

**FREE STATE HUMAN SETTLEMENTS AWARDS RECOGNISE BEST CONTRACTORS**



PROUD:Thabo Mofutsanyane district director Amanda Moleti, left and winner Madoda Khoba.Picture: Getrude Makhafola

***Getrude Makhafola***

Contractor Thotelabogolo will represent the Free State at the upcoming national human settlements awards at the end of this month after the company won the contractor of the year award on Saturday. The province's annual human settlement awards were granted by Premier Ace Magashule and cooperative governance and traditional affairs MEC Olly Mlamleli to contractors from across the province.

Winners walked away with cash, trophies, construction equipment and laptops.

"It is so inspiring to see a person's face light up when they receive a house for the first time. People need shelter and we as contractors come in to help the government deliver in that regard.

"I am thankful for the government's undivided support all these years. I look forward to bringing the national award home," said Thotelabogolo owner Rachel Els.

Her company has been building RDP houses and fixing faulty ones for years in the province. Another winner in the category best priority project: best informal settlement project was Madoda Khoba's Group Two Trading based in Phuthaditjhaba.

Khoba said he had studied to be a teacher but could not find a job for years. He then decided to start his own company. "My parents helped start up the company. I used my father's bakkie as I did not have a vehicle. It was a tough start. I never thought I would one day be awarded for the work I am doing," said Khoba whose company focuses on rehabilitating hotels and informal settlements.

The first phase of Maqhekeng, which used to be an old age home and was then invaded by foreigners after most of the elderly had died, had been completed, said Khoba. At least 200 units have been refurbished so far.

Khoba was appointed to do the work and decided to source out labour in the area. "The crime had escalated in the area. Fortunately, I had the cooperation of some community members so I hired them to work on the project," he said.

The best youth contractor award went to Rehauwe Construction and Development. Mlamleli said it was also important to source services from businesses owned by the youth. "You cannot overlook young people. "We are sourcing their services so we get better developed future contractors who are able to deliver now and in many years to come, as they are the future," said Mlamleli.

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