

Women 'executives' a threshold of diversity in a workplace versus service delivery

Report by Vusi Shabalala (1st edition)

Images by Sane Khumalo

There is today a global call for companies, enterprises (big and small) and public administrations to foster and implement the appointment and or inclusion of female employees in executive positions or in super-elite boardrooms. The placement of women in senior positions has been a focus over decades, and yet the ratio of women in top posts has remained adamantly unchanged in the past years. In some big institutions including government, early progress has shown decline. The absence of gender balance and other manifestations of diversity at executive and or senior management levels is indicatively not a 'women matter' but it is a competitive disadvantage. It is one of the concerns to all South Africans, including Public Works family, whether we are aware of this imbalance or not. Is anyone out there buying into the call?

Today, consensus has emerged worldwide that women have 'power'. Yes, power. You may define it in your own making of opinion. Biblical history may also persuade our understanding that this 'power' referred to herein may have been when it all began in the '*Garden of Eden*' or was it during the times of '*Samson & Delilah*'. The main reason that there are few women at the top is because of cultural legacies that were and have not been challenged but instead honoured.

Let me take you to a cruise where we highlight some powerful women in the entire world including South Africa, who serve and served in highest executive positions.



Above (left) is Mrs S Linda General Manager for the Branch Property Management and (right) Mrs BNJ Makhaye Senior Manager for Directorate Human Resource Management (HRM) both at Public Works Head Office

As at 22 January 2015 we hail the following world's female Presidents and business leaders from the west, namely; Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė; President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner of Argentina; Jamaican Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller; Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany; President Michelle Bachelet of Chile;

Prime Minister Erna Solberg of Norway; US former Secretaries of State, Hillary Clinton and Condoleezza Rice; President of Kosovo Atifete Jahjaga; Ophra Gail Winfrey, an American philanthropist dubbed the '*Queen of all media*', a talk-show host, actress, producer and media proprietor who is quite influential worldwide; and the list is long as it attests. In addition, historically speaking, the principle of hereditary monarchism has also tended to supersede the principle of gender discrimination, meaning even very sexually regressive societies have allowed female monarchs to rule them from time to time, if that is how the monarchical birth lottery goes.

In the African continent, we boast mother figures such as the Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf; Senegalese Prime Minister Aminete Toure; President Catherine Samba-Panza of Central African Republic as appointed; Malawian President Joyce Banda. Both Presidents Banda and Sirleaf have just committed to using their positions to improve the lives of women across the continent. They both worked together to accelerate these efforts.



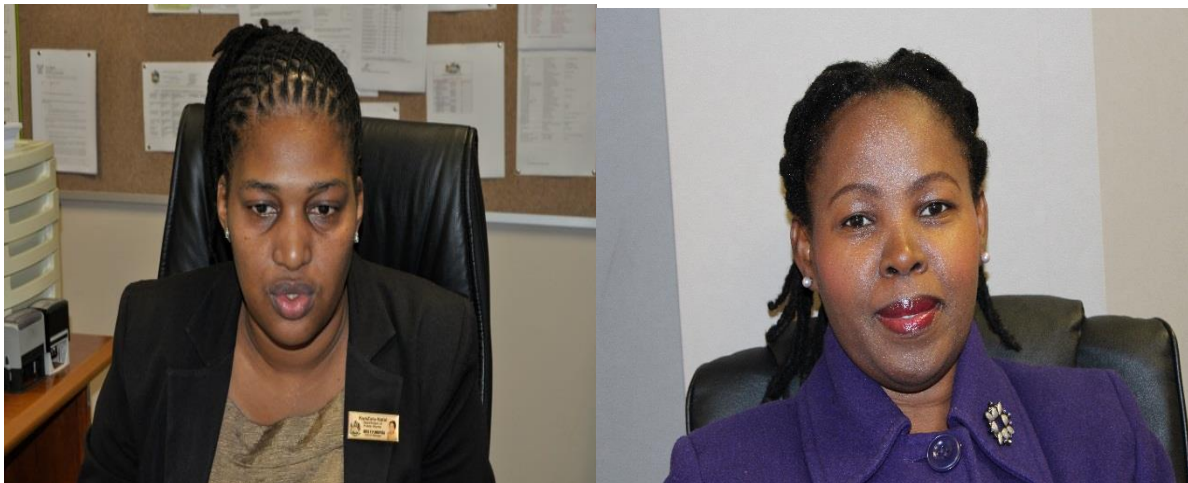
Above (left) is Ms D Fihlela, Regional Manager for eThekwin Region with (right) Ms A Khan, Senior Manager for Legal Services at Head Office

South Africa also has its share when 20 000 women staged one of the country's largest demonstrations as they marched to Pretoria's Union Buildings on the 9th of August 1956 to present a petition against the carrying of passes by women to the prime minister JG Strydom. This is today a blue print which gave birth to South African women leaders such as Nkosazana Clarice Dlamini-Zuma, who is Chairperson of the African Union (AU) since 2012. Former Deputy President of South Africa between 2005 and 2008, Ms Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka who is currently the United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of United Nations (UN) Women since the 19th of August 2013; Gill Marcus who became the ninth Governor of the South African Reserve Bank and the first woman to hold the position.

As we turn the next page, we are not surprised to note with enthusiasm and feeling of elation that KwaZulu-Natal Department of Public Works also receives the accolades it deserves as there are more than ten women in senior management positions with Mrs Sindi Linda topping the hierarchy as Senior General Manager for the Chief Directorate Property Management. For the purpose of balanced reporting, we highlight an "**A-List**" of women 'big-wigs' from KZN Public Works. These are women who have been placed in positions, with each employed with roles and responsibilities attached to their post/component which are not detailed herein. We henceforth value and honour Ms Dudu

Fihlela, Regional Manager for eThekwin Region; Mrs Nokukhanya Mando for Security Management; Mrs BNJ Makhaye for Human Resource Management; Mrs Yandisa Mzotsho for Contractors & Consultants Management; Mrs Zanele Dlamini for Budget & Accounting Services; Mrs Asanda Nene for Operations Coordination; Mrs Glenda Dayaram for Real Estates; Ms Andaleeb Khan for Legal Services; Ms Reinette Harris for Compliance and Risk Management; Ms Philile P Mbuyisa the District Manager for Umkhanyakude; Ms Ntokozo Mbatha, the former District Manager for Umzinyathi and currently heading the position of District Services at Midlands Regional office; Mrs Cebile Buthelezi, the District Manager for uMgungundlovu; Ms Xolile Ntanz, the Senior Manager for Asset Management.

Having spent some precious time to interrogate some of the women mentioned above in their official capacity, I have observed in my analysis, opinion and from a '*communication perspective*' that they are brilliant, ambitious, eloquent, learned to the course, caring mothers, **firm**, assertive, charming, attractive, smart, beautiful and **tough**.



Above (left) is Ms P Mbuyisa, District Manager for UMkhanyakude District, North Coast Region with Mrs N Mando, Senior Manager for Security Management at Head Office

Let us remind you that Public Works also prides itself to a group of female officials in the Middle Management Services (MMS) bracket, who are not mentioned in this piece, who also directly and indirectly pose a '*positive*' threat to their male counter parts as they show the agility, vim and verve by slowly closing in towards the ranks of Senior Management Services. Researches and surveys have been conducted by various academia and the findings have been quite exciting in that it became evident that governments and enterprises/ organisations are implementing measures to increase gender diversity in their executive positions. This also supplements the fact that female managers, like their male counterparts, are ambitious to becoming executives by virtue of their academic background and expertise but they may tend to be less visible due to the nature of their stature and culture. However, they are indeed confident in what they do, due to the powers invested in them to do their work versus the positive results of service delivery.

It is agreeable that changes show explicitly clear that women are better off, even though the top faces of executives at both business and government including South Africa and KwaZulu-Natal Department of Public Works remain adamantly male. However, there will be a course for change. To be continued, please read the 2nd and 3rd Editions....

