

# Connecting the dots .....

## Stories of change: Women in Local Government

### **The only way is up for Bongekhile**

#### *Summary*

Bongekhile Mkhando, environmental officer, Pigg's Peak Town Council, Pigg's Peak, Eswatini

Project involvement: Women in Local Government network and mentee

*Bongekhile Mkhando, already successful in middle management, is on her way to the top, thanks to the mentoring on leadership and project management she received as part of the Connecting the Dots project. She is now running a local economic development project to boost the town's economy and has set up a housing project to help low-income families.*

#### *Background and aims*

Bongekhile Mkhando has already reached middle management as an environmental officer for Pigg's Peak Town Council. Pigg's Peak is a developing town, located in the north-west of Swaziland, some 70 km north-east of the capital Mbabane.

When she was given the chance to take part in the Connecting the Dots project, Bongekhile enthusiastically took up the offer, choosing to be a mentee rather than a mentor to help further her career, having identified areas where she felt she needed more growth and learning to get to the next level.

#### *How the project has helped*

As part of the Connecting the Dots project, Bongekhile was assigned two mentors – one to help her with leadership skills, and one to mentor her on proposal writing and project management.

This mentorship has helped Bongekhile to learn and apply new skills, in particular she has learned more about how to approach developing new projects for the council: formulating proposals, developing action plans with timelines and assigned responsibilities, and record-keeping.

Through her mentor on leadership, Bongekhile has learned what makes a good leader, has gained a greater understanding of different leadership styles and how to apply them in the workplace.

#### *Impact*

Thanks to her new project development skills, Bongekhile has planned and is now implementing a project on local economic development (LED) and has set up a housing cooperative to help low-income families.

“The project is still at an early stage, but the mentorship has contributed significantly to helping me develop the project and action plan,” says Bongekhile.

Bongekhile says that the experience has also helped in running her own life, applying leadership skills to how she runs her household and managing a better work-life balance.

“Leadership begins with you as an individual to get people to follow you. This starts at home, not just at work,” she noted.

“I realised I was spending too much time at work and on social media, but am now making sure that I set aside time for my family.”

*Looking forward*

Bongekhile hopes that the experience and skills she has developed will help her get to the top and reach her goal of executive level in the near future.

