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# GENSA newsletter

ISSUE NO. 1

JUNE 2010

## A warm welcome to you...

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the first GENSA newsletter which we hope you will find informative on gender and energy activities undertaken by the Gender and Energy Network of South Africa (GENSA).

In September 2009, the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) signed a contract with the ETC Foundation which currently hosts ENERGIA, the International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy. The contract signed was in recognition of funds to the HSRC to host the Gender and Energy Network of South Africa (GENSA) as the ENERGIA National Focal Point (NFP) in South Africa. Ms. Nthabiseng Mohlakoana is the GENSA contact person at the HSRC.

The GENSA activities and outputs as stipulated in the funding contract and as agreed to by the HSRC, ETC and ENERGIA are as follows:

To revive GENSA membership

throughout the country by recruiting new and old members into the network,

To share information through newsletters, meetings and workshops with network members,

To build relationships with organizations, groups and networks with interest in the gender and energy dialogue, and

To develop a research project proposal with GENSA members and its partners that will address gender inequalities in the energy and related sectors.

So far, GENSA has managed to recruit a total of 43 members who are updated about the network's activities and encouraged to participate in meetings and workshops that inform gender and energy discourse in the country.

We do hope you will enjoy this offering.



**ENERGIA and the HSRC  
working together on gender  
mainstreaming of energy  
issues in SA.**

## Introduction of GENSA to the gender and energy community

On 23 February 2010, GENSA in collaboration with the HSRC held its first strategy meeting. The meeting was attended by participants from different organizations based in the Western Cape and Gauteng Provinces. At this meeting participants were given a background of GENSA and ENERGIA and the importance of having such networks in the coun-

try. The GENSA key priority areas were outlined for the participants but they were also encouraged to contribute their thoughts on how best the network should be governed. Amongst the participants' suggestions were the following:

Having a network such as GENSA in the country would provide support amongst people that

share similar interests

The network should not only focus on impoverished women and men but should also focus on policy issues that affect everyone so as to get high level input

The network should provide its members with access to government decision making processes

by engaging with decision makers in government departments and in Parliament

GENSA should take part in informing and developing alternative energy service delivery methods for communities

It is at this strategy meeting that participants brought up an idea of having a two-day workshop which would focus on policy papers and strategies by government and other stakeholders which affect gender mainstreaming in energy policy making and implementation.

For more information on GENSA activities in South Africa, please contact Ms. Nthabiseng Mohlakoana: [nmkaxulu@yahoo.com](mailto:nmkaxulu@yahoo.com) or Dr. Wendy Annecke: [glo-worm@webmail.com](mailto:glo-worm@webmail.com)



**Engaging with local communities on gender and energy issues affecting their daily lives**

*“It is common knowledge in South Africa that during winter months, those living in informal housing settlements suffer from fires that engulf their homes in seconds due to unsafe paraffin appliances”*

## Building relations with the Department of Energy

In February 2010, GENSA approached the South African Department of Energy (DoE) to work with them gender and energy issues in Imizamo Yethu, a small township in Hout Bay, Cape Town. At the time, DoE was distributing Para-Safe stoves and 10 litres of paraffin to 350 low-income informal households in the area. This was part of a national pilot project by the department to ensure that households without electricity access and using paraffin had safe appliances to

do so. It is common knowledge in South Africa that during winter months, those living in informal housing settlements suffer from fires that engulf their homes in seconds due to unsafe paraffin appliances. The project was welcome by the community and its leaders as it showed governments' commitment to keeping families safe.

The project had employed 16 fieldworkers who distributed the stoves and fuel and collected household data on en-

ergy use. GENSA thought it best to approach the department and suggest Gender and Sustainable Energy training for the fieldworkers and the department's staff members. In total, 5 of the fieldworkers were selected to take part in the training including a member of the DoE staff (also see page 3). At the end of the training, as part of their Action Plans, these fieldworkers chose to go back to their community and hold an Energy Safety event which would directly benefit house-

holds, especially those using paraffin and other unsafe fuels and appliances. The Energy Safety event took place on 5 June 2010.

For more information on the Illuminated Paraffin project by the DoE, please contact Ms. Nombongo Mngomeni:

[nombongo.mngomeni@energy.gov.za](mailto:nombongo.mngomeni@energy.gov.za) or

Mr. Fuad Allie: [fuad.allie@energy.gov.za](mailto:fuad.allie@energy.gov.za)



**Demonstration of safe and efficient cooking methods at the Energy Safety event at Imizamo Yethu**

## Gender and Energy Policy Workshop hosted by GENSA, HSRC and the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE)

On 18 & 19 May GENSA, HSRC and CGE hosted a two-day workshop where experts in the gender, energy, climate change and environment fields were invited. The workshop saw attendance by visitors from Penn State University, GenderCC, Earthlife-Africa, Heinrich Boell Foundation amongst others. Four policy and strategy documents namely; the World Bank Energy Strategy Approach Paper, Renewable Energy Policy Paper, National Climate Change Response Policy and the Integrated Resource Plan II on electricity.

The idea was a response to governments' activities in developing a comprehensive climate change ap-

proach, several statements being made regarding its intentions to construct a 'green economy'. It was therefore important for GENSA and the CGE to ensure that climate change and renewable energy policies are gendered. Part of the plan

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**Discussions during the policy workshop**

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**Commissioner Abrahams of the Commission for gender Equality making her point.**

found to be very technical in the language used and inaccessible for

was to develop what could be termed a holistic feminist pro-poor vision around climate change and renewable energy out of this process.

Summary of outputs on papers reviewed:

1. WB Energy Strategy Approach Paper: As an output to this workshop, official comments were submitted to the World Bank by the NFP in consultation with the network members and all those that had attended the workshop. Amongst other issues raised, the strategy paper was seen to concentrate on macro level rather than micro level energy issues, which

people that may not be familiar with climate change terminology but affected by high level decisions made.

Integrated Resource Plan II:

For more on these documents and full workshop proceedings, please contact Ms. Nthabiseng Mohlakoana – [nmkaxulu@yahoo.com](mailto:nmkaxulu@yahoo.com)

*“It was therefore important for GENSA and the CGE to ensure that climate change and renewable energy policies are gendered“*

## Upcoming events

GENSA will be hosting a series of gender and energy workshops in the next few months. If you wish to be informed about these please do not hesitate to contact Nthabi for detailed information on workshop titles, dates and venues.

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## Training pictures



**Stove-Tec Biomass Cook Stove in action**

**Gender and energy training participants role playing a lesson**



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**GENSA operates within the framework of the Southern African Gender and Energy Network (SAGEN) which regionally represents Southern Africa and covers six countries namely: Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, SA, Swaziland and Zimbabwe. The regional network for Southern Africa is affiliated to the Africa regional work and the International Network on Women and Sustainable Energy (ENERGIA).**

## **Interact with us...**

Please watch out for our next issue where we will be showcasing more work on gender and energy in South Africa as well as information on our network partners.

If you have stories and short pieces to share on your work and interests in the gender and energy area, please send them to us: [nmkaxulu@yahoo.com](mailto:nmkaxulu@yahoo.com)

Do you have suggestions on the network and this newsletter? Please contact us and let us know what changes you would like to see. Write to [nmkaxulu@yahoo.com](mailto:nmkaxulu@yahoo.com)