

Of water affairs and women

 By [Fred Says...](#)

31 Oct 2004

The sub-headline of the advertisement was 'Women in Water Awards 2005'. "In the past, ads with subject matter like this would have been promoting wet T-shirt competitions, it has all changed," was Fred's considered and somewhat whimsical, comment. "Woman have come a long way."

In a fortnight where racial and gender issues, The President, rape, sexuality and AIDS all took top honours in the news, I was convinced that Fred had been "ex-communicando" or out of the country, to make such a statement. With my Windhoek Lager to hand and Fred with his Klippies and water, no ice, I was determined to find out what on earth he was thinking.

The advertisement had been placed by 'the dwaf' in August in the Mail and Guardian.

The illustration in the advertisement, that of an elongated statue of an African woman with a gourd on her head, said it all. It evoked old memories of an Africa in which women were the bearers not only of children, but also of life's other essentials, water and wood. In the rural and poorer communities this is sadly, still too often, the case. Honouring the women's role in water management touched an old truth. After all, cooking, cleaning and life itself is reliant on water, and women do still take the lead in the domestic management of these issues.

Why not honour that role, formally, even if there is the possibility that this could entrench stereotypes that are best forgotten, we argued. And, after all, it took the mighty Queen Victoria (not a male Scottish engineer) to recognize that the festering and diseased city of Glasgow needed clean water, not much else, to make it an environment worthy of human habitation.

If the advertisement had been placed in the latest issue of "Sports Illustrated" (the women in swimsuits edition) the meaning would have been altered fundamentally and perhaps, with more power, we mused.

Elsewhere in the same edition of the "Mail and Guardian", Mbeki's blast and the counter-blast of accusations of racism, male sexuality and AIDS were aired fully. It was comforting that behind the scenes, there were things happening of more practical and immediate life changing import. The supply of piped clean water is, after all, so basic a need.

We left the pub wishing "the dwaf" (The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry) all the best in improving matters of womanhood, water and wood.

ABOUT FRED SAYS...

With piercing blue eyes, a full set of clean underwear, his own hair - although it's mostly on his manly chest now - and stealth-like in his entry into his favourite bosveld watering hole, 'FRED' is clearly a legend in his own laager. An insider with so many years experience in the industry that he's forgotten where time began and advertising ended, he will be writing for Bizcommunity.com weekly to bring us the industry news you thought was safely swept under the rug, lurking there with the rest of South Africa's scandals and dirty laundry! If you dare, all correspondence with Fred can be sent via the editor editor@biz-community.com!

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