

## **Professional Women in Energy Forum Report – Launch Breakfast 20 September 2005**

---

Venue: Total South Africa – Rosebank, Johannesburg  
Time: 8h00 – 10h00

### **Introduction**

Despite the Liquid Fuels Charter being the first of all Economic Charters encouraging participation of PDI's in South Africa, representation of women in the oil and energy sector is limited in senior and middle management positions. The pace at which this situation is being changed is very slow. Partly because women have not been attracted to make a career in the sector and partly because the culture of organisations appear to have been such that women have not been encouraged to reach top management positions.

Women in Oil and Energy South Africa is a section 21 company whose aim is to ensure that women are increasingly represented in the sector either as entrepreneurs or as a cross section at all levels of corporate groups. WOESA, with the support of some of the major oil and gas companies, has embarked on setting up a Professional Women in Energy Forum for women employed in the sector. The forum is to ensure that women network with each other to strategise and facilitate their empowerment within the sector.

The Forum is intended to have at least one activity each per year in the following three cities: Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban. The topics discussed will be linked to issues women are confronted with in the workplace, which enhance or hinder their progress and empowerment. The forum will further be supported by a website chat room, which will be organised by the WOESA national office.

The aim of the Forum is to facilitate the following:

- Exploring professional and economic development of women in the sector
- Achieving greater diversity in the value chain (women's participation ensured)
- Meaningful job creation and enhancement for women
- Accelerating women's career paths
- Broadening women's understanding of the sector
- Popularising the concept of Sustainable Economic Empowerment for women.

“Sustainable economic empowerment of women in our lifetime” is the slogan of the forum. The Forum will challenge the status quo and participate, assist and facilitate transformation in the sector.

The launch of the Forum was held on 20 September 2005 at Total South Africa in Johannesburg as a breakfast meeting. 70 participants attended the event.

### **Opening**

Ms. Pinky Moabi, treasurer of WOESA, was the Programme Director of the event. She opened the meeting shortly after 8 a.m.

Mr. Jeff Gule, a representative of Total, welcomed the participants to the event. He commemorated that “women's month” stretched into September this year and that it was also

“cancer month”, that aims to enhance women’s life expectancy with regard to women related types of cancer.

He made a few remarks with regard to safety in the building.

Ms. Moabi extended the welcome to the Deputy Minister of Minerals & Energy who was to give the key note address to the launch, to the equity partners of Total, the hosts of the event, and all professional women in the oil and energy sector.

She qualified the launch as the first day in a journey to network. She shared her experience of the Women in Business event in London in 2004, where young, technically skilled women of oil producing countries were present, who vibrantly networked. This is the type of dynamics we need for women in South Africa as well: we need to talk to each other, both women entrepreneurs and women employees in the sector.

She identified women participants attending from the following organisations; Total, Shell, Sasol, BP, SAPIA, Caltex, Engen, DME, WOESA, ESETA and MEETI.

She then gave a short presentation on WOESA (PowerPoint presentation is attached as Annex 1) and referred to the WOESA brochure in the Forum information pack.

### **Introduction to the Professional Women in Energy Forum**

Ms. Almorie Maule, executive board member of WOESA, indicated that WOESA in its 3 years of existence had over 1,500 women were exposed to workshops, courses and other events with regard to the oil value chain, the sector as such, renewable energy, business skills and capacity building.

Now the number of small businesses in the sector has grown, but what about women employed in the sector (both corporate and in the parastatals). Now there are 5 PDI CEO’s in the oil majors, but where are the women?

She listed the factors why women are not in top positions in the sector:

- The liquid fuels charter focuses on race rather than gender
- There is a corporate culture in which career progression is not taken seriously
- There are not enough women entering the industry
- Women are too passive about their careers

The PWE Forum wants to address these issues by facilitating networking. There should be a buzz of knowledge sharing, sharing experience, etc., without jeopardising confidentiality of the employers. She also invited participants to come up with ideas how the Forum would work.

The support of the oil companies is necessary to make the Forum a success. The benefits of the Forum to the employers would be:

- Increased pool of competent women
- Meeting gender targets
- More competent women
- Improved productivity
- Diversity in top management
  - More modern social responsibility orientation
  - Will lead to sustainable development

Ms. Moabi responded that if women are too passive, we should identify women who can/want to climb the corporate ladder.

### **Women's present positioning in the sector**

Ms. Althea Banda Hansman, HR executive at BPSA and chairperson of the SAPIA BEE HRD Committee, contemplated on the theme of the day "Sustainable economic empowerment of women in our lifetime" and suggested to have milestones for this goal every 10 years.

She gave a presentation on the present positioning of women in the sector by comparing the figures of the Department of Labour (all sectors) with the figures of SAPIA (oil sector). The PowerPoint presentation is attached as Annex 2.

The figures related to employment, top management recruitment and promotion, occupational level, legislators and senior officials, employees with disabilities. She then outlines SAPIA's response to these figures: acknowledge the challenges and create sustainable solutions.

Ms. Moabi qualified her presentation as provoking and she solicited the following questions from participants:

- Is there a structure which deals with governance?  
Ms. Banda: The HRD strategy is developed by a team of employment equity experts and HR executives, which is reporting to DME
- What to do about the fact that many women have no qualifications?  
Ms. Banda: There is a pool of talented people, but there is a lack of technical. This lack of expertise is not quantified expertise. MEETI could support by providing training and Wits has developed a programme for a national certificate
- What to do to enable women to fill positions now?  
Ms. Christa Botes (Total, member of SAPIA HRD BEE Cee): The commitment from SAPIA for the framework is there. Women have to make it happen. Is happening on a daily basis in senior management, not yet in top management
- What are we doing wrong that it is not happening?  
Ms. Banda: We have to identify the levels and positions of the scarce skills and the variety of jobs in these positions
- ... (did not record question)  
Ms. Banda: We need a matrix of scarce skills and lacking skills. The majority of these skills have technical aspects. There is a gender and race bias towards technical skills
- Are there training programmes, like for the Mining qualification?  
Ms. Banda: As said, Wits has developed modules, general and for the petroleum industry, which need to be aligned to the NQF.

### **Membership**

Ms. Jacqueline Williams, WOESA National Co-ordinator, gave a presentation on membership of the PWE Forum. The PowerPoint presentation is attached as Annex 3.

Membership of the Forum is open to every woman professional employed in the oil and other energy sector.

The membership fee to the Professional Women in Energy Forum is R 1,000.00 per year.

Benefits to members:

- Knowledge sharing
- Access to skills and expertise
- Sharing of information
- Sharing of skills
- Women's lobby
- Access to investments in the sector
- Exposure to business and investment opportunities

WOESA member companies are automatically invited to participate in the Forum. Membership to the forum will also give access to WOESA.

### **Key Note Address**

The Hon. Ms. Lulu Xingwana, Deputy Minister of Minerals and Energy, gave a key note address on the PWE Forum.

She indicated that the sector lacks flair. Gender equality is necessary and women in the energy sector should stand up and make it happen. Each one who succeeds has to pull up at least one other woman.

Women ask: "What can Government do for me?" The question should be: "What can you do for South Africa?" There is the change of the Constitution, but also the change of attitude, both from men and women.

The energy sector has a lot of opportunities. Women have to fight twice as hard as men for these opportunities. WE have t change it for ourselves. We must have many women CEO's and chairs of boards of directors.

Where are the women? The Minister and Deputy Minister of ME fight day and night for the women in the sector. WOESA and the women have to stand up. Young women are to get skills in technical and business areas.

She congratulated the launch of the PWE Forum: women, come on board, plough ahead and succeed, access more opportunities and companies and mobilise more women.

### **Way forward**

Ms. Nthembu Mlonzi, board member of WOESA, wrapped up the presentations and discussions and asked for suggestions from participants on the way forward.

The following comments were made:

- DME and Eskom have professional women networks – PWE Forum is to network with these and share information and resources and encourage other forums in SAPIA, etc.
- The PetroSA forum is keen to participate in PWE Forum

- In case of corporate membership of WOESA, the employees of the member company can participate in the Forum: Engen is already doing that
- The Forum is to market itself through board representation
- Frustration of women in industry can be addressed by mentorship by women who did succeed
- Promote energy sector as career in schools
- Pull in NGO women (eg RE sector)
- Resolve predicament in lower sectors (customer contact points – small business people): extend corporate expertise to lift SME's up
- Mandate WOESA to have PWE Forum as a programme/subcommittee? With different entities?
- Use website (chat room?) and database for opportunities
- Avoid conflict of interest with business opportunities

### **Closing**

Ms. Moabi asked in conclusion if the launch of the Forum had been useful and the house affirmed. She indicated that the report of the Forum would be available on the WOESA website. She thanked the speakers, the host and the participants for their contribution and closed the meeting just after 9h45.

### **Networking**

Participants were invited to join for the breakfast and use the opportunity for networking