

## **U20 Submission: Advancing Women’s Economic Empowerment in South Africa’s Property Sector Submitted by: WECONA Property Sector – Phase 1 Study**

The **WECONA Property Sector Study** represents a landmark initiative aimed at transforming the gendered dynamics of South Africa’s property sector, an industry valued at over **R9.3 trillion**. Undertaken as part of **Pillar 5: Economic Power** of the **National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP-GBVF)**, this study demonstrates that meaningful women’s economic empowerment is central not only to inclusive development, but also to the prevention of GBV-F.

Despite notable policy and legislative frameworks such as the **Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) Act**, the **Amended Property Sector Code (2017)**, and the **Property Practitioners Act (2019)**, the representation of women—particularly Black women—in the property sector remains dismally low. The study found that **less than 10% of procurement opportunities** in the property value chain reach women-owned businesses, despite a 40% procurement target in government legislation.

Women continue to face structural barriers in accessing capital, land, leadership positions, and procurement opportunities. This is exacerbated by unconscious bias, underrepresentation in decision-making, and the siloed implementation of gender transformation policies. Additionally, the study underscores the link between economic marginalisation and vulnerability to GBV-F, affirming that economic empowerment is both a rights-based and a safety imperative.

The study was managed by **Mahadi Buthelezi**, CEO of RB Property Group and Lead of the WECONA Property Sector, and engaged **over 20 strategic stakeholders** including government departments (DWYPD, DPWI, National Treasury), commercial banks, academic institutions (UNISA, University of Pretoria), and property industry bodies (SAPOA, SAIBPP, PSCC).

Key focus areas included:

1. **Policies and Regulatory Frameworks:** Analysis of legislative compliance, including SDG 5, CEDAW, the Maputo Protocol, and national acts. Findings revealed strong policy architecture but weak enforcement, poor monitoring, and fragmented stakeholder coordination.
2. **Business Landscape and Ecosystem Mapping:** A comprehensive mapping of supply chain and value chain integration showed women’s exclusion from high-value segments such as real estate development, construction, and property investment.
3. **Training and Skills Development:** The study found persistent skills gaps and limited access to professional networks, mentorship, and enterprise support for women.

To address these challenges, the study makes the following **recommendations** aligned to U20 principles of inclusive urban development and economic justice:

### **1. Strengthen Enforcement of Gender Procurement Policies**

- **Mandate 40% procurement** from women-owned businesses in both public and private property development projects.
- Introduce compliance penalties and monitoring tools to track spend disaggregated by gender.

### **2. Establish a Women’s Property Fund**

- In collaboration with the **Banking Association of South Africa (BASA)** and DFIs, launch a **Women’s Property Empowerment Fund** offering low-interest loans and blended finance solutions for women developers and entrepreneurs.

### 3. Institutionalise Gender-Responsive Urban Planning

- Embed **gender indicators** in urban planning processes, municipal zoning, and infrastructure development to ensure equitable access to land, housing, and commercial property for women.

### 4. Expand Skills Development and Mentorship

- Strengthen **partnerships with SETAs**, universities, and private sector firms to scale training in real estate finance, valuation, town planning, and construction management.
- Institutionalise **mentorship networks** for women across all sub-sectors.

### 5. Strengthen Multi-Sector Collaboration

- Establish a **Property Sector Gender Transformation Council** to coordinate stakeholders, monitor implementation of gender targets, and integrate NSP-GBVF objectives across local, provincial, and national departments.

### 6. Promote Data Transparency and Accountability

- Develop and publish **Gender Economic Participation Indexes** for the property sector, disaggregated by race, region, and sub-sector.
- Monitor progress through collaboration with Stats SA, the Commission for Gender Equality, and industry regulators like the **Property Practitioners Regulatory Authority (PPRA)**.

### Impact and Way Forward

The WECONA Study affirms that empowering women in the property sector is not merely a social justice imperative but also a strategic investment in **sustainable, inclusive economic growth**. With 51% of South Africa’s population being women—and 42% of households led by women—unlocking their economic agency is pivotal for GDP growth, housing delivery, urban equity, and transformation.

The findings from this Phase 1 Desktop Study will inform **Phase 2 (2024–2025)**, which will pilot targeted interventions and track sector-wide transformation through tools such as the **WECONA Economic Empowerment Index**. This next phase aims to drive measurable change through collaborative governance, policy advocacy, and the scaling of innovation-led women’s entrepreneurship in the built environment.

In alignment with the **U20’s global urban agenda**, this submission calls on city leaders, ministries, and U20 networks to champion gender equity in infrastructure development, investment flows, and procurement. The urban future must be one where women are not only beneficiaries but **architects of sustainable, resilient cities**.