

ISSUE 9 SEPTEMBER 2010

# Achieve

LEADERS IN CLOSING THE SKILLS GAP



## ADDRESSING **Gender Parity**

**Engineering gets  
the feminine touch**



**merSETA**  
MANUFACTURING, ENGINEERING  
AND RELATED SERVICES SETA  
ISO 9001:2008

# Vision

Leaders in closing the skills gap.

# Mission

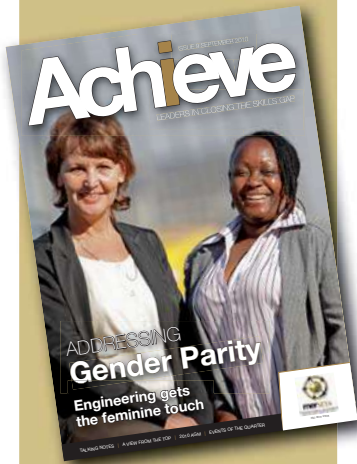
To facilitate sustainable development of skills, transformation and accelerate growth in manufacturing, engineering and related services.



**merSETA**

MANUFACTURING, ENGINEERING  
AND RELATED SERVICES SETA

ISO 9001:2008



#### ON THE COVER

Sheryl Pretorius and  
Malebo Mogopodi



PG. 10

Lauren Klein, flying the merSETA flag high in the United States.



PG. 16

AATP galvanises support to meet skills deficit.



PG. 20

Engineering gets the feminine touch.

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# Talking Notes

This year marks the 54<sup>th</sup> year since women of determination and substance marched to the Union Buildings to protest against the extension of the pass laws to women by the then apartheid government.

**I T IS IMPERATIVE** that we recognise and celebrate all women who have contributed immensely to shaping the future of South Africa. These are women who refused to surrender to the gloom and doom predicted by many of the nay-sayers in South Africa. At the same time, we must acknowledge the entrenched challenges faced by women in our society.

The struggle that needs to be intensified today is mobilising more women to enter the engineering field. I believe that women will play a crucial role in addressing the skills deficit in this sector in the years to come.

Just as women were able to face the tyranny of Apartheid head-on, this same spirit, character and determination must be harnessed to tackle the challenge of skills deficits.

This edition of *Achieve* is specially designed for, and dedicated to, all our wonderful and loving women, *wathinta abafazi, wathinta imbokodo!*

In keeping with our theme, we speak to the AATP Senior Project Manager, Ms Helen Brown. She brings us up to speed with regards to the Artisan and Accelerated Training Programme. We also highlight the role of women in skills development and take a closer look at the ingredients that make a governing board successful. Board member Ms Malebo Mogopodi gives us powerful insights.

When engineering gets the feminine touch, it becomes a masterpiece. I watched in awe as South African Women in Engineering deliberated on water scarcity and discussed an engineering solution to this particular challenge.

“Operation closing the skills gap” is in full swing and we commemorated June 16 in the Vaal Triangle. We used this platform to lobby youth around career guidance and

the opportunities available. It will be interesting to see our young people carve a niche for themselves in the engineering sector in the near future.

In order to convert the unconverted, we also visited Limpopo where the Letaba FET College in Giyani played host to 67 minutes of honouring the stalwart and beloved Madiba, and I must say the exhibition was a blast.

We speak to Senior Manager Ms Sheryl Pretorius. She shares her vision with us and also hints on how she intends to improve service delivery at regional level.

Like women of substance, let's rally around to make skills development a living reality. We must refrain from using employment equity solely as the legislative crutch or a means of meeting targets. Our ongoing efforts should be predicated on the grounds that women can do it and they deserve a break.

Be blessed!



Sibongiseni  
Zinjiva Ka-Mnguni  
Editor



# A view FROM THE TOP

The recent labour unrest in the private and public sectors is a clear indication that labour and employer stakeholders need to consistently meet on middle ground.

**I**N THE LAST MONTH, the auto industry was disrupted by a nationwide strike that has cost both employers and labour billions of rands, while the public sector strike has seen major disruptions to services in education, health and the general bureaucracy.

It is the constitutional right of labour to flex its muscles within the law, and the right of employers to ensure minimal disruption. Protected labour disputes force both parties to keep the negotiation door open to resolve pressing issues.

Inherent in labour disputes are the losses suffered by both parties, but after the initial dispute, labour relations normally smoothen out and get on an even keel. The merSETA, as a quality assessor for training and education in five sectors, is well aware of the disruption to training schedules that labour disputes bring. But this does not mean in any way a reduction in standards.

We assure stakeholders that our primary motive for existence is to ensure skills development in the country. Our performance for the financial year 2009/2010 has

“We do not intend resting on our laurels. For not a moment can be wasted in ensuring a viable skills pipeline into South African industry.”

been exemplary and illustrates again that we are “leaders in closing the skills gap”.

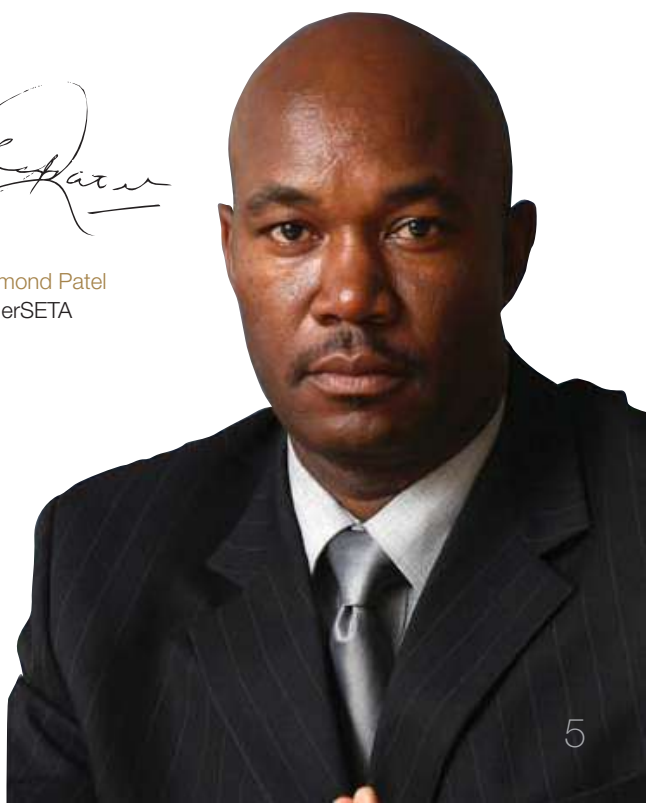
We do not intend resting on our laurels. For not a moment can be wasted in ensuring a viable skills pipeline into South African industry.

Coming on top of the general economic malaise, our sector in particular has been hard-hit by the recent strike. But that management and labour could sit around the table and negotiate their way out of the wage and benefits impasse is clear testimony to the resilience of the motor industry. It has been here for about a century – and will stay for another century.

Sincerely,



Dr Raymond Patel  
CEO merSETA



Sheryl reveals her

# FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

By Sibongiseni Ziinjiva Ka-Mnguni

Sheryl Pretorius is no stranger to the skills development fraternity as she was previously the Regional Manager in the Western Cape. Working her way up and showing increasing signs of excellence, she was appointed the Coastal Manager in July 2007.

**S**HE IS NOW the Senior Manager: Client Services, responsible for all seven merSETA Regional Offices. She has been in the skills development fraternity for more than 20 Years and has received numerous accolades, including the Best Innovative Idea of the Year in 2005; Manager of the Year in 2006 (as Regional Manager of Western Cape); Internal/Independent Award for the Best SETA Employee in 2006 (South Africa); Outstanding Teamwork and Service Delivery in 2007 with the Eastern Cape Regional Office; the Team of the Year in 2008; and also in 2009 with the KwaZulu-Natal Regional Office.

## FUNCTIONS OF REGIONAL OFFICES

Sheryl says regional offices provide vital services such as guidance and advice on different learning areas, implementation of these learning areas, skills and needs analysis, planning and completion of workplace skills plans and reports, accreditation, workplace approvals, increasing the capacity of training committees, shop stewards and skills development facilitators as well as other assistance.

Regional offices are assisted by regional committees which are industry-based structures. Their duty is to ensure stakeholders are capacitated accordingly and the

offices also build strong relationships with stakeholders to ensure confidence is high and communication channels are clear.

Each regional office has a Client Relations Manager responsible for the day-to-day running of the office. The merSETA has the following regional offices: Western Cape, Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga & Limpopo, Free State & Northern Cape, Gauteng North & North West and Gauteng South.

Regional Offices have done tremendously well and this is the reason the merSETA was endorsed as one of 2009/2010 best employers. It is also ISO accredited.

“We’re a well-oiled machine and sometimes when the wheels threaten to come off, we all jump in and roll up our sleeves. We all work towards the same goal which ultimately is the well-being of the merSETA.”

## THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

Ecstatic about the strides made in the development of women in South Africa, Sheryl says after decades of fighting for equal rights it is fitting to have the month of August put aside to honour women.

“We have legislation in place which looks at empowering women. If you look at the number of women in



“We’re a well-oiled machine and sometimes when the wheels threaten to come off, we all jump in and roll up our sleeves. We all work towards the same goal which ultimately is the well-being of the merSETA.”

Senior Manager: Client Services - Sheryl Pretorius

Parliament, for the first time women are well represented. There has been a change in the workplace where more and more women are moving into high-profile management positions.”

As we celebrate Women’s Month, Sheryl says the solution for the under-representation of women in business lies in identifying talent, training and mentoring women to occupy management positions. “There are women with the potential to become excellent leaders and decision makers -- most however lack training and mentorship from a strong leader,” commented Sheryl.

Sheryl says as the country has moved substantially on women rights, but warns there is still much to be done. “There are still social and cultural barriers to women’s advancement which society as a whole has to break down,” she says.

#### SUPPORT SYSTEM

Juggling a full-time job and being a CEO at home takes energy and adds to strain when travelling between regions. “The amount of travel, working interventions and work in far-flung regions give me limited time at home. When I return home, I appreciate it so much more,” she says.

Sheryl was quick to point out that her husband is a pillar of strength. She gives credit to him for understanding her passion, drive and the underlying love she has for the merSETA and skills development. “He supports me 110% at all times. Without him and my sons’ support, I doubt I’d be able to give my job the total commitment that is required.”

She went on to thank the constant support she gets from her two assistants, Tersia Du Plessis and Anneline Page, without whose assistance she would not be able to keep on top of everything.

#### CUSTOMER IS KING

Sheryl lives by the motto that the Customer is King. “I live by this adage and I believe that if everyone at merSETA lives, breathes and believes in this adage, the merSETA will reach the ultimate goal which is ZERO-dissatisfied clients.”

At a regional level, merSETA clients expect outstanding service. Like other organizations, there are internal processes that can at times hamper service.

“One of my goals is to ensure our internal processes are streamlined and the regional offices align themselves to

“The Customer is King. I live by this adage and I believe that if everyone at merSETA lives, breathes and believes in this adage, the merSETA will reach the ultimate goal which is ZERO-dissatisfied clients.”

become a world class service delivery organisation.”

Sheryl says planning and implementation of Government and merSETA strategies to meet the National Skills Development Strategy III (NSDS III) targets is important. She emphasises that delivering a quality service tops her agenda.

#### IMPROVING CUSTOMER SERVICE

“A number of surveys have been carried out that clearly show where our weak areas are. A Champions working group has been put in place to ensure that the client’s expectations will be met.”

She didn’t mince her words when she said clients should look forward to an improved Discretionary Grant process in terms of turnaround times and improved communication channels.

She says her unit intends to improve communication with stakeholders by having an interactive website, which will be a one-stop shop in terms of service, with the emphasis on user friendliness.

She also adds that they will introduce a new Management Information System (MIS) to replace the existing Datanet system. She also promises quicker turnaround times related to the returning of calls, emails and solving queries. Sheryl said a major improvement in the professional attitude of the staff is also something she is working on, together with her team.

A staunch believer in skills development, Sheryl says constant training and capacity building of staff is pivotal





Sheryl Pretorius

in ensuring the merSETA stakeholders receive accurate information from all regions.

#### SYNERGY

Sheryl says synergising all institutions for the betterment of skills development is critical.

“We need to work together to identify areas of interest for all parties. merSETA understands the importance of improving the partnerships already in existence, such as those with Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges and Higher Education and Training (HET) providers. However, at the same time the merSETA needs to ensure that industry comes to the party.”

Pressed further, she said excellent initiatives are already in place that could be used as best practice benchmarks. She commented that in the Eastern Cape, the merSETA has signed a cooperation agreement with the Provincial Education Department and one of the major employers in the area.

“The objective of the project is to establish a permanent hands-on and practical vocational training facility in the East London/Eastern Cape, covering the automotive mechatronics engineering skills area to meet the market requirements of all automobile manufacturers.”

“The amount of travel, working interventions and work in far-flung regions give me limited time at home. When I return home, I appreciate it so much more.”

#### RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The Provincial Human Resources Development (HRD) strategy identifies nodes for rural development. In expediting rural development, the regional offices will identify sustainable opportunities in their regions and commence with the process. One of the Key Performance Areas that the Client Relations Managers will be measured against will be the participation in initiatives aimed at developing rural areas.

#### LIVING THE LEGACY

Asked how she would like to be remembered, Sheryl says “as a person that makes a positive contribution, not only in areas of her responsibility, but to the merSETA and skills development as a whole”.

This entails strengthening service delivery and ensuring merSETA staff have the necessary skills to deliver on their mandate.

“Due to my passion and being extremely interested in the development of underprivileged and poor people, I really cherish the moment when I change someone’s life in a small way,” concludes Sheryl. **A**

# Lauren Klein, FLYING THE merSETA FLAG HIGH in the United States

By Own Correspondent

When the Global Young Leaders Conference (GYLC) presented Grade 12 learner Lauren Klein with the opportunity to travel to the United States with 300 other youngsters from all over the world, she leapt at the chance.

**L**AUREN KLEIN attended the Global Young Leaders Conference (GYLC) which took place recently in Washington D.C. and in New York City.

She joined 100 other South African's and was selected for the honour of representing her school in this prestigious experience due to her excellence in academic achievement. According to Tonia Jacobson, the Director of admissions at GYLC, students must be nominated to receive an exclusive invitation for the Global Young Leaders Conference.

GYLC is a unique leadership development program that brings together outstanding young people from around the world to build critical leadership skills in the global context.

Students have the opportunity to learn from and exchange ideas with today's world leaders in the challenging and dynamic environments of Washington D.C. and New York City.

Students meet with top business leaders, policy officials, lobbyists, journalists, diplomats and academics. Young leaders are encouraged to analyse issues, form and advocate positions, and influence sound decision-making. Lauren, a Grade 12 pupil at the Fred Norman Secondary

School in Gauteng, got a lifetime opportunity to attend the conference. The trip opened her eyes to the many cultures and beliefs that characterise outstanding young people from all over the world.

"Coming from South Africa, I'm comfortable with people from all walks of life. However the cosmopolitan nature of both the group that we were in, and the streets of New York and Washington were an eye opener," says the proudly South African teen.

"I never actually realised how proud I was to be a South African until I heard what the other students from all over the world had to say about our country - only words of praise and respect."

Next year, Lauren intends on studying towards a Bachelors Degree in Health Sciences with the ultimate aim of becoming a medical researcher.

Proud Mom, Priscilla was full of praise for the merSETA.

"When we were faced with challenges like changing Priscilla's flight details at extremely short notice, Science, Engineering and Technology (SET), Project Manager Azwifaneli Tshisikamulilo stepped in and helped with the whole process. It didn't take him long at all to sort everything out."



Clockwise from top right: Lauren and her friend - Bright lights, big city, nothing's too much for Lauren to handle; Lauren Klein - The future might be murky, but with the right attitude you can see where you're going; Lauren relaxing at home.

When questioned about the role of women in Science, Lauren was upbeat.

"I think that South Africa has been moving in the right direction for the last 10 years. You see women represented at the highest levels of business and Government."

Students returned home from GYLC with a greater understanding of their roles and responsibilities as citizens and future leaders in an international community. GYLC Scholars are recognised as meeting the highest criteria in academic and leadership.

Lauren does have some advice for women who want to succeed: "Go with what your heart says," she recommends. "If you love something you can only succeed."

Lauren attributes much of her academic success to the Star Schools programme that is sponsored by the merSETA, which she has been attending for the last three years. However, she suggests that Star Schools could be improved by closer cooperation between the programme and schools as to how the syllabus is rolled out.

"Often Star Schools covers a subject and the school only covers it months later, or vice versa. If this happens then

you've forgotten half of what you learned: we need to fix this."

With young woman like Lauren on the move, it seems that South Africa finally has the direction that we have been searching for in our quest to eliminate gender disparity. merSETA wishes her every success in her future endeavours. **A**

"I never actually realised how proud I was to be a South African until I heard what the other students from all over the world had to say about our country - only words of praise and respect."

# ADDRESSING GENDER PARITY

By Sibongiseni Zinjiva Ka-Mnguni

Achieve caught up with Governing Board member Ms Malebo Mogopodi to explore progress around gender parity and her role in promoting skills development.

**H**OW SIGNIFICANT is Women's Month to you? This is the month to celebrate women, but I believe women have to be celebrated throughout the year as their contribution is immense in our society.

**How far have we come in terms of developing and promoting women in South Africa, looking at government institutions and the corporate world?**

Whilst we have very progressive pieces of legislation and a special Ministry to take care of women, amongst other things, not much has been done in this area, particularly black African women who remain marginalised and at the bottom of the ladder in the workplace. We see only few selected women who have made it, particularly in the corporate world.

**What is the secret behind the success of the merSETA Governing Board?**

With different constituencies carrying different mandates, we work towards a common goal, and that is the development of the workers. We plan and agree on strategic objectives and put processes in place to achieve the set objectives. This we do without compromising our mandates.

**How long have you been serving on the merSETA Governing Board and how important is it to comply with corporate governance?**

I have been serving on the merSETA Board for eight years now. It is very important to comply with corporate governance as it keeps us in check, makes sure that we don't flaunt the constitution, regulations or the law. It is

important to comply because then we will not get any audit findings. To ensure we comply and continue to do that without fail, we appointed a Corporate Governance Manager, Mr Tom Mkhwanazi, whose main responsibility is to guide and assist us in terms of Corporate Governance.

**Women are still at the receiving end in terms of gender parity in their workplace. What can be done to rectify this situation?**

It all starts with the way we conscientise our children. We expect girls to be confined to non-technical occupations. Women, and girls in particular, should be exposed to technical occupations and senior positions because it is not the gender of a person that does the job. It also needs to be mentioned that black women remain the most marginalised as opposed to other races.

**What are some of the projects you are involved in and what have been the milestones of these projects?**

I'm involved in a Project in Orange Farm involving the training of "Backyard Mechanics". Toyota McCarthy through Dave Collins was the first employer to understand and agree to support unemployed individuals in Orange Farm involved in Motor Mechanics. The intention is to help these individuals to be able to set up their own workshops, their own enterprises. We wish to have many more "Dave Collins", to take on more of these "Backyard Mechanics". If you go through the streets of our townships, you will come across a Motor Mechanic, an Auto Electrician, an Exhaust Welder or a Spray Painter. All these informal businesses operate on the street corner, without proper systems and support but they do perfect jobs. Why can't we organise them, train them, assist them



“It is very important to comply with corporate governance as it keeps us in check, makes sure that we don’t flaunt the constitution, regulations or the law.”

Board Member - Ms Malebo Mogopodi

to set up their own businesses or cooperatives and they will in return contribute to the economy of this country. The other project I assisted to set up is a New Venture Creation on CNC for unemployed youth in Katlehong. The challenge these youth is facing is who will buy their final products i.e. bolt and nuts, bearings, mag wheels etc? How committed is our industry and big business to the development of our communities and promotion of local content?

I am also currently assisting women to set up a Community Project around Sewing for Schools, a Computer/Information Centre and Recycling Projects in my ward. This is still at concept phase. Another important project is the Numsa Retrenched Workers Project funded through merSETA RAP. Our intention is to get our members re-trained, not for the sake of re-training but for sustainable livelihoods. All these projects are 'work in progress' so there has not been much done yet. I will report progress on these projects.

**Why is skills development your passion and what can be done to fast track skills development, especially in remote areas?**

Making a difference in people's lives is the reason I wake up and go to work everyday. Skills development is one revolution through which we can change the lives of our people. I am very happy that we agreed as the merSETA Board that we need to concentrate on remote areas of this country to ensure development. We will table proposals to develop areas like Ga-Motlatla, Mokgalwaneng, Ngcobo, Dimbaza, Ramabulana, Bushbuck Ridge, Naboomspruit, Ga-Mogoto. These are areas where there is still no sewerage, electricity or running water. We will organise the unemployed, particularly the women into NGOs/CBOs or Co-ops. We will assist them to get funding to start their own projects for sustainable livelihoods.

**What are some valuable lessons learnt during NSDS II?**

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Adult Based Education and Training (ABET) remain valuable and fundamental in our endeavours to change the material conditions of our members and the previously disadvantaged majority of this country. It is through RPL that we can bridge the imbalances of the past. It is through ABET that we can address the illiteracy problem of our people to access further training and development. All these have not been easy to achieve as training in general is a contested terrain. New venture creation and support for NGOs/CBOs and Co-ops have also been very valuable for me.

**What is your advice to women in the deep rural areas where opportunities and gender equality still remain a challenge?**

Remain the strong woman you have always been. Be ready to fold up your sleeves and get to work. Be ready

**"I want the Numsa Retrenched Workers Project to be a success as a token of appreciation for their loyalty to Numsa."**

to confront the challenges of life and a patriarchal society. Most importantly shout for me to hear because I remain your servant to bring opportunities your way through merSETA. Prove to the world that your gender is not a barrier or a constraint.

**The 10th annual report on employment equity has been released, and the report shows gross under-representation of women in top management positions. Is the act still relevant in addressing gender inequality in the workplace?**

The act is still relevant though not in the same character. Though I agree that there is still gross under-representation of women in top management, I don't agree that that includes all women as stipulated through the Act. Black African women remain the most marginalised, whilst in most work places white people get preferential treatment. As a result, you find white males replaced by white females and the company claims to have complied with the Employment Equity (EE) Act.

In my view all women "may" be previously disadvantaged, but not in the same way. Comparatively speaking, white women enjoyed more privileges as opposed to Indians, Coloured and Black Africans at the bottom of the priority list. If we were to correct this imbalance, then we have to list women in terms of starting with the most marginalised i.e. Black Africans.

**What legacy would you like to leave one day?**

As a merSETA Governing Board Member, as a National Training Co-ordinator in the metalworkers family responsible for training and development of our members, I want to ensure that I leave the footprints representing good work and my efforts in changing the material conditions of our members.

I want the Numsa Retrenched Workers Project to be a success as a token of appreciation for their loyalty to Numsa. I want to leave a trail of very successful community Projects as it is also my political responsibility as an ANC activist in my ward, branch and as a Youth and Skills Development Portfolio Committee Member. **A**

# New-look Young Welder Competition launched by SAIW

The South African Institute of Welding (SAIW) in conjunction with its members, main sponsor merSETA, and sponsors has announced that entries are open for the 2010 Young Welder of the Year Competition.

“We have made some fundamental changes this year,” says Jim Guild, SAIW executive director. “While the overall winner must have entered all three categories - carbon steel, stainless steel and aluminium - we are allowing entries for one category only. This will broaden the participation in this important competition.

Also, the winner will not, as in the past, automatically be sent to the WorldSkills competition but will have to reach a minimum standard in the months after the local competition. In this regard we urge all employers to do whatever they can to facilitate the training of their candidate should he/she win,” says Guild.

All young welders in South Africa, who will not be more than 22 years of age on December 31, 2011, are invited to enter the competition, the first round of which will consist of an assessment of entrants in the different regions.

Once the finalists have been selected, they will each receive a copy of blueprints of the exercises that will

have to be carried out. They will have the opportunity to practice and perfect these before the four-day finals to be held in Johannesburg from 4th to 8th October 2010 at the Institute’s welding school.

The competition will be judged by a panel of industry experts and the winner, if he/she attains the required standard, will attend the 41st WorldSkills Competition to be held in London in October 2011.

“Entrants will have to show that they have mastered four welding processes – shielded metal arc welding (SMAW), gas tungsten arc welding (GTAW), gas metal arc welding (GMAW) and flux-cored arc welding (FCAW) – across the three materials or in their chosen material,” says Guild.

## Entries close 17 September 2010

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

Liz Berry on 084 446 0629 (Western Cape)  
Ian Elsdon-Dew on 031 201 4850 (KZN)  
Etienne Nell or Frans Vorster on 011 298 2100 (Gauteng and other regions). A



## 2010 YOUNG WELDER OF THE YEAR COMPETITION

The Southern African Institute of Welding (SAIW) in conjunction with its members, partners and sponsors is proud to announce that entries are open for the 2010 Young Welder of the Year Competition.

**FIRST PRIZE: R15 000 PLUS A CHANCE TO REPRESENT S.A. AT 2010 WORLDSKILLS IN LONDON**

### PRIZE STRUCTURE

**National** Overall Winner R15 000 | Overall Runner-up R5 000 | Carbon Steel Category R5 000  
Aluminium category R5 000 | Stainless Steel category R5 000

**DEADLINE EXTENDED TO 17 SEPTEMBER 2010** Visit [www.saiw.co.za](http://www.saiw.co.za) for more info

# AATP GALVANISES SUPPORT TO MEET THE SKILLS DEFICIT

By Own Correspondent

Achieve took time out to talk to the Accelerated Artisan Training Programme Senior Project Manager, Ms Helen Brown, about the inroads being made by the programme.

## **W**HAT IS THE Accelerated Artisan Training Programme and what does it seek to achieve?

This programme started in 2007 in response to the Joint Initiative on Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA) which highlighted the critical shortage of qualified engineering artisans in our sector. The fact that we accelerate the route to a Section 13 trade test is not desirable under normal circumstances. However, the alternative of waiting four years and only achieving an average 30% first time trade test pass rate was seen as a risk to not achieving the economic growth and related job creation objectives of National Government.

The project was therefore scoped with two major differences. Firstly, Apprentices entering the programme have to have higher entry qualifications and secondly, the structure of exposure to the curriculum is highly regulated and monitored. In this way, the project has to date entered 2,792 and successfully qualified 883 apprentices since the start of the programme in 2007. All candidates who have passed the trade test remain in industry and continue to build on their experience.

### **How far are you in terms of meeting these objectives you set out to achieve?**

Our original project objective was to train 5,000 new apprentices in this way. By the end of 2010, we will have reached in excess of 3,000 AATP apprentices. Although the original target has not been achieved, the collateral effect of this project is that it has stimulated the sector into reconsidering apprentice training which became less popular after the learnership system was introduced.

### **Is AATP the answer to the shortage of skills in the manufacturing and engineering sector?**

No, it's only one part of the solution - but I can confidently say that this initiative has made a significant contribution to rebuilding the capacity of industry and training providers in our sector for the task of training apprentices. Before the start of this project, our statistics showed that the merSETA had less than 2 000 apprentices registered – and now that the project has reached its fourth phase of implementation, the statistics show that apprentice registrations now exceed the 10 000 mark.

### **What is the buy-in from employers in terms of taking the programme forward?**

At the end of 2009, we commissioned a review of the project where a specialist panel was tasked with appraising the success of the implementation of the AATP. In this process, many apprentices, training providers and employers were interviewed – and the general consensus amongst employers was that the programme should not be terminated but rather expanded.

### **How much has been invested in the programme?**

The project is funded from two sources – the merSETA discretionary grant fund (R150m) for phases one and two, and the National Skills Fund (NSF) fund (R136m) for phases three and four. From the merSETA funds we have already committed R116 30 000 with R 90,935,084 paid out on results – and from NSF funds R100 462 500 has been committed with R29 603 500 paid out to date.

### **How do employers get involved in the programme?**

Not all employers qualify to join this programme. If we





Senior Manager - Ms Helen Brown



AATP Team from left: Zanele Tshabangu, Mthunzi Lubando, Gabisile Kubheka, Morongwe Molefe, Hlengiwe Mathe and Helen Brown.

consider the original objective of speeding up the number of apprentices qualifying and entering the labour market, we have to be sensitive to the employment prospects once the trade test has been passed. For instance, the infrastructure projects, particularly the new power stations at Medupi and Kusile, are drawing a significant number of qualified artisans in certain trades – so if employers are in the tiered supplier system to these power stations, we have greater chance of apprentices finding work immediately after the trade test. The same goes for a qualified motor mechanic, where a critical shortage of these artisans has been identified.

Employers also need to take cognisance of the resources required to manage large groups of apprentices through institutional learning and on site; the extra coaches and mentors required; the potential disruption to normal work processes.

A third consideration for employers is whether they can train more than 10 apprentices in each intake. This is important for the AATP project team in that its efficiency lies in processing bulk registrations and achievements rather than single cases which require extra staffing resources.

Any Employer interested in the AATP should be recommended to the Project Coordinators by their merSETA Client Liaison Officer.

#### **How long does the programme take?**

For the motor related CBMT trades, each of the four levels takes approximately six to eight months – while for the metal time-based trades, we are achieving a successful trade test pass, 20 to 22 months after the start of the training. This all depends on how the apprentice applies him/herself to the learning and practice requirements – and how the employer manages this process. The more dedicated resources the employer has, the more efficient the process.

#### **How does the quality compare with traditional training methods?**

There is no difference in the curriculum of this apprenticeship and the normal four-year apprenticeship. The difference is in the way in which the curriculum is structured during institutional training - with an upfront arrangement at the workplace on uninterrupted exposure to the tasks required against the curriculum. In the four-year approach, the apprentice goes on institutional training when available and is exposed to workplace tasks as they arise.

#### **What have been the major challenges?**

The quantitative uptake has been a major challenge – particularly since the numbers are balanced against the quality training and workplace exposure objective. The third and fourth phases of the project have put additional emphasis on sharing best practice amongst AATP

“Organisations in our manufacturing sector are starting to employ more industrial designers and quality assurers to support the manufacture of their goods because women are the dominant purchase decision makers.”

employers and encouraging continuous improvement. For example, each monthly set of project meetings focuses on solving problems and finding new solutions. There is also an annual AATP Apprenticeship Symposium to share new thinking and best practice amongst training providers and employers. But most important is that the project now enters into its own research initiative in partnership with the University of Bremen in Germany which will focus on:

- International competency comparisons of key trades;
- Cost-benefit analysis for apprenticeship training; and
- Vocational identity amongst existing and potential apprentices

Each of these initiatives is designed to develop leadership in quality apprentice training amongst our sector employers.

**Are we doing enough to entice young people to enter the engineering field, especially women engineers?**

I don't think it is ever possible to do enough in this area of career guidance. The merSETA has a new project initiative for career guidance which the AATP will be supporting. Of particular emphasis will be a process of capturing the lessons learned from past AATP apprentices who are now working as qualified artisans – and then sharing this information with young people considering an engineering vocation.

**Some commentators have blamed the lack of preparedness amongst students who enter the engineering programmes; hence we are not producing quality artisans. What is your view on this?**

South Africa is experiencing a severe shortage of well-qualified, competent and experienced artisans. While the economy currently produces approximately 5 000 artisans per year, research suggests that at least 12 500 artisans should be produced each year in the next four years to meet demand.

**How can we change the gender stereotypes that women cannot make it in the engineering sector?**

Equity legislation has made good contribution to changing these perceptions. All we can do is continue these conversations with employers and use the opportunities

presented.

**What is your message to all women who aspire to be engineers/artisans and those already in the sector?**

My message lies in the story of how the Renault Scenic became famous in the 1990s. It was one of the first multi-purpose vehicles (MPV) to achieve a significant market penetration very soon after its launch. It was the forerunner to the extensive MPV model market to which every car producer seeks to succeed in today. The interesting part of this story is that Renault researched consumer behavior to find that more than 70% of vehicle purchase decisions were in fact influenced by wives and girlfriends of male purchasers. They decided to use this information in their vehicle design strategy by choosing a female engineer (who became very famous) to design the Renault Scenic. The result was that this vehicle appealed to the dreams that women had about the design features of her ideal car.

I think that this story is important because all women who would like to enter the engineering sector don't see these opportunities or the fact that they have a greater chance of building a robust career at higher levels in the organisation. Women are playing an increasingly significant role in society at large – and their related purchasing power is growing. Organisations in our manufacturing sector are starting to employ more industrial designers and quality assurers to support the manufacture of their goods because women are the dominant purchase decision makers.

I think it also important to say that a qualified engineering artisan – whether it be a boilermaker, motor mechanic or tool maker – has many more career options than most other occupations. Our research shows that a qualified artisan works in their designated trade for an employer, for an average of six to eight years. They then take their skills and experience to a new level by – for example:

- Being promoted into supervisory and management positions;
- Starting their own business;
- Studying further to become a master artisan or engineer; and
- Training or instructing other aspiring apprentices. **A**

# ENGINEERING GETS THE FEMININE TOUCH

By Sibongiseni Ziinjiva Ka-Mnguni

It is encouraging to see a company like Atlantis Foundries (Pty) Ltd leading the way in affording women the opportunity to work in what is commonly termed a “man’s world”. The ever growing interest by women in industrial science, engineering and technology needs to be applauded as well.

**T**HIS IS A STEP in the right direction in addressing the challenge of achieving gender parity in the workplace, and at the same time helping address the chronic skills shortage in the engineering sector.

Three young women exemplify this new attitude. Kathleen Spandiel, Anna Marie Jay and Erica Jonker are taking this “man’s world” by storm.

Atlantis Foundries (Pty) Ltd produces automotive castings for the passenger and commercial vehicles industries. In addition, the company produces machine cylinders and crankshafts for automotive applications.

The company is located in Atlantis, about 50km north of Cape Town, and plays an active role in promoting gender parity. Since 1996, the company has trained seven female apprentices, six of whom have qualified as turner machinists.

In a male-dominated field, it is often a prerequisite for success to prove oneself, and the women had to do exactly that.

“This was definitely the right choice for me. I am proof that women are capable of doing this job just as well as men can do it,” explains Kathleen.

This same sentiment is shared by Tony de Vos, the Training Manager at Atlantis Foundries. “We decided to give women a chance in 1996 and I was pleasantly surprised to find that they fitted in so well and their male counterparts accepted them and really went out of their way to help them with different modules of the training,” says Tony.

Kathleen was brought up in a family of four boys, and being the only girl, her siblings taught her the technical fundamentals on how to fix various mechanical devices. This entrenched her appetite for all things technical and a lasting fascination for the field, which has resulted in her launching a career as an artisan.

Kathleen says that in the past, it wasn’t possible for anyone to become an artisan. But now, with the right qualification and right attitude, anybody -- man or woman -- can realise their dream of becoming an artisan.

Kathleen says gender or race should not prevent one from pursuing dreams of being an artisan or an engineer. “We need more training in the trades and more jobs should be made available for those people, especially women who want to pursue a career in this field,” she says.

Kathleen is a Turner and Univ Grinder and she has



From left to right: Anna Marie Jay, Tony de Vos, Erica Jonker and Kathleen Spandiel.

been with the company for nine years. She says skills development is fundamental in the South African context since women were not given opportunities in the past to venture into the engineering field.

Her advice to young people who aspire to follow in her footsteps is that they should complete their qualification, set goals for themselves and strive to achieve success in their chosen fields. "No matter how difficult it may be, go out and search for opportunities -- a good job will not just fall into your lap."

Erica says although she acknowledges men possess greater physical strength that can help get the job done, women have the attention for detail and the patience that many males do not have.

"Women were oppressed in the past but these days, women have a lot of opportunities and the government is encouraging women to become involved in all sectors of our economy."

Asked about a male-dominated sector, like engineering, Erica says her male counterparts have been supportive of her and other women at work.

Daunting challenges in the workplace can sometimes derail and demotivate an employee from performing to

"This was definitely the right choice for me. I am proof that women are capable of doing this job just as well as men can do it."

the best of their ability, but this bright young mind has gained the confidence to do things that might normally be perceived as too challenging.

Erica is a turner machinist apprentice; this is her first year with Atlantis Foundries and she relishes every moment. Being surrounded by people like Kathleen and Anna-Marie is a real motivation to achieve her dreams and she learns something new from the more experienced women each day, she adds.

Born in Robertson but growing up in George, Anna-Marie moved to Cape Town in 1998 when she started her

apprenticeship at Atlantis Foundries. She has been with the company for 13 years, 10 of which have been as a qualified turner machinist.

She attended school at P W Botha Technical College, where she studied a variety of technical subjects including electrical, woodwork, motor mechanic and fitting and turning.

"I absolutely fell in love with fitting and turning because finally I got to make and learn how to manufacture different parts," says Anna-Marie.

Anna-Marie works in a toolroom which is directly linked to production. "We have support maintenance and production engineering. Based on an engineering drawing/sample, we have to plan the safest, quickest and best machining process to manufacture the end product by means of using a lathe drilling or milling machine," adds Anna-Marie.

She is responsible for manufacturing new parts and performing modifications on old parts. "I am also directly involved in training apprentices and preparing them for their trade tests."

When asked how they planned to celebrate Women's Day, Anna-Marie says she will be spending it with her mother, who values the time when she can be with all of her children.

"So the best we can do for her is to get together, not just for a day but for a weekend. She relaxes and we spoil her with gifts and food and we take family photos, which she treasures," says Anna-Marie.

Asked about the most important person in her life, Erica points to her mother. "I would like to thank her for all that she has done for me and what she still intends to do. God used her to shape me, teach me, form me into the person that I am today. I would not choose any other woman to be my Mother and I am sure there are many people who would agree," elaborates Erica.

Kathleen says Women's Month is important because it celebrates the contribution made by women to our society. At the same time, the country is reminded that there are many challenges that the women of today still face, as well as many prejudices.

"I am truly blessed to have such a wonderful, loving, caring, understanding and strong woman as my Mother in my life. I thank her for her guidance and the support she gives me."

"I am truly blessed to have such a wonderful, loving, caring, understanding and strong woman as my Mother in my life. I thank her for her guidance and the support she gives me," concludes Kathleen.

Anna-Marie has this advice for all aspiring artisans: "Be positive, focus and believe in yourself; it is important to do something you love. If you love what you are doing you will have a successful career and give the company good value for their money."

Tony from Atlantis Foundries urged other companies to give women equal opportunities, especially in the Light Engineering field, as they are able to do the job as well as, and sometimes even better, than men.

The merSETA salutes Atlantis Foundries for their pivotal role in driving skills development among women. We trust that other companies will follow suite. **A**

# NISSAN DIESEL SOUTH AFRICA ADVANCING SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

By Own Correspondent

Nissan Diesel South Africa showed its commitment to developing staff when 15 employees graduated with a National Qualification Generic Management Certificate. The glittering graduation ceremony took place in Pretoria recently.

**T**HE merSETA-ACCREDITED learnership programme started in February 2009 and after more than a year of dedication and little sleep, it was fitting for the graduates to be filled with pride as they ascended the podium to receive their certificates.

The relationship between the merSETA and Nissan Diesel has grown in leaps and bounds. Among their accolades, Nissan Diesel SA received a Top Training Company Award as an established company from the merSETA in 2008.

"In order to provide our customers, suppliers and dealers with the level of service that adheres to stringent world standards, our staff are constantly trained and empowered to stay abreast of the latest developments within the industry," explains Johan Richards, CEO of Nissan Diesel SA.

"We strive to provide our staff with ongoing development opportunities that not only allow us as a company to achieve our goals, but empower and contribute to the overall development of our workers.

"The National Qualification Generic Management provides a framework for learners to develop competencies to become proficient junior managers. It is intended to empower learners to operate confidently as junior managers in the South African community and to respond to the challenges of the changing economic and work environment," says Richards.

The 19 modules completed by the learners included team management, record keeping, communication, performance management and team motivation.

According to the training provider, Growth-Link, the Nissan Diesel staff performed above industry averages, with the 15 learners, who started the 18-month course, successfully completing it in a mere 13 months.

"Nissan Diesel started this ambitious project last year during a challenging period for the local transport



Nissan Diesel South Africa Graduates

industry," said Dr Illezzanne Joubert, managing director of Growth-Link.

"The commitment of Nissan Diesel was clearly evident by affording learners the opportunity to complete their studies during working hours whilst line management also mentored and motivated learners to complete their studies successfully."

Richards said trucking formed an integral part of the South African economy to ensure the wheels of industry and business continue to rotate effectively and productively.

"We believe the best place to start is with our own staff, allowing them the opportunity to create a better life for themselves and their communities at large," concluded Richards. **A**

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# GLORIA MOJA - BREAKING DOWN THE GENDER STEREOTYPE

By Sibongiseni Ziinjiva Ka-Mnguni

Our quest to track down the rare gems that are being refined by the merSETA bursary scheme took us to Vanderbijpark in the Vaal Triangle where we caught up with Gloria Moja.

**G**LORIA MOJA was joined by her long time friend, Bontle Molebiemang, who is also studying towards a National Diploma in Hydrometallurgical engineering. Bontle spoke highly of her friend,

“Gloria is a highly motivated and articulate person in terms of achieving her dreams, a trait that we share and a cornerstone of our friendship.” Their relationship and mutual support is an example for other young women to emulate.

Gloria matriculated at Bokamoso High School in 2006. At the end of 2007, she applied for a merSETA bursary to study a National Diploma in Hydrometallurgical Engineering at the Vaal University of Technology (VUT).

When merSETA broke the good news to her, she was in seventh heaven and the euphoric mood was almost immediately translated into academic excellence for this talented young Mokopane-born learner.

Gloria wanted to break the gender stereotype that only men can study for an engineering-related course and that women are not technically inclined. “It is always disappointing to be seen as an underdog, but as a woman you need to be optimistic, positive and be self motivated,” elaborates Gloria.

Gloria admires and looks up to her mother. “She molded my personality and has imparted values that have made me the person that I am today. I admire her strength,” says Gloria

“The reason I chose Hydrometallurgical Engineering is because I had always had an interest in minerals and mining, and when my brother Chris brought me brochures with information on different careers, I became even more interested in Hydrometallurgy.”

Hydrometallurgical Engineering is concerned with processes involving aqueous solutions to extract metals from ores. The most common hydrometallurgical process is leaching, which involves dissolution of the valuable metals into the aqueous solution.

After the solution is separated from the ore solids, it is often subjected to various processes of purification and concentration before the valuable metal is recovered either in its metallic state or as a chemical compound.

The solution purification and concentration processes may include precipitation, distillation, adsorption and solvent extraction. Sometimes, hydrometallurgical processes may be carried out directly on the ore material without any pre-treatment steps.

Gloria laments the lack of resources and career guidance





Above: merSETA bursary holder - Gloria Moja; Right: Gloria with her friend Bontle Molebiemang



“Women should not be afraid of a challenge, they shouldn’t undermine themselves - it’s all in your mind.”

as the main reasons careers like Hydrometallurgy remain relatively unknown to learners. She says the lack of access to information is the nations’ detriment.

“The lack of information is a challenge that needs to be addressed if we hope to reduce the skills discrepancy in our country. We need to pay special attention to the places that have been hard hit by the lack of career guidance, which are the rural areas of South Africa. The state of affairs when it comes to information dissemination in these areas is appalling,” adds Gloria.

It is a pity that in this age, learners in remote areas are yet to have access to the Internet, a library and even labs; it is a situation that calls for the immediate intervention of all stakeholders involved in our education sector.

The myth that engineering is only for men should be dismissed immediately. As we celebrate women’s month statistics show an increase in women entering the engineering sector and it is in our national interest to dispel the idea that women should be afraid to enter the engineering field.

“Women should not be afraid of a challenge, they shouldn’t undermine themselves -- it’s all in your mind,” says Gloria.

Asked why is important for young people to be educated,

Gloria says education is the weapon the youth can use to change the world. “There’s an element of contentment in knowing how the elements that make our world so wonderful and life so precious operate. You become content with yourself if you know how the processes unfold in the manufacturing of certain things.”

Gloria warns young people that they should not expect a free ride in life and that they should stop being armchair critics, instead getting their hands dirty like everybody else. She says young people should work hard if they want to be successful and should not expect miracles to take place.

Gloria’s message is that women should stop competing with each other and should support each other. “Everybody is important and should be treated as such; you cannot say an eye is more important than the ear -- each has its role to play. Hence, it’s important to support one another and work together.”

When she is not studying, Gloria spends time doing aerobics or playing netball.

As the merSETA, we are indeed humbled by the zeal, tenacity and courage showed by young women like Gloria. We will continue in our quest to unearth more women who are closing the skills gap. **A**



Learners at the Careers for the Future

# Careers for the future, A LASTING LEGACY FOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

By Own Correspondent

“Operation closing the skills gap” invaded Sebokeng, Vaal Triangle, on June 16 with the aim of furthering the impact of career guidance. The purpose of the event was to celebrate Youth Day by exposing young people, especially from disadvantaged communities, to career opportunities in the field of Science, Engineering and the Financial Sector.

**T**HE EVENT is the brainchild of merSETA and the I Can Foundation, who have been partners for the last four years. The event attracted about 1 000 Grade 12 learners from high schools in the Vaal area as well as rural high schools in the Free State.

Like the determined youth of 1976 who were steadfast in their commitment to a quality education as the cornerstone of a better life, learners used the opportunity to interact with exhibitors and find out about available careers.

I Can Foundation CEO Dr David Molapo extended his gratitude to the merSETA and said the event would not have been possible without the consistent and generous partnership of visionary partners like merSETA.

With our efforts to reach out to the communities in South Africa, merSETA hopes to build a lasting legacy through the youth of our country. Commemoration of Youth Day will be hollow if young people do not seize opportunities presented to them. **A**

# merSETA joins in a VIGOROUS CAREER GUIDANCE CAMPAIGN

merSETA took the gospel of career guidance to Nasrec in the South of Johannesburg, where the 10th SABC Career Faire took place. The objective of the event was to inform learners about different career opportunities, writes Sibongiseni Ziinjiva Ka-Mnguni.



Learners attending the SABC Career Faire

**T**HE EXHIBITION attracted 8092 learners residing in Gauteng. As a catalyst for skills development, merSETA disseminated information on careers and opportunities in the manufacturing and engineering sector, and also interacted with learners to assist them in choosing careers.

In today's world of new options and opportunities, young people have the power of choice -- and it is the choices

they make that will determine their destiny. As Andre Gide put it - man cannot discover new oceans unless he has the courage to lose sight of the shore.

As merSETA, we can preach the importance of making the right career choice, but it is up to young people to make these important choices.

We trust the choices they made on the day will go a long way in closing the skills gap. **A**

# DOING GOOD IN HONOUR OF MADIBA

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) hosted the Mandela Day Career Guidance at Letaba Further Education and Training (FET) College in Giyani, Limpopo. Personalities, business community and dignitaries graced the occasion, writes Sibongiseni Ziinjiva Ka-Mnguni.

**T**HOUSANDS OF LEARNERS attended a Nelson Mandela Day career festival hosted by the DHET in Giyani in Limpopo in July.

Marking 67 years of selfless dedication by former president Nelson Mandela in serving his people and the international community, merSETA had a meaningful presence at the function which saw a host of exhibitors explain career choices to learners.

Minister of Higher Education and Training Dr Blade Nzimande urged the youth to make use of opportunities presented by government and SETAs in choosing careers that boost the country's economy.

"It is important for a young person to access information about available careers". Government is committed to putting in place all necessary resources and FET Colleges will play a significant role in closing the skills gap," said the minister.

"FET Colleges must be colleges of choice -- we want you to learn and succeed in your chosen field." He went further to encourage young people to take education seriously and emulate Dr Mandela.



Dr Blade Nzimande.



From left to right: Minister of Public Service and Administration Mr Richard Baloyi, Minister of Higher Education and Training Dr Blade Nzimande, and MEC for Education Mr Dickson Masemola.

Dr Nzimande committed 67 full bursaries to Limpopo's top 67 learners to the delight of the learners.

"The high failure rate at tertiary institutions is a direct result of lack of information, which is why this career festival should be an annual event," elaborated Dr Nzimande. It is cool to be educated; it is ayoba to be educated."

Among the personalities who motivated learners was Shift presenter, Rulani Baloyi, who pointed out that she did not allow her vision impairment to restrict progress. "Not having sight did not discourage me from becoming a journalist. If you can dream it, you can achieve it," she told the enthusiastic crowd.

"You don't have to live in Johannesburg to make it in life. If you want to be an actor or an actress, start in your neighborhood and work your way up," said Baloyi.

Quoting Madiba, Limpopo MEC for Education Mr Dickson Masemola said: "Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor; that a son of a mine worker can become the head of the mine; that a child of farm workers can become the president of a great nation.

It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another."

The Giyani event followed the pattern throughout the world -- 67 minutes were pledged by millions of people in changing someone's life.

The merSETA congratulates the people of Giyani. **A**

"You don't have to live in Johannesburg to make it in life. If you want to be an actor or an actress, start in your neighborhood and work your way up."

## SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN IN ENGINEERING CONFERENCE

## RAISES THE BAR

The South African Women in Engineering (SAWomEng) annual conference took place in Cape Town recently and the theme of the conference was: Water scarcity and sustainable water management solutions for the upliftment of informal settlements, writes Sibongiseni Zinjiva Ka-Mnguni.

**T**HE CONFERENCE attracted 70 female students in their final and post-graduate years of study. These bright minds from 11 different universities and Universities of Technology converged at the University of Cape Town to deliberate on the issues that affect women in the field of engineering.

SAWomEng presents an invaluable platform for the advocacy, advancement and education of women entering the engineering sector. The SAWomEng was founded to advance and advocate 5 pillars:

- Igniting the engineering flame;
- Mentorship;
- Incubate the engineering mind;
- Meeting of minds between old and new engineers; and
- Embracing the multi-faceted nature of female engineers.

Delivering the keynote address, merSETA Chairperson Ms Jeanne Esterhuizen said according to an Human Science Research Council (HSRC) Report, about 16.21% of engineering professionals in South Africa were women in 1996, but this decreased to only 10.5% in 2005.

“What happened between 1996 and 2005? This declining trend is not only alarming in the context of the critical shortage of engineering skills in South Africa, but also highlights the continued under-representation of women in engineering.”

She went further to say that conversely the percentage of women undertaking study in engineering programmes in South Africa increased from 9.5% to 20% in the same period. While representing one fifth of the engineering student population, women represent only 10% of the engineering workforce.

“It would seem that the emphasis should not only be on studies and recruitment, but also on retention. How many of you will still be in the engineering profession in 10 years time? I don’t have to tell you that the professional engineering environment can be described as ‘a man’s world’ – this damaging perception, along with related gender stereotypes, is perhaps most responsible for why women are still under-represented in the engineering field,” the merSETA chairperson added.

Among significant barriers identified were:

- balancing work with family;
- gaining credibility and respect among male peers;
- the challenge of “dual career” relationships or marriages;
- lack of mentors due to the small numbers of female engineering professionals;
- lack of access to networks; and
- Inequality in terms of salary and promotion opportunities.

She saluted the SAWomEng for their outstanding work. Technical Project Coordinator Cindy Jade Africa said the SAWomEng would continue to nurture and help women



Clockwise from top: South African Women in Engineering Delegates; merSETA Chairperson Ms Jeanne Esterhuizen; Rebecca Chiume.

to contribute towards civil society. She said five years after the first conference, they had raised the bar, and this was evident by the type of delegates and the sponsors they attracted to this year's conference.

Asked about the underrepresentation of women in the engineering field, Cindy said they had also established GirlEng to market and encourage young girls to enter the field.

GirlEng has now spread its message to over 200 high schools, creating awareness and instilling a sense of confidence in young women.

"It also motivates engineering as a highly desirable career aspiration for women and aims to empower women to succeed and advance in the field."

One of the delegates, Rebecca Chiume, who is studying her Masters degree in Chemical Engineering at the University of Cape Town, says challenges for women should not be seen as insurmountable, but should motivate them to achieve at the highest levels.

Rebecca does her bit of marketing the field by mentoring learners and hosting information workshops. She also plays the role of being a support system to learners who aspire to be future engineers.

Water scarcity and sustainable water management solutions for the upliftment of informal settlements were important, delegates were told. Visiting the informal settlements and having a firsthand experience of the daily lives and challenges facing members of these communities gives a sense of the magnitude of the tasks facing engineers in South Africa.

South Africa has undertaken a far reaching excise to design and build infrastructure that will promote and sustain economic growth and development in the long term.

SAWomEng will play a crucial role in ensuring the challenges facing the engineering sector during the rollout of the various projects are met. A

"It would seem that the emphasis should not only be on studies and recruitment, but also on retention."

# merSETA national ROADSHOWS

By Own Correspondent

On 29 April, Higher Education and Training Minister Blade Nzimande published a draft framework as well as revised Seta landscape for the third phase of the National Skills Development Strategy. In response to his call for public comment, the merSETA arranged a roadshow for stakeholders around the country...

**D**R NZIMANDE'S proposals call for the reduction in the number of Setas from 23 to 21 and is based on the belief that there have been no major structural changes in the economy to provoke drastic amendment of the Seta landscape.

In fact, says merSETA chief executive officer Dr Raymond Patel, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) has acknowledged the work done by the Setas over the past decade. Addressing about 300 merSETA stakeholders in Cape Town, he said the department was also ensuring an element of continuity for the next five years in the face of a much-changed skills development strategy.

In terms of the proposals, 15 Setas will be relicensed with no or minimal changes to their structure, four will amalgamate and two new authorities will be created. Part of the restructuring process revolved around consolidating value chains which, maintained Dr Patel, was why it was strange that the DHET had suggested taking the petrol- and motor retail sub-sectors from the merSETA and transferring them to the Wholesale and Retail Seta. Those who attended the Cape Town event resoundingly endorsed Dr Patel's contention that the proposed Seta landscape constituted a threat to the merSETA. They felt that moving fuel- and motor retailers to the Wholesale

and Retail Seta (W&RSETA) would seriously disrupt skills development in the automotive sector particularly for small and medium enterprises.

"Moving these people over to the W&RSETA will also undermine our rural development strategies in terms of training mechanics, auto-electricians and body repairers in those areas," said Dr Patel.

"When you look at fuel retailers in small towns or rural areas, you more often than not find that they are also auto-electricians, mechanics and repair stores. These are their main sources of income, not petrol and diesel sales. "It's not about selling; it's about developing competent, certified technicians," he said, adding that the companies in question benefited disproportionately to their contribution in levy income. The merSETA has spent a total of R62 million on skills development for fuel retail SMEs in the past two years and they are among the main beneficiaries of the Seta's training voucher scheme.

Dr Patel pointed out that the merSETA was "looking at the bigger picture and serving the best interests of South Africa" when it came to disbursing discretionary grants. He said the Seta was promoting decentralisation and rural development by allocating funds for interventions out of proportion to income derived from provinces. For instance, 18 percent of discretionary funds had been earmarked for Mpumalanga and Limpopo during 2009



Region	Contribution to levy income (%)	Discretionary fund disbursements (%)
Eastern Cape	6	9
Free State / Northern Cape	4	8
Gauteng / North West	52	27
KwaZulu-Natal	14	34
Mpumalanga / Limpopo	6	18
Western Cape	18	5
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

“The annual levy income base will be about R180 million, of which ten percent will go towards Seta administration. You can’t run a Seta successfully on R18 million a year.”

– 2010 despite the fact that just six percent of the Seta’s levied income had been contributed by companies in these provinces (See table above).

This trend would continue during 2010 – 2011, he said, adding that merSETA had built a surplus of almost R1 billion during the past couple of years and was beginning to spend this. “We have budgeted R602 million for discretionary projects for the year, based on a net levy income for the period of between R270 and R300 million.”

Net levy income is total levy income less the budgeted allocation for mandatory grant payments.

Dr Patel said there was a significant disjuncture between the stated criteria for establishing Setas and the proposed landscape.

According to the DHET, the changes that were to be made were not based on the performance of individual Setas but rather on achieving greater efficiencies and financial sustainability. The department also felt that the merSETA’s income was too high in relation to that of some of its counterparts.

But, said Dr Patel, “that has not made us inefficient. If anything, it has made us more efficient. From the moment we got our programmes right, our big budget put us in a

position to start delivering effectively on our mandate. “I also cannot understand the rationale behind establishing a second manufacturing Seta,” he added. “It will be made up of remnants of the Setas for clothing, textiles, footwear and leather; forestry, and the printing, packaging and publishing sub-sectors of the Mapp Seta.

“The annual levy income base will be about R180 million, of which ten percent will go towards Seta administration. You can’t run a Seta successfully on R18 million a year.”

The interests of the country would be best served if the proposed body was incorporated into the merSETA, said Dr Patel.

“The merSETA has one of the most stable management structures within the Seta fraternity, with a turnover of less than 15 percent in the past four years. This is one of the reasons that we have been able to turn the organisation around and position it as one of the best-performing Setas.

“It has also enabled us to start taking up a leadership role in the sector. Our awareness of economic conditions meant merSETA was one of the first Setas to formulate a retrenchment assistance plan which was later adopted by Government as its national Training Lay-off Scheme.” **A**

# Events of the Quarter



Clockwise from top left: Sello Galane; Yvonne Chaka Chaka; South African Women in Engineering 2010 Conference Executives; Naadiya Moosajee, Nasir Williams and Mabohlale Mampuru; Learners at SABC Career Faire.



From left: merSETA Chairperson Ms Jeanne Esterhuizen; Dr Raymond Patel; Delegates at 2009 Annual General Meeting.



# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

Dates and Venues for the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services SETA (merSETA):

DATE	REGION	VENUE
17 September 2010	Gauteng	Premier Hotel OR Tambo 73 Gladiator Street, Rhodesfield, Johannesburg Tel (011) 551 5429/5390
30 September 2010	Durban	Hilton Hotel 12-14 Walnut Road, Durban, 4001 Tel: (031) 336 8202
5 October 2010	Free State/ Northern Cape	Protea Hotel Willow Lake 101 Henry Street, Willows, Bloemfontein Tel: (051) 412 5400
7 October 2010	Mpumalanga	The Ridge Cnr N4 Highway & Mandela Street Tel:( 013) 655 9336
13 October 2010	Eastern Cape	Summerstrand Hotel Marine Drive, Summerstrand Tel : (041) 505 8211
14 October 2010	Western Cape	The Table Bay Hotel Quay 6, Victoria & Alfred Waterfront Tel : (021) 406 5000



**merSETA**  
MANUFACTURING, ENGINEERING  
AND RELATED SERVICES SETA  
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# leaders in closing the skills gap.

The merSETA is one of the 23 Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) established to promote skills development in terms of the Skills Development Act of 1998. The 23 SETAs broadly reflect different sectors of the South African economy. The merSETA encompasses Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services.

The various industry sectors are covered by five chambers within the merSETA: Metal and engineering, Auto Manufacturing, Motor Retail and Components, New Tyre and Plastic.



**merSETA**

MANUFACTURING, ENGINEERING  
AND RELATED SERVICES SETA

ISO 9001:2008

*facilitating sustainable  
development of skills,  
transformation and  
accelerating growth in  
manufacturing, engineering  
and related services.*



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