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MEC's OUTREACH: EXPOSING RURAL WOMEN TO ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

The Department of Economic Development, Environment, Conservation, and Tourism (DEDECT), led by MEC Bitsa Lenkopane, convened a gathering on 8 November, at Sannieshof Lodge and Events for women, primarily from rural areas of North West Province. The aim of this outreach programme was to empower women about government services and enterprise opportunities that can improve their socioeconomic conditions.

This initiative is part of a broader government plan to stimulate economic growth and address gender disparities in rural communities, aligning with the Government's Integrated Rural Development Sector Strategy launched in 2023. It also supports sustainable economic development and social transformation goals as outlined in the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) Act.

DEDECT empowered women in business and aspiring entrepreneurs by providing information on support services the Department and its agencies offer, such as small business and cooperative registration, empowerment funds, business turnaround and recovery programmes, liquor license applications, opportunities in the biodiversity and tourism sectors, and compliance with business regulatory laws. Other participating government institutions, including the NYDA, SEDFA, SARS, NWGB, Goldrush, V Slot, NEF, WECONA, and others, shared insights into their services. Local SMMEs were also afforded the opportunity to showcase their products, demonstrating women's commitment to actively participating in and growing their businesses.

In her address, MEC Bitsa Lenkopane expressed satisfaction at the turnout and the strong interest shown by women eager to learn about the government's offerings, demonstrating the need for rural women's empowerment to drive economic growth, create jobs, and build stronger, more equitable communities.

The MEC also highlighted that the Department's initiatives align with the priorities of the current administration, which is committed to accelerating service delivery and empowering communities through outreach programmes like Thuntsha Lerole. She further indicated the DEDECT's ongoing efforts to collaborate with other government institutions and the private sector to unlock economic opportunities for North West residents. "A core focus of DEDECT, as the primary department facilitating economic development in the province, should be to provide clarity, guidance, and incubation support to our people. Access to information is critical and should not be undermined as it empowers communities to understand and seize the opportunities available and meant to transform their livelihoods. Through this outreach, we want



Let's Grow North West Together

to ensure that women, youth, and people with disabilities are not left behind,” said MEC Lenkopane.

These government outreach programmes are essential to improving public access to government information, enabling communities to engage directly with officials and gain a better understanding of available opportunities. By actively disseminating information, the government fulfils its responsibility to empower communities and respond to their challenges while receiving feedback to enhance service delivery.

