

RESULTS FOR CHANGE



Susan Swart took the mic and told her story, in not so many words. By the time she was done relating her story, the whole marquee was on its feet applauding the will and drive of this woman. Swart participated in the 2014 SADC Protocol@Work summit, presenting in the emerging entrepreneurs category. She told her story with passion and every carefully chosen word as she related how she “promoted” herself from survivor to businesswoman.

At 18, when she was in grade ten, Swart left school to search for employment because her parents could no longer pay her school fees. She married at 21 and her husband later left her for his mistress of ten years. The emotional anguish resulting from the years of emotional trauma and abuse finally surfaced after her husband left her and her two kids to fend for themselves.

Her first job was in a shop, where she earned R8 (less than US\$1) a week. She worked there until her sister opened a restaurant and employed her. She worked for her sister for years, all the while dreaming of the better life she always knew she would have some day.

She relates one day in 2010 when she woke up and decided enough was enough. She thought long and

hard about the business ventures she could pursue. She identified the product she wanted to sell, she identified her market and took it from there. She registered a catering business and started with a donated chips making machine. She says the business did not kick off perfectly from day one, but she knew, just as she had always known, that she would overcome.

Swart says she first heard about Gender Links' programmes from the Cape Aghulas Municipality of Western Cape, which is a Centre of Excellence (COE) in Gender Mainstreaming in Local Government. The municipality was asked to identify GBV survivors in the area and Swart was one of the 20 survivors who were identified by the municipality. She started attending the meetings, summits and trainings regularly and got the empowerment and motivation she needed.

"Gender links taught me how to fly! I was encouraged to encourage others and was empowered to empower myself. I want to tell everyone that they can overcome, just like I have. My business is still growing and I know it will keep growing. Gender links has provided me with the platform and the freedom to be the best that I can. The summits and trainings provided got me where I am today."