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Philisiwe Buthelezi is CEO of the National Empowerment Fund (NEF), a development finance institution under the department of trade & industry (DTI). It aims to fund and facilitate broad-based black economic empowerment.

It runs a community development fund and helps black entrepreneurs build shopping malls in townships and buy franchises.

In 2007, Buthelezi was named as the chair of JSE-listed construction giant Group Five.

From 2002 to 2005, she was chief director of BEE at the DTI. In 1993, while with Standard Corporate & Merchant Bank, she became the first black SA female corporate dealer. She joined the SA Reserve Bank in 1992 after a stint at the London office of Banque Nationale de Paris.

Buthelezi received a BA and an MSc in economics from the Sorbonne in Paris and an MBA from the University of Sheffield.