

Women must empower themselves - deputy minister

By [Genevieve Quintal](#)

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PRETORIA: South Africa progressed beyond the stage where women need to ask for emancipation, Deputy Arts and Culture Minister Rejoice Mabudafhasi said on Thursday, 30 July. They do, however, need to empower themselves to thrive across the economic landscape, she said.



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She was speaking at the launch of Women's Month at the Union Buildings in Pretoria.

"Women must continue to play a lead role in eradicating poverty and stimulating sustainable development of our economy," she said in a copy of her speech prepared for the event.

"As we seek to transform the economic conditions in our land, we must also remember we are not doing this for ourselves, but for generations to come. That is why it is important that we pass the baton to the young women of South Africa."

The theme of this year's women's month was "Women United in Moving South Africa Forward".

Mabudafhasi said the theme was built around socio-economic empowerment issues, where the country will see women playing an active role in their own empowerment and by extension in the empowerment of their society.

"We must afford young people opportunities to learn, acquire skills and contribute meaningfully to the development of our society," she said.

"I am proud that over the past 21 years South Africa increased the access of girls to education, initiated bursaries and training programmes for young women and allocated funds for women entrepreneurs."

Inspiration to women

Mabudafhasi said it was encouraging to see women such as African Union commission chair Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma in high positions. This was an inspiration to women across the continent.

She also welcomed the AU's declaration that 2010 to 2020 would be the "African Women's Decade".

Political activist Sophie de Bruyn, who led the historic Women's March of 20 000 women to the Union Buildings on August 9, 1956 to protest against them being forced to carry passes, will also be attending Thursday's event, along with Minister of Women Susan Shabangu.

De Bruyn, who led the march with activists Lilian Ngoyi, Rahima Moosa, Helen Joseph and Albertina Sisulu, is the only surviving member of this group of stalwarts.

In 2016, South Africa would be marking 60 years since the Women's March.

"This historic moment provides us with a critical opportunity to take a retrospective look at the road that we have travelled, assess the progress, and position women's empowerment at the centre of the country's and global agenda," said Mabudafhasi.

She called on government, business and civil society to work together to move African women forward.

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