

## WOMEN EMPOWERMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The 3<sup>rd</sup> of March is a rather busy day on the conservation calendar as it has been marked as World Wildlife Day (WWD) by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). The same day has also been pinned as Africa Environment Day (AED). This year, AED was commemorated at Phakalane Golf Estate by the Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources Conservation and Tourism through the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA).

The theme for this year's commemoration was "Nurturing nature for sustainable development: A woman's call" and the purpose of the event was to give Botswana an opportunity to broadly embrace sustainable development as well as empower women to explore opportunities in the natural resource sector. The objective of the forum was to examine the role of women in environmental stewardship as well as challenges and opportunities in strengthening the rights of women over natural resources.



*Minister Tshekedi Khama giving a keynote address*

During his keynote speech, the minister of Environment, Natural Resources Conservation and Tourism, Mr Tshekedi Khama said education and economic empowerment of women have a significant potential to reduce poverty. He urged parents to teach children about the environment. He also shared that women reinvest their incomes back into their own households compared to men and that women and children are frequently among those affected by fluctuating commodity prices and natural disasters such as drought and famine.

The minister said women support their families through wages of labor, preserve traditional knowledge, maintain biodiversity and ensure household food security and nutrition. Despite these critical roles, women and young girls continue to suffer the effects of poor health care, education and discriminatory policies.



*Exhibitor explaining to one of the attendees.*

For her part Ms Chandapiwa Sebeela from Meteorological Services said Botswana has started to experience climate related effects in the form of high temperatures reaching 40 degrees. Climate change will also result in diseases, water shortage and frequent natural disasters which affect economic activities, business, biodiversity and ecosystems and the livelihoods of people. She said other challenges include persistence poverty, droughts, high youth unemployment and inadequate distribution of opportunities and undiversified economy. Ms Sebeela expressed that climate change is caused by humans and it is accelerating because of population growth,

consumer lifestyle and reliance on fossil fuels. “Women are vulnerable to climate change because of their roles of collecting water for the family, limited access to education and lack of power, independence and decision making.”, said Ms Sebeela.

The National Community Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM)Coordinator Mr. Boatametse Modukanele said natural resources are a central point in job creation and the same natural resources draw people to Botswana and create employment under hospitality, mostly in the northern part of the country. He said since the turnover of mines is going down, it is high time Botswana invests in natural resources to get people out of poverty. Women have always been and remain the deciding influence on the quality of life and well-being of their families and communities.

Amongst the exhibitors were the women of Kgetsi ya Tsie from the Tswapong area who have worked with Kalahari Conservation Society before in improving profitability of morula harvesting and marketing. A tour around the stalls sealed the proceedings of the day.



One of the exhibitors showcasing their crafts

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