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**SOUTH AFRICA**

## SUCCESS STORY

# Course Opens Up New Pathways

**Program trains woman as she continues to gain greater role in politics**



Photo: Zema Semunegus

Conveniently scheduled courses helped Elizabeth Thabethe complete her degrees and improve her work in Parliament.

***“Without the knowledge I gained in the USAID course for Parliamentarians, I would not have been able to achieve this new position. I am excited by the prospect of using the economics knowledge I have gained to improve the life of South Africans,” said Elizabeth Thabethe, South Africa’s deputy minister of trade and industry.***

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Elizabeth Thabethe had been the leader of Cosatu’s (South Africa’s largest trade union) Commercial Catering Workers Union prior to her election to Parliament in 1994. She was later re-elected in 1999 and 2004, serving on a number of committees and caucuses.

Yet, despite her extensive public service, she was unable to obtain her secondary school graduation certificate out of retribution for her anti-apartheid activities in the 1980s. To complete her degree, she joined a USAID special economics education program for Parliamentarians, which had class schedules designed specifically to take place at times permitted by Parliament’s schedule.

The program is taught by South African professors, private sector economists, senior government officials, and professors from Williams College in Massachusetts. Thabethe received her certificate in economics from UNISA (University of South Africa) and immediately went on to the diploma course at the University of the Western Cape, a special program also established by USAID, which she completed in 2006.

She has since been appointed as the country’s Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry.

Thabethe, whose constituency is in Germiston, a city east of Johannesburg, has been a leader in structuring USAID’s course this past year and making arrangements to extend the program to newly elected Parliamentarians. She is outspoken on women’s issues, and was an important partner during USAID’s recent gender assessment.