

# Connecting the dots .....

## Stories of change: Women in Local Government

### Inspiring young women to break through into politics

#### *Summary*

Cllr Makhandanje Gugu, Siteki Council, Siteki, Eswatini

Project involvement: Women in Local Government network and mentor

*Recognising that something needed to be done to get more women into local politics, Cllr Makhandaye Gugu has become a role model for young people. She joined the Connecting the Dots project to mentor young women and encourage them to break through into politics, but it has also made her realise the mountain they have to climb.*

#### *Background*

Cllr Makhandanje Gugu is a councillor appointed by the Eswatini's national Ministry of Housing and Urban Development. She is keen to see more women, and particularly younger women, go into politics to make more of an impact on women's issues.

#### *Aims*

Cllr Makhandanje Gugu wanted to join the Connecting the Dots project out of concern that there is not enough women in politics to make an impact on women's issues, whether it is laws affecting women's daily lives or and supporting them to be entrepreneurs. She wanted to learn about inspiring and mentoring younger women and girls so she can help them to get involved and break through politically.

#### *How the CtD project has helped*

By being involved in the mentoring programme, Makhandanje learned how to mentor young women and girls. She was able to mentor several young women who were interested in going into politics. Mentoring covered topics such as what they need to start the journey, campaigning skills, and how to reach their goals as councillors.

"It is not only older women but young women and children need to break through politically.

"There are a lot of skills you need as a councillor. I was able to mentor them that as a councillor the skills you should attain are vast - interpersonal skills, patience, and many others," commented Makhandanje.

She has also learned more about dealing with interpersonal relationships, in particular how women politicians can support each other and the value of a network for mutual support.

"Lack of peer support has meant fewer women in politics. We have to support

each other for the target representation ratio to be met,” she explains.

Makhandanje says she is grateful to be a part of the Connecting the Dots project which has made her realise how much there is to be learned.

### *Impact*

Makhandanje has learned that, as a role model for woman in politics, she needs to go out and inspire, mentor and teach women about various aspects of being a councillor, and how they can break through politically. She says that mentoring has helped her understand the challenges young people face in looking to become councillors.

“It was a privilege to me to mentor those young people, and in mentoring them learn the challenges that they face in wanting to be councillors - this is something that we, as current councillors, need to put into place for them to be councillors in the future,” said Makhandanje.

### *Looking ahead*

Makhandanje hopes that more mentoring and encouragement will bring more women into politics to make an impact on women’s issues, as currently there are not enough women representatives.

