



MEDIA RELEASE

Women in the Waste Industry

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Institute of Waste Management of Southern Africa (IWMSA) encourages women to become part of the Waste Management Industry.

Throughout the world, the women's role has always been expected to be that of mother and homemaker; however that role has evolved significantly over the years into the multiple roles of also being educator, entrepreneur and provider.

It is normal across many cultures that women generally handle waste in their homes. It is stereotypical to assume that woman can only follow a certain career path and remain unempowered, but "many women are unaware of the vast amount of career paths that they can follow in the waste management industry," according to Deidre Nxumalo-Freeman IWMSA Eastern Cape Branch Chairman."

Suzan Oelofse, IWMSA Central Branch Chairman concurs, "There are many diverse roles within the waste industry for women. Many people associate waste management with being a 'dirty' business; however there are also more and more women interested in the field; starting from grass root levels as entrepreneurs, to consultants as well as scientists that are also emerging in the waste management industry."

"It is important for people to see waste as an opportunity and a resource instead of just seeing it as rubbish", Nxumalo-Freeman continues. Oelofse adds, "waste is not the problem we have to address in waste management, it is people's attitudes and behaviour that is the real problem".

Oelofse continues, "Working in the waste industry has opened my eyes to how wasteful modern society has become and highlighted the desperation of the individuals sorting through the waste at landfills to earn a living. There is a dire need for improved waste management services, but waste management continues to be low on the priority list of politicians."

However more women are joining associations and taking control of the situation.

Nxumalo-Freeman adds “Waste Management Co-operatives are another opportunity that are specifically being embraced by the ladies in the communities especially in the Eastern Cape.”

Co-operatives are becoming a very popular initiative in the waste management industry. A co-operative is an independent, self sufficient association of people who join on a voluntary basis to meet waste management needs through the formation of a jointly- and democratically-owned enterprise.

According to Nxumalo-Freeman, approximately 80% of co-operatives in the Eastern Cape alone are run by women. “We have achieved much success with these co-operatives specifically in the Nelson Mandela Municipality area, they have developed the model and hope to roll it out to the rest of the country.”

The IWMSA needs your assistance, to assist the IWMSA to change the perception of the waste industry, and to help with their training and education drives, get involved in the IWMSA’s committee at branch level – join and do your bit for the environment.

For more information contact the Institute of Waste Management of Southern Africa at: 011 675 3464, or visit www.iwmsa.co.za for more information.

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