mandate of supporting self-determination. What is of interest with Mrs Nene's directorate is that employees involved are offered opportunities for self-development and orientation and knowledge management so that when a new employee takes up a position he or she falls within an already established relationship and team structure. From the old school of thought,

one would consider such positions to be mostly managed and headed by males but the woman profiled in this piece has proven the odds wrong.

Asset Management may be regarded as a component that deals with the systematic process of operating, maintaining, upgrading and disposing assets in a cost effective manner. For your understanding, Public Works' Directorate Asset Management is led by Mrs Xolile Ntanzu, who has recently been appointed in the hierarchical ranks. The concept might be understood from various meanings each according to its field of operation. For the purpose of our article, the directorate is solely assigned to the management of state assets, such as public buildings, public-private partnership assets. It is a component that encompasses the provisioning of advice in the procurement of appropriate assets; maintaining, upgrading and operation of such assets and the management of assets at the end of their respective life cycle. It may also be agreed that key stages which are of importance for the management of assets may include planning (determination of asset requirements); acquisition (procurement of assets to meet an identified service need including assessment of procurement option); operation and maintenance (the management and use of an asset to deliver services including maintenance) and disposal (treatment of an asset that has reached its useful life cycle or is worn out). There are two Sub-Directorates within the Asset Management Directorate, namely, Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and Property Valuation. GIS exist mainly to support and ensure that location information is complete and accurate on the register, including the collection of GIS data (coordinates, cadastral info. etc) from various other state organs and assist with aerial and location maps for the provincial assets. Property Valuation is responsible to ensure that assets in the register have accurate values.



Above (left) is Ms Xolile Ntanzu Senior Manager for Directorate Asset Management at Head Office with (on the right) Mrs Ntokozo Mbatha former District Manager for uMzinyathi District Office and currently Deputy Manager for District Services at the Midlands Region

In a nutshell, the Directorate Asset Management exist mainly to manage the Provincial Immovable Asset Register. The management of immovable asset includes the following areas: Recording of all state / provincial land to ensure complete and accurate records of immovable assets in the Province and such assets are occupied by the provincial departments to support the service delivery activities that they perform; the registration of assets into the name of the Provincial Government of the Province of KwaZulu-Natal; the payment of property rates to all municipalities; this is done in terms of Municipal Property rates Act. The Act makes provision for the land owner to pay property rates, the Directorate would then conduct the verification of invoices from the

municipalities and process for payments through the department's Finance Section where after reconciliation of accounts for proper allocation is ensured.

A brief profile is on Mrs Ntokozo Mbatha, former District Manager for uMzinyathi District, which is situated in deep rural areas of the province. It also serves Msinga Municipality, which is regarded as one of the poorest local municipality and often requires service delivery attention.

Under the leadership of Mrs Mbatha the District has in the previous years succeeded in providing effective service delivery despite minimal budget allocation and staff capacity. Some positive highlights of her office term period include amongst others the following:

Impact registered in strengthening of service delivery: Mrs Mbatha has strengthened and established strong relations with the municipalities that she served. She has attained a positively proven record in ensuring the healthy maintenance of inter-governmental relation and balanced coordination of multi-socio structures within the district as she equally once manned crucial positions as the District Secretariat and Chairperson on the Operation Sukuma Sakhe (OSS) wing.

It must be reported that Mrs Mbatha has been transferred to Midlands Regional Office where she serves as Deputy Manager for District Services. In her tenure as District Manager, she initiated and invited the Office of the Premier to the District with an aim at addressing issues that would seek to change peoples' lives with a significant approach to the identification of individuals within the poverty stricken areas who will have roles and responsibilities to undertaking such massive assignments. In achieving this goal, Mrs Mbatha arranged and organised meetings at various intervals which were in response to amongst others; understanding the National Council of Provinces agenda matters; supporting all multi-party visits to the district; the coordination of Provincial Cabinet sittings in the district and the hosting of the Provincial service delivery and community outreach programmes.

In 2012, uMzinyathi District was awarded with a "silver award" at the Premier's Service Excellence Awards ceremony held at Inkosi Albert Luthuli ICC, Durban. Since that accolade, the district became a support and advisory to other departments with strategies around service delivery improvement. Mrs Mbatha was also presented with a letter of commendation from Mr S. Haskhe of the KZN Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs for the support she rendered towards the preparations of the Batho Pele project by the department.

We further profile Mrs Buthelezi who joined Public Works as a District Manager for uMgungundlovu from the 1st of June 2010 with nine heads of various sections reporting direct to the District Manager. In the district structure there is a core section known as inspectorate headed by Mr. S Burns (Control Works Inspector Electrical Mechanical) with 8 works inspectors, Ms L Shange (Control works Inspector Structural) supervising six works inspectors and Mr M Majozi (Structural works inspector) Supervising 5 works inspectors. The other core section is building maintenance headed by Mr T Bekwa appointed as a Chief Artisan with 23 staff compliments under his control. There are also support sections headed by administration officers such as Auxiliary Services and human resources management with two officers, finance section headed by District

financial officer, acquisition, stores and assets headed by three administration officers. In total, the total staff compliment stands at 71.

uMgungundlovu District is a fully operating office providing unplanned maintenance services to various Provincial Government Departments. The line of reporting is under the leadership of Operations Chief Directorate and Southern Region management. The main clients are Department of Education where maintenance requests are received from various schools and provincial state owned office namely the Departments of Agriculture, Transport, Public Works, Social Development as well as the Office of the Premier and Provincial Parliament for the continued maintenance of all Provincial state owned facilities.



Above (left) is Mrs Cebile Buthelezi, District Manager for uMgungundlovu District office with Mrs Asanda Nene (right) the Senior Manager for Operations Coordination at Head Office

As I conclude, I strongly stand firm on my opinion and contention that in today's era of change, the empowerment of women in senior positions should be a priority and not just blinkers that would obscure progress of service delivery. This is based on the premise of the principles of women empowerment which include the following: the treatment of women fairly at work; promotion of education and training as well as professional development for women; establishment of high-level corporate leadership for gender equality and continuous measurement and public reporting on service delivery achieved by women. The Department of Public Works carries a star and stands to be counted amongst corporates in its efforts towards the advancement of women as individuals and equally as public servants for the betterment of all communities they serve. Women executives will in the future remain a threshold of diversity in a workplace versus service delivery. Public Works will lead in building communities through women empowerment.