



**Keynote Speech by
Dr Nobuhle Nkabane, MP, Deputy Minister of Mineral Resources & Energy of
the Republic of South Africa, at the 13th Annual Women in Mining Conference
& Career Expo held on 23 February 2022, at Indaba Hotel, Fourways**

Programme Director
Delegates from African Countries
Representatives of Mining Companies
Representatives of Government and State-Owned Entities
Representatives of different companies
Representatives of Women organisations
Esteemed Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning

It is with great pleasure and honour to give a keynote address on this important event. Let me start by expressing my sincere gratitude to Intelligence Transfer Centre (ITC) and partners for putting together this 13th Women in Mining Conference and Career Expo. The conference will give women the platform to share valuable information and engage on critical issues that affect women participation in the mining and mineral industry.

The DMRE acknowledges that the exclusion of women and inequality in the mining and mineral industry remain a global problem despite the efforts that are made worldwide. Women are excluded in employment, business, and at community level. When women participate in the mining sector, they are given limited support.

A series of studies conducted by Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) on the assessment of some of the South African mining companies on progress made towards gender transformation and mainstreaming, revealed that the mining industry has clearly struggled to promote gender transformation. This is manifested by the continued domination of men at the decision-making levels of employment.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Government of South Africa has good intentions of transforming the country and as such initiated intervention strategies to address exclusion and discrimination of women in the mining and mineral workplace. Mining Charter targets were adjusted to provide for Historically Disadvantaged Individuals (HDIs) at various levels of appointment as follows:

- 50% of board and executive management with 20% women
- 60% senior and middle management with 25% women
- 70% of junior management with 30% women

The Minerals Council of South Africa was established to monitor the progress of its members with respect to the Mining Charter targets. As part of its monitoring role, the Minerals Council identifies challenges faced by its members (women and men) in achieving these targets and engages with the DMRE for immediate attention and revision where necessary.

According to Minerals Council of South Africa 2018 Women in Mining in South Africa factsheet, the number of women working in the mining sector has increased significantly in the past 15 years or so from around **11,400** in 2002 to around **53,000** women in 2015, increasing to **54,154** in 2018 which is equal to 12% of the total workforce in the mining sector.

South Africa lags behind other mining countries such as Australia and Canada, which are still relatively low, however have a slightly higher representation of women in mining at 17% and 16% respectively.

Konsake et al., (2021) study on “Creating Gender Inclusive Mining Industry: Uncovering the Challenges of Female Mining Stakeholders” revealed that less than 20% of women are appointed in the core mining operation of the leading mining countries in the world with Australia at 16.1%, Canada 16%, Mexico 14.9%, South Africa 13.2%, United States 13%, Chile 8%, Indonesia 6.7%, Ghana 6%, Peru 5.7%, and China 3%. Women are not only underrepresented but their presence in the managerial positions are not noteworthy¹.

According to Bloomberg, in ²Forbes (2019) article on “Why the Mining Industry needs more women” just one in 20 global firms is headed by a woman. Mining is lagging in its progress on gender equality. 2018 numbers show the industry has the second-largest median gender pay gap in the UK at 24.9%. It is clear, that, women experience

¹ Konsake BA, Sakyi-Addo BS and Dumakor-Dupey, 2021, Creating Gender Inclusive Mining Industry: Uncovering the Challenges of Female Mining Stakeholders, Elsevier: Resource Policy NO 20.

² Linda Doku, May 2019, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/woodmackenzie/2019/05/24/why-the-mining-industry-needs-more-women/?sh=208574cf585c>

lack of career advancement, discrimination in decision making, remuneration and general abuse in the mining sector. This needs to change.

The benefits of diversity are widely acknowledged and cannot be disputed anymore. Companies that promote inclusivity and foster cognitive diversity have been proven to outperform their peers and tend to be more creative, innovative, and productive. So why has the mining sector been slow to change? And what can be done to address the gender imbalance? Let's engage and contribute towards transformation of the sector.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is an assumption that independent women with control over their finances are likely to have successful businesses. According to ³Ashleigh Rennie 2021 article on challenges facing women entrepreneurs in South Africa; the World Bank put Africa at the top of the list when it came to the growth rate of female entrepreneurs worldwide in 2019.

In South Africa, more than half of our population is female, but Mastercard Index of Women Entrepreneurs (MIWE) found that women make up only 19.4% of business owners, making us 45th in the world when it comes to female-run companies. That's a long way behind Uganda (39.6%), Botswana (38.5%), and Ghana (36.5%)⁴.

I must say the number of entrepreneurs in the mining and mineral industry are even less. To make things worse, as women try and move forward to overcome these gender biases, the pandemic worsened social and cultural obstacles, taking them a few steps back.

There are more economic opportunities available in the mining and mineral value chain that contribute to building inputs industries and providing mineral based feedstock into the rest of the economy. However, it is difficult for women to participate and contribute to the country 's economy in this sector.

Some of the key challenges that prevent women from entering the mining and mineral value chain include the following:

- access to finance,
- gender bias,
- lack of market access,
- lack of information on existing opportunities,

³ Ashleigh Rennie, 2021, <https://www.sage.com/en-za/blog/4-challenges-facing-female-entrepreneurs-in-south-africa/>

⁴ Ibid

- poor or limited networking opportunities,
- inadequate role models,
- lack of business skills and education.

Training institutions, financial sector, nongovernmental organisations and THE government need to work together to close the identified gaps. These gaps are also mirrored in the energy sector.

The department commits to work with Development Funding Institutions, Commercial Banks, Business development Institutions and Venture Capitals to ensure that capacity development issues such as mentorship, development of bankable business plans, funding and related are covered and that women are provided with relevant information and possible training.

In August 2021, President Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa in his keynote address announced that 40% of government procurement of goods and services should be from women owned companies. The President further launched Women Economic Assembly (WECONA) formed by a partnership between government, the private sector and women organisations and businesswomen in October 2021. The role of the assembly is to facilitate the participation of women-owned enterprises in industry supply and value chains. This is a demonstration of government support for the advancement of women.

The Mining Charter III also provides for procurement of goods and services from women-owned enterprises and its implementation is monitored by the DMRE through the minerals and petroleum regulations branch.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining (ASM) is another area which women need to consider as a business opportunity. The Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining sector has played a very minor role in the economic development of South Africa because of the focus on large scale mining. South Africa continues to struggle to transform Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining.

In 2019, the DMRE has launched and implemented “WOMENDIGGERS Programme” which is a flagship empowerment pilot project in Taung, North-West Province. The programme aims to increase the number of women with requisite skills in the mining sector especially small-scale mining, to increase representation of women in the mainstream economy and in the mineral and mining sector.

To date, 22 women completed their theoretical training, 15 completed their practical training, and the department is in the process of assisting them to apply for mining

permits. The DMRE has set aside funding to support women to secure mining permits by assisting with application process. Once the pilot is successful; the programme will be implemented nationally.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mining is a hostile and hazardous environment that may affect workers' health and safety, especially women. You will agree with me when I say Gender-based violence is one of the most alarming issues in South Africa and even Honourable President Ramaphosa declared it as the second pandemic in 2020. South African mining communities have the highest level of Gender Based Violence (GBV).

Women in mining experience emotional, physical, sexual violence and harassment, especially those who work closely with men in isolated spaces or underground. The global statistics show that 35% of women and girls has reported GBV and most of the time it is unreported. For women in the large-scale mining, sexual harassment is commonly noted in South Africa and Tanzania where women provide sexual services to men for their assistance⁵.

In February 2022, Rio Tinto released a report on “⁶Workplace Culture at Rio Tinto” which found out that there are inappropriate and harmful behaviours across Rio Tinto, including bullying, sexism and racism in the company both in Australia and South Africa.” In all these practices, women are the most affected.

The President is also at the forefront of the implementation of the National Strategic Plan for Gender Based Violence and Femicide. In this very same month of February 2022, he signed into law the following pieces of legislation to address the scourge of violence and abuse of women and children and these are also applicable to mining and minerals industry:

- The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act Amendment Bill,
- The Criminal and Related Matters Amendment Bill, and
- The Domestic Violence Amendment Bill.

Lack of women Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is one of the challenges faced by women in the mining industry. Most of the mining companies use the men PPEs that are not designed to suite the women's body structures and needs which expose them to health risks and sexual harassment. The Mine Health and Safety Council

⁵ Lucy Atim, Mesiya Mwangoka, Dr. Laura Martins, and Sophie Rickard, 2020, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in the Mining Sector in Africa: Evidence and reflections from the DRC, South Africa, Tanzania & Uganda

⁶ <https://www.riotinto.com/-/media/Content/Documents/Sustainability/People/RT-Everyday-respect-report.pdf?rev=db65caa21e6843508b890790fcc8abc4>

developed the guidelines for women PPE for the industry to follow and comply with. Gradually we are seeing mining companies starting to introduce women PPEs.

In addition, the Occupational Health and Safety Regional Tripartite Forum (RTF) was established as a co-operative to promote occupational health and safety in the various mining regions.

The DMRE monitors the implementation of Mine Health and Safety Act (MHSA) No 29 of 1996, as amended, which outline the health and safety of women in the workplace including sexual harassment.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to announce that the department is now drafting the Mining Sector Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Strategy which will address the exclusion and discrimination of women in the industry and advocate for women participation in the sector.

Let us continue to engage and deliberate on these issues and build capacity of women to participate meaningfully in the value chain of mining and mineral sector and contribute to the economy of this country. Let us indeed move from the integration to the development of women in mining because when you empower a woman you empower a nation.

I want to assure you once again that the department is currently drafting the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Strategy for the Mining and Minerals Sector. You will be consulted for inputs. I also want to assure you that gender mainstreaming and economic empowerment and transformation will become a reality in the Mining and Energy sectors of our country.

I wish you successful deliberations.

I thank you