

SPEECH BY PREMIER DR. PHOPHI RAMATHUBA DURING ASHA'S LIFESTYLE WOMEN'S MONTH EVENT

24 AUGUST 2024

Program Director, Ms. Lethabo Joy,
Pastor Josie Sithole,
Ms. Nyeleti Mthethwa,
Ms. Zelda Buitendag, Mental Health Specialist,
Dr. Ellen Moila, Skin Care Orchid Aesthetica,
Dr. Kgoale Moabele, Vysta Aesthetica & Hair Transplant,
Mrs. Mops, TV Reality Star & Businesswoman,
Dr. Patience Mlengana, Businesswoman, Entrepreneur, Teacher, and Published Author,
Host Dr. Mpho Ndou,

Good day, distinguished women of many hats.

It is a profound honor to stand before you today as we gather to commemorate Women's Month—a time dedicated to celebrating the remarkable contributions, resilience, and diversity of women. Today, we are not just here to celebrate; we are here to reaffirm our commitment to advancing women in every sphere of life.

Program Director, we recognize that women in our society wear many hats. Whether as mothers, leaders, entrepreneurs, caregivers, or change-makers, women bear the weight of numerous responsibilities, often juggling careers and family life while also playing pivotal roles in their communities. In this room, we have the backbone of our society—women who nurture, lead, innovate, and inspire.

We can not overlook the reality that many women single-handedly head households, often without support. These women exemplify unparalleled strength and resilience, balancing the demands of raising children, managing finances, and contributing to the economy.

But, ladies, your contributions extend far beyond the home. You are the mentors, the leaders, the community organizers, and the advocates for change. You are the architects of our future, the glue that holds our society together. Your creativity, industriousness, and unique perspectives make you invaluable agents of progress and transformation.

Program Director, as we look around, we see women occupying leadership positions across our nation—trailblazers who have shattered glass ceilings and paved the way for others. From Ms. Tsakani Maluleke, our esteemed Auditor General, to the newly appointed Chief Justice Mandisa Maya—the first woman to hold this esteemed position in our history—these women serve as beacons of inspiration. They have proven that when women are given opportunities, they excel and lead with distinction.

Program Director, here in Limpopo, as we celebrate the first woman Premier since the dawn of democracy, we can not fail to honor Hosi Tinyiko Lwandlamuni Phyllia N'wamitwa II. A South African woman from our province, who endured lengthy court challenges brought against her by a member of the royal family who claimed she should not be allowed to reign because she is a woman. Fortunately, the Constitutional Court ruled in her favor, affirming her as the Senior Traditional Leader, Hosi of the Valoyi (N'wamitwa) people near Tzaneen in the Mopani District.

This ruling directly reversed the Apartheid-era rule of male primogeniture in traditional leadership succession, a practice deeply rooted in the Vatsonga/Machangana community. This landmark decision was not just a victory for Hosi N'wamitwa, but a triumph for all women, challenging patriarchal norms and affirming the right of women to lead.

In the health fraternity, we proudly celebrate one of our own, Professor Salome Maswime. An associate Professor and Head of the Global Surgery Division at the University of Cape Town, an Obstetrician and Gynecologist, and the President of the South African Clinician Scientists Society, she is recognized globally for her research contributions on cesarean sections. Professor Maswime is an unwavering advocate for women's health rights and equity in surgical and maternal care.

Additionally, we celebrate Dr. Vhutshilo Netshituni, the first Black Pediatric Oncologist to graduate from Sefako Makgatho University. Having broken through historical barriers, she now leads the Pediatric Oncology Unit at Pietersburg Tertiary Hospital in our province. Her journey is a beacon of hope and inspiration for future generations of women in medicine.

Program Director, despite these successes, we acknowledge that our journey is far from complete. Cultural norms, gender prejudices, and patriarchal attitudes continue to hinder the full realization of women's potential. These barriers must be dismantled to create a truly inclusive society where women can thrive.

Program Director, as the first woman Premier of this province since the dawn of democracy, I am deeply committed to supporting women through policies that promote inclusion, encourage diversity, and prevent discrimination. We must continue to champion women's rights in education, justice, health, housing, agriculture, and finance, ensuring that every woman has the opportunity to fulfill her potential.

We are working tirelessly to ensure that girls have equal access to learning opportunities and resources. In the realm of justice, we are strengthening laws and raising awareness to combat gender-based violence, ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable and that victims receive the support they deserve. We are also expanding access to quality medical services, empowering women to take control of their health and well-being.

Ladies, while the government plays a crucial role, true empowerment begins within ourselves. Women must continue to uplift one another, share knowledge, and build

networks of support. Men, too, have a vital role in this journey—supporting women's efforts and recognizing that gender equality is not a threat but a foundation for a stronger, more equitable society.

Program Director, as we celebrate this Women's Month, I encourage you all to continue breaking barriers, pursuing your dreams, and lifting one another up. Together, as women of many hats, we have the power to lead change, shape our future, and leave an indelible mark on the world.

In closing, I leave you with the words of Harriet Tubman: "Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world."

I thank you.