The 2009 South African Women In Dialogue (SAWID) Dialogue, hosted at the Birchwood Conference Centre in Boksburg from the 29th of November to the 2nd of December 2009, was a dialogue with a difference. It was the result, not only of extensive input throughout the year by women from the provinces, experts in academia, business and the public sector, but also of a process by which the women of South Africa crystallized their intention to participate actively in the development agenda of their country.

The main themes that occupied women’s attention during the year were the critical emerging issue of the Global Financial Crisis and its effect on the lives of women; the repositioning of SAWID for relevance and sustainability, and the coordination of the existing women’s structures and formations in South Africa into a coherent women’s movement to belabor a transformative agenda for nation building and global engagement.

Ms Mathabo Kunene, IsiGodlo Trustee and Acting Executive Manager of SAWID.
SAWID is an independent South African Women’s Forum committed to improving the status of women by engaging national government, the private sector, civil society organizations (NGOs, CBOs and FBOs) and donors; and forming partnerships to shape development agendas. The SAWID Forum is impartial, not-for-profit and tied to no partisan interest.

**SAWID Vision**

“South African Women united in our diversity acting together for a better future.”

**SAWID Mission**

“We, the Women of South Africa, stand together for Women’s participation on issues of national, regional, continental and international importance. Through our Dialogues, we seek to establish a common agenda for the development of Women, and to ensure that Women’s views are considered whenever decisions are taken on all issues that impact on our lives. We commit ourselves to work together to ensure that fundamental rights gained through our liberation are entrenched and protected, and emergent challenges are addressed.”

**Values**

We are patriotic, accountable and responsible citizens of South Africa. We are self-reliant, independent and tolerant. We are women of integrity who are confident and committed in our actions. We engage with one another with honesty, empathy and respect for our differences. We are guided by the spirit of ubuntu which underpins all the above values.

**IsiGodlo Trust Objectives**

- To promote creative Dialogue amongst South African Women;
- To promote Pan-African solidarity for peace, equality, and development;
- To promote Women’s leadership;
- To support the African Union (AU) principles and the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) at local level and
- To structure fundraising efforts to support the above objectives.

*SAWID is a project of the IsiGodlo Trust*

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In March 2009, Ms Vuyo Mahlati, IsiGodlo Trustee and Chair of the SAWID Development Commission, as well as a member of the Ministerial Task Team on Engendering the Anti-Poverty Strategy in South Africa, presented a discussion paper on the Financial Crisis and Gender at the 53rd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, (UNCSW) in New York.

In her presentation she pointed out that the financial crisis once again reminded women of the skewed picture of the global economic framework with marked inequalities in the economic security of men and women, rich and poor. These gender imbalances were not just visible in income inequalities, but also in decision making structures; both locally and globally, demonstrating the underlying patriarchal nature of our global communities.

An example of this imbalance was palpable at the World Economic Forum’s annual meeting in Davos 2009, where only 5% of the two and a half thousand people who attended were women. Ms Mahlati quoted Avivah Wittenberg-Cox in Women-omics.com who reminded us that “women are not a minority to be integrated into the whole”. She therefore recommended that the struggle for gender equality should intensify.

Ms Mahlati’s main argument centered on the opportunity for economic policy reform and substantive action to address the structural dimensions of inequality, poverty and deepening discrimination, which included the need to place gender equality at the centre of the UN reform.

She cautioned against a recovery agenda that perpetuates inequalities, quoting Khadija Sharife in African Business, (February 2009) who highlighted that “over 30% of sub-Saharan Africa is chronically malnourished yet the UN’s Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) alleges that global production is capable of feeding 1.5 times the world’s population. Sharife further pointed to the UN statistics indicating that 2% of the world’s population control 50% of the wealth in circulation. By contrast, 40% of the world’s population own less than 5% of global wealth.

In an impassioned plea she wondered: “Why can’t we grab this opportunity to change the global economic order from this parasitic frame to a symbiotic and
synergistic frame that looks beyond profit for a few to embracing diverse socio-cultural factors for the sustainability of our universe?"

She suggested the following recommendations as concrete steps towards concerted action:

• Unpacking the gender implications of the financial crisis more specifically with clear proposals at both local and global levels
• Target the G20 economic summit on April 2, 2009 in London to ensure women’s participation in economic recovery/reform discussions
• Institutional Reform that is directed by strategic system reform that emphasizes sustainability and places gender equality at the center. This includes Breton Woods Institutions and all organs of the United Nations. The latter includes the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) that is to be transformed into a well-resourced organ with authority and maximized impact at grassroots level.
• Ensure implementation of protocols, adherence to targets and financial commitments. Review aid commitments (official development assistance – (ODA) as well as regional/continental initiatives) and assess impact for improved direct benefit and promotion of self-reliance
• Promote an inclusive macroeconomic agenda with a global economic model that favors global development and sustainability which:
  - is not confined to marketplace exchange
  - defines economic activity beyond monetary transactions
  - is inclusive of the vulnerable groups
  - emphasizes human capabilities and asset building (beyond social transfers)
  - is transparent and values human rights, corporate governance and corporate citizenship

At country level:

• Advocate for direct financing of the Gender Machinery and monitored Gender Budgeting
• Advocate for stimulus packages that put women at the centre with resource allocation for women’s empowerment (Public, Private/Commercial finance, NGO Funding and Microfinance)
• Establish or support institutions that offer an integrated, convergence approach to empowerment from basic needs to informed participation and value addition (shelter, water, sanitation, education and skills development, health and nutrition, technology, credit, asset base, marketing, community and political participation)
• Ensure women participation and benefit in SA’s government, business and labour initiative with its five pillar measures: i) Investment in public infrastructure (including the R787bn infrastructure programme), ii) Macro-economic policy, iii) Industrial and trade policy, iv) Employment measures and v) Social measures.
In pursuit of the objective of re-examining women’s survival strategies and indigenous wisdoms in times of economic stress, and to debate concrete proposals for women to participate in the economic recovery of their country, SAWID organised a National Roundtable, in partnership with the Development Bank of South Africa (DBSA), and the Independent Development Trust (IDT), on the 21st of August 2009 (Women’s Month), bringing together 150 South African women from diverse backgrounds to reflect on the impact of the Financial Crisis and to provide a platform for women to consider ways of implementing existing initiatives within existing frameworks more effectively. Ms Vuyo Mahlati and Ms Liepollo Pheko were the keynote speakers at this event.

Key Recommendations from this National Roundtable and later Provincial Dialogues were as follows:

- Ensure that women are a part of the recovery agenda: Past experiences have shown that policy responses to financial crises have disproportionately disadvantaged women. It is critical to recognize gender equality as a fundamental human right and an issue of social justice; essential for economic growth, poverty reduction, environmental sustainability and development effectiveness.
- Stimulus packages should ensure that spending is gender-equitable in job creation and does not only focus on physical infrastructure projects and other sectors that overwhelmingly employ men rather than women.
- Strengthening women’s relationships
Information and Research: Continuous collaboration that will maximize the knowledge around issues that affect women.

Maintaining and expanding our gains in policies on gender equality: by continuing to emphasize girls’ education and universal access to reproductive healthcare, including family planning. Much progress has also been made in improving women’s positions in the household, increasing their negotiating power and reducing violence and harmful traditional practices. These gains must be maintained to accelerate recovery from the financial crisis.

Investing in women’s economic empowerment has benefits - both in terms of mitigating current hardships and in preventing future ones.

Investing in health and social services: Allocating funding for social infrastructure, investment in areas such as public health, education, child care, and other social services has two benefits. Firstly, it generates jobs for women since women are heavily represented in those occupations. Secondly, directing funding to activities that help women with their family life – e.g., child care services, contraception, and school feeding programmes – can soften some of the negative effects of the crisis for entire families. The suggested expenditures on the social infrastructure, aside from cushioning women and children, have the added effect of contributing to the long-term health of the economy by raising productivity.

Provincial Roundtables: Women and the Financial Crisis: a Local Perspective

Hon. Ms. Moruokgomo Mabe: MEC Finance of North West Province and provincial delegates.


In order to enhance the outcome of the Annual Dialogue and enrich the debate and contribution of provinces, while achieving SAWID’s goal of maximising dialogue at provincial level, the SAWID Secretariat and the various Provincial Steering Committees organised four provincial dialogues as a build-up towards the Annual Dialogue: These dialogue took place between August and November 2009. The Provinces that hosted these dialogues were:

North West Province, Limpopo Province, KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape.

The dialogues targeted around 200 women relevant to the theme, representing all regions, guided by the inclusivity checklist of SAWID. These dialogues were well attended and three out of the four provinces had the privilege to be addressed by their respective MEC for Finance and an opportunity to engage on the issue of the Financial Crisis and its impact on poor women.
Feedback from women during the national roundtable and four provincial roundtables highlighted the following survival strategies:

(It was agreed that these are strategies that are relevant for every day survival, not just during times of financial crisis: The goal is to bring these marginalized survival strategies into the mainstream of development.)

1. What are women doing to survive in times of economic stress, and what resources are available in communities?

- Home based care: taking care of the poor, orphans and disabled
- Running crèches and pre-schools, and Early Childhood Development (ECD) skills training; availability of grannies to run crèches
- Informal trading, street vending, braiding and plaiting of hair on street corners
- Small scale farming and vegetable gardens for food security
- Backyard businesses, like shebeens and taverns
- Domestic work, or related traditional skills like cleaning, laundry and catering
- Craft projects: knitting, sewing and baking

2. What resources are missing in communities, and how can government assist women to increase and multiply their survival strategies?

- Temporary and part-time jobs
- Stokvels, social clubs and financial cooperative societies where women help each other buying necessities and supporting families
- Participation in NGOs, NPOs, CBOs
- Voluntary projects for a stipend
- Using luncheon clubs, churches and stokvels to share knowledge
- Using available funding through Umsobomvu, DTI and IDC
- Intergenerational transmission of knowledge and skills
- Strong family values, including prayer

Delegates at the Limpopo Provincial Dialogue.

Eastern Cape Provincial Dialogue
workshops, workshops on marketing skills and ICT skills
• Establishment of a culture of learning through promotion of reading skills
• Making information available in all mother tongue languages, and using existing multi-purpose centres to establish gender, youth and people with disability desks
• Registration and formalization of small businesses
• Assistance with the establishing and sustainability of cooperatives
• Professionalization of early childhood education and recognition of women’s unpaid work
• Establishment of viable recycling projects
• Availability of operational spaces and resources

for NGOs, CBOs, and FBOs, including community places where stories are told, and dancing and cultural activities happen
• Enhancement of food security through support for rural agriculture and food gardens (seeds, implements and training)
• Strengthening of local government to deliver
• Networking tools and databases, where common projects are streamlined and linked, and communities of practice shared
• Transparent monitoring, evaluation and accountability of all funds and projects
• Cooperation between community, municipalities and government makes for an integrated approach and sustainable projects
The SAWID 2009 Annual Dialogue

The first day of the 2009 SAWID Annual Dialogue, held at the Birchwood Conference Centre in Boksburg, from 29 November to 2 December 2009, started off with the participants singing and ululating as African Traditional healers, colorfully attired and led by traditional healer Ms Stella Williams, conducted the devotions using drums, dance, songs and impepho (incense) to call on God and the ancestors to provide guidance, bless the proceedings and help the delegates in their deliberations. Ms Williams cited issues such as child and women abuse as well as the AIDS epidemic as requiring special attention and intervention.

The facilitator for the day was Ms Girilie Silinda, General Manager Development Programmes of SAWID, who welcomed all delegates, citing that the programme was designed to give women space to engage and interact with each other.

Mr Themba Thebe, Member of the Mayoral Committee (MMC) for Roads, Transport and Infrastructure in Ekurhuleni, welcomed delegates on behalf of the Executive Mayor of the Ekurhuleni Metro. He paid tribute to women in general and in particular to Mrs Zanele Mbeki and highlighted the important role that women play in life. He cautioned the women present, “If you are a woman leader and there is no woman next to you, you have a problem.” Mr Thebe wished all a warm welcome and hoped that the deliberations would be successful.

Prof Edith Vries, Executive Head of the office of the CEO of the Independent Development Trust, (IDT) one of SAWID’s development partners, welcomed all the women, acknowledging the special role of Young South African Women In Dialogue (YSAWID) and expressing her appreciation at their presence in large numbers at the dialogue. She noted that women are universally acknowledged as providers and builders of homes, families and schools. She pointed out that the women of SAWID had never adopted a “victim stance” and that women would even pull through the difficult economic recession by their own agency. She reminded women that SAWID had managed to influence the way government makes decisions in its short lifespan, and added that it was a courageous step of SAWID to reposition itself, ensuring that the voice of women would continue to be heard in a
changed socio-economic and political environment. She voiced confidence that the 2009 Dialogue would be a great event.

**SAWID Steering Committee Chairperson Dr Brigalia Bam** was ushered onto the stage amid song and dance. In her welcoming address, Dr Bam spoke about the important role that women can play in fighting marginalization and poverty. Even though the development of women sometimes creates distance between women, she said, it was important for women to always remember that the strongest thing that keeps them together is that they are women and they therefore “cannot fail the women who are poor all over the country”. Dr Bam added that women must use their collective energy to eradicate poverty. She encouraged women to become self-reliant and to set up support groups to help one another face the tremendous challenges such as poverty and patriarchy which still undermine the development of women.

Highlighting some of the work of SAWID, Dr Bam mentioned the recognition of senior citizens, and the Peacemaking dialogues with countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi and Sudan, which showed that other African women were eager to learn from South African women about many things. She highlighted the fact that SAWID ensures that international problems become part of the women’s agenda at national and local level, and emphasized that SAWID prides itself on fighting poverty. In conclusion she acknowledged YSAWID and urged young women never to lose their values.

**Ms Bibi Khan, Member of the SAWID Steering Committee,** asked women to indicate what they would like to see as the outcome of the Dialogue. These are some of the comments and suggestions that women made:

- A participant from the Eastern Cape expressed concern about the fact that women do not support other women. They are used and suppressed by men and they in turn suppress their own sisters.
- A woman from the North West Province noted that women are undermined in the mining sector, and wondered how they can be empowered to deal with this challenge.
- A participant from Mpumalanga Province asked whether there was a plan to confront gender...
violence, hunger and poverty, and how men can help in dealing with these issues.
• An Eastern Cape Province woman was concerned about the restructuring of SAWID. She noted that the communication strategy needed to be clarified, and that participants needed a clearer understanding of the recession and how it is affecting poor women.
• A Gauteng Province woman suggested that SAWID speak to government about the issue of remuneration of police reservists; volunteers and home based care practitioners.
• A woman from the Western Cape Province highlighted the need to develop guidelines and policies around racial diversity and inclusivity.
• A participant from the Eastern Cape Province wanted to better understand the relationship between SAWID chapters and SAWID national.
• There was a question about the allocation of jobs to SAWID members who are disabled.

Ms Liepollo Pheko, a political analyst, then delivered the keynote address on the theme of the conference.

She highlighted the gender specific challenges posed by the global financial crisis, and noted that, if left unchecked, this crisis would reverse progress in gender equality and women’s empowerment, increase current poverty and imperil future development. She also noted that policy responses, which build on women’s roles as economic agents and their preference for investing in a child’s well being, can go a long way towards mitigating these negative effects. These responses are good for women and for development - they yield high returns in terms of containing current and future poverty- and should be enacted quickly.

She highlighted some of the effects of the crisis on women:
• The impact of job losses on men’s and women’s well-being differ among countries but men are generally better positioned to weather the crisis because they have higher paying jobs, more assets, more wealth, and their jobs are more likely to offer benefits and be covered by unemployment insurance.
• Women are more likely than men to be under-employed or employed in the informal sector, with limited social safety nets. Exacerbating all these factors is the reality that most women have less access to and control over economic and financial resources than men. Migrant women, especially those who are undocumented, are at higher risk of exploitation than men if they lose their jobs.
• Economic crises exacerbate pressures on women to remain in abusive relationships, migrate for work or enter into the sex trade and other risky professions.
• The World Bank has identified 33 developing countries where women and girls in poor
households are particularly vulnerable to the effects of the global economic and food crises. In 15 of these countries, mostly in Africa, the situation is especially precarious. These countries already are characterized by limited educational opportunities for girls and by high infant and child deaths.

- In developing countries in which women are concentrated in export manufacturing industries (such as in Latin America and Asia), or in tourism (the Caribbean), the effects on women are expected to be greater than for men. This is particularly worrisome in regions such as the Caribbean, where women head a large percentage of households.

- The largest impact could be in the Asia-Pacific region, which has one of the highest ratios of women of working age. And, among working women, about 65 per cent are in vulnerable employment, largely in the region’s informal sector. Many of them have no benefits such as maternity leave and pensions or job security, and thus risk falling into poverty in economic downturns.

- When family resources become scarce, education for girls may be seen as a luxury. When household incomes decline, girls are more likely to be withdrawn from school and to take on more work responsibilities than boys.

Their Impact on Development:

- **Decreased welfare of poor households.** The loss of women’s income usually has greater negative implications for the welfare of poor households than an equivalent loss of men’s income because of both the contributions women make to current household income and their ‘preference’ for investing scarce resources in their children’s health and well-being.

- **Decreased school enrolment.** Educational gender gaps in poor countries are likely to widen as girls are pulled out of school as households cope with declining household income.

- **Decreased employment and small business activity.** The crisis is expected to reduce women’s income in developing countries as a result of losses in employment in export-oriented industries, tightened micro-finance lending and declines in remittances. Women are also affected by the diminished availability of credit worldwide.
because women constitute the majority of clients of small community-based lending institutions. Lastly, household incomes in developing countries will decline as remittances diminish.

In conclusion, Ms Pheko noted that women have a window of opportunity to empower themselves and to ensure that stimulus packages and other policy responses are gender equitable. Gains in gender equality have to be maintained and expanded, and women have to be vigilant that investments are made in women’s economic empowerment, and in health and social services.

In response to Ms Pheko’s presentation, parliamentarian Hon. Ms Vytjie Mentor urged women to view the recession as an opportunity. She urged women not to create a legacy of debt for their children. She expressed her concern about the loans from the International Monetary Fund that the South African government was making and cautioned that South Africa would still suffer the consequences. Alluding to the suggestion that the state bails out banks, she further urged women to challenge such decisions. Women should use the recession as an opportunity and go back to basics, she said, for example, like planting vegetables. They should demand that the Public Works budget for 2011 target rural women because she pointed out that it is mostly men who will benefit from the 2010 budget.

Ms Josephilda Nhiapohlope, from the Presidential Economic Joint Working Group, delivered an address entitled South Africa’s Response to the Economic Crisis on behalf of the Minister of Economic Development. She noted that South Africa does not have a toxic assets crisis or a banking crisis, and explained that our banking regulations are sound, but that the international conditions led to a sharp recession. South Africa’s manufacturing output shrunk and consumer demand fell, with an enormous impact on employment and poverty levels. Liquidations and retrenchments are at an all-time high, and 348,311 new UIF claims were received between April 2009 and August 2009. The South African government’s key response is to move from a budget surplus to a deficit of at least 7.6% in 2009/2010 and 6.2% in 2010/11, with a major focus on infrastructure investment. Social grants have been extended, and a Joint Economic Working Group was called by the President to discuss the crisis and the government’s response.

In conclusion, she shared the framework that was agreed upon and its five key elements:

- Financing growth and investment
- Addressing distressed sectors
- Avoiding retrenchments, and managing it,
- Addressing the social impact of recession, and
- Engaging with the international response to the crisis.
The afternoon session was moderated by Dr Mohau Pheko. Two speakers took the podium after lunch, both presenting on the theme from their provinces’ perspectives. Ms Ramilla Ramdass, a KZN Steering Committee member, presented the KwaZulu-Natal provincial perspective. She read a paper that had been previously presented by the Hon. Ina Cronje, MEC Finance, KwaZulu-Natal.

The Honourable MEC expressed good wishes for SAWID and stated her hope that SAWID would grow from strength to strength. She commended SAWID on the appropriateness of the topic in the current economic climate.

Her paper cited staggering figures of job losses due to the recession:

- More than 500,000 jobs have been lost since 2008 in South Africa;
- There has been a 13% drop in overtime;
- A Quarterly Labour Force Survey showed that 400,000 informal and domestic position have been lost;
- In KZN 17,000 jobs have been lost in the first quarter and 57,000 in the second quarter of this year alone.
- In KZN about 38,000 domestic workers, gardeners, nannies and other people in private household have lost their jobs;
- Levels of unemployment and discouraged job seekers have risen to 34% in KZN.

All this affects women the most because they are most likely to have jobs in the informal sector. Women in the formal sector are also affected because they are most likely to be unskilled compared to their male counterparts. In addition, family tensions increase often resulting in divorce or worse. She aptly used the following expression to demonstrate the impact of the recession on family life: “When poverty comes in the front door, love leaves through the back door.”

The government had to come up with strategies that would minimize the effects of this recession. Some of the strategies used by government include:

- Increased infrastructure spending which provides jobs for communities, for example, the stadium and the airport projects in Durban;
- The Expanded Public Works incentive programme;
- Adjusting monetary policy, for example reducing the repo rate; and
- Exercising fiscal prudence, that is, spending within one’s means.

Some good news is that although KZN was badly hit, the second quarter of the year showed signs of recovery. South Africa was praised by the Chief Economist of the World Bank for some of its economic plans. The MEC motivated the women by citing a Chinese saying that goes “When the winds of change blow, some people build shelters; other people build wind mills.” She encouraged women to be involved in commercial farming; to find opportunities and to conduct proper market research; engage in small business development, cooperatives, and networking. In conclusion, the Honourable MEC announced that they are embarking on financial literacy training for communities and affirmed government’s willingness to support women.
The First Lady of Limpopo Province, Mrs Mokgadi Mathale, provided her Province’s perspective on the financial crisis. She commenced by asking delegates to observe a moment of silence for the late former First Lady of Limpopo, Mrs Moloto, who passed away in August 2009. Her presentation focused mainly on initiatives by the Provincial government, highlighting the following:

- Limpopo contributed 14.4% of the national target in job opportunities;
- 651 sustainable employment opportunities for women were created;
- The Department of Social Development has initiated poverty alleviation projects for women, for example, like sewing and beading projects;
- A Home-based centre was established that employs women;
- Various agricultural projects were initiated, like a chicken broiler in Capricorn; an atchaar export project at Mopane and a project that supplies potatoes to Simba at Sikhukhune.

Despite these initiatives, however, she highlighted remaining challenges:

- Less access to land and water rights;
- Poor access to information, for example, information on climate change;
- No fertile land for higher grade farming;
- Lack of management capacity.

Amongst her hopes for the future, she shared the following wish list:

- An increase in the number of women in senior management positions;
- A move towards 2% representation by the disabled;
- Gender quality and equality – an increase in the number of influential women in government.

As the moderator of the session, Dr Pheko prompted women not to “agonise but to organise”. She raised some issues which would guide the discussions:

- Is what the government is doing sufficient to bolster the economy?
- Where is our agency as women?

Questions and comments

- A woman from the Northern Cape remarked that the province has beautiful stones that are sold to tourists, and that government should assist women to explore how these stones can be used to create jobs.
- There are manganese mines although these do not benefit women. Women in the mining sector are undermined and do not receive mentoring from men. Women need to stand up and lobby for resources to help them.
- We need to redefine our living standards and our values. It is important to know our own talents so that we can manage ourselves.
- Women need to use what they have, for example, participate in Stokvels and plant their own vegetables.
- SAWID was applauded for the opportunities they give to women. However, there is still the challenge of access to information.
- Women are among the “working poor” because they often do not go beyond middle management. Because of this, they are not able to obtain financial assistance targeted for the poor, even though they qualify for assistance.
Closing remarks

This session of the dialogue pointed out that women CAN survive amidst the recession. Women however need to look at the points of entry of their engagement at local, provincial and national government levels.

The day’s activities finished on a very high note as a result of a vibrant healing and barrier breaking session facilitated by Mr Mike Boon of Vulindlela. Mr Boon discussed how cultural diversity should not be seen as a barrier to trust, and advocated for a model of leadership that is focused on service to others.

On the final day of the Dialogue, Bishop Mapule from Alexandra spoke as a representative of the Progressive Women’s Movement of South Africa (PWMSA). She cited that there should be no competition amongst women structures and that the PWMSA is for everyone and not only for certain individuals. She explained that it is a networking body responsible for bringing organizations together. It is not an implementing body. She noted that a major aim of the organization is to make sure that women participate in all sectors of society, and that women are taken from an existing paradigm to a more empowering one. In conclusion she emphasised that it is important for women to participate in leadership activities.

The Hon. Deputy Minister of Correctional Services, Ms Hlengiwe Mkhize paid tribute to Mrs Mbeki for her vision and stated that she has left a mark in the world. Through Mrs Mbeki’s efforts SAWID has been in a position to help women in other countries and in the process afforded opportunities to South African women to learn from women in other countries. For example she attributed her success as Ambassador to the Netherlands to the exposure she received through SAWID. She thanked SAWID for the exposure she obtained though her participation in the Rwanda dialogue. Another initiative that SAWID had a great influence upon was the establishment of the Ministry
for Women, Children and People with Disabilities. She however pointed out that this was not an overnight event, but one that took a lot of effort and lobbying. She encouraged women to be vigilant to issues that affect them and work together.

Dr Frene Ginwala took the podium amidst great excitement, indicated by vociferous singing and ululating in acknowledgement of her enormous contribution to the liberation of South Africa and, in particular, to the empowerment of women. She expressed her delight in being invited to the Dialogue. In her address, Dr Ginwala lamented the fact that fifteen years after the democratic dispensation, women were worse off. The gap between the rich and the poor has widened. The challenge, as she pointed out, was in understanding what we are dealing with. Democracy does not reduce poverty. Poverty still remains a major challenge. The reality of South Africa is that the majority of women are breadwinners. There remained various issues that women needed to dialogue on. An example was the recent situation in the Eastern Cape where women wanted to march in support of an eight-year old girl who wanted a divorce because she had been in a forced marriage, a custom (ukuthwala) that is still practiced in some parts of the country.

Although government has increased the number of women in parliament, the impact of this increase is yet to be seen. She was critical of the grouping of women, children and people with disabilities under a single ministry. Her view is that vulnerability comes to children because of their age but they grow and come out of it. Disability on the other hand, is basically physical in nature. How then do women feature within these two groups? She stated, however, that although we cannot do much about this state of affairs at this stage, it is important that we hold this Ministry accountable. We need to see to it that strategies and plans are in place in order to ensure that women issues are dealt with. She further urged women to get into active gender structures.

Ms Judi Nwokedi, representing Cell C, one of the sponsors of the dialogue, addressed women on “Empowering women through technology.” In her address she encouraged women not to fear technology but to learn to use it. She used the metaphor of women as volcanoes because they are a source of incredible power. Like volcanoes women are capable of doing a lot of good but also a lot of damage. She urged women to explore some of the opportunities that exist in underserviced areas as business opportunities. She pointed out that in South Africa the “new gold” is now energy. Some of the possibilities are:

- In the Eastern Cape there are job opportunities to participate in energy supply;
- there are opportunities to become independent power suppliers.
Advocate Nomazotsho Memani delivered an address on behalf of Hon. Ms Noluthando Mayende-Sibiya, Minister of Women, Children and People with Disabilities.

The speech on the subject of the economic empowerment of women noted that women were meeting during the 16 Days of Activism Campaign of No Violence Against Women and Children, and at a time when government has committed itself to curb the spread of the HIV infection and the impact of AIDS in our society.

It pointed out that even prior to the economic recession, there were existing barriers which inhibited the economic participation and empowerment of women, such as problems of lack of access, ownership and control of land. Many women have been channeled into the caring services, farming for food production and the hospitality services, where the low wages paid reflect the little worth afforded these jobs. The casualization of labour and labour brokering further weaken women’s bargaining position in these fields.

The Ministry of Women, Children and People with Disabilities is reviewing the situation of women’s access to empowerment funds and micro-credit with the aim of establishing an Empowerment Fund for Women, which will assist NGOs and civil society in undertaking women empowerment programmes, particularly in rural and other disadvantaged areas. The Ministry is also ensuring that the economic opportunities arising from large public infrastructure projects like the Extended Public Works Programme, land distribution and rural development programmes, are effective in reaching women.

The Ministry is also eager to focus on ensuring that there is both gender and disability equity in the uptake of training programmes of SETAs, colleges for further educations and universities. The Ministry is in the process of drafting a Gender Equality Bill that will seek to achieve 50-50 gender parity in both the public and private sectors.

In conclusion, Advocate Memani stated that the Strategic Framework of the Department has been developed, supported by a Budget Proposal and an Organizational Structure with sufficient capacity to address the specific interests of the three groups falling under the Ministry’s portfolio, namely Women, Children and People with Disabilities.
DIAMONDS ARE HELPING TO EMPOWER SOUTH AFRICA.

Just as the diamond industry employs thousands of cutters and polishers, so does Ponahalo, the BEE vehicle which owns 26% of De Beers, empower thousands more South Africans. By representing stakeholders from across the country, from business leaders, De Beers employees and the urban skilled, to people with disabilities and the rural poor, our empowerment is proving to be just like our diamonds - forever.

De Beers. Always looking forward. Always giving back.
SAWID was established in 2003 for the purpose of creating an inclusive, diverse and non-partisan platform to ensure women’s participation on issues of national, regional, continental and international importance, and to establish a common agenda for the development of women. From its initiation, the platform was characterized by its honouring of the diverse spiritual traditions of the women, and by its advocacy of a non-hierarchical, organic and holistic structure, where women ministers and unemployed rural women have equal voice and say. The Spousal office, who hosted the first dialogue in 2003, was mandated by the women of South Africa to continue to host the dialogues with a committed group of volunteers who acted as National Steering Committee (NSC), a decision to be reviewed in three year’s time. It was envisaged that the Office on the Status of Women (OSW) in the Presidency and the Offices of the Premiers in provinces, who shared the mandate of cascading the continental development goals of the AU and NEPAD to grassroots women, would act as custodians of SAWID in the provinces.

In July 2004, however, SAWID moved out of the Spousal office because the Spousal office did not have a mandate to raise funds, a function that is reserved for the Director-General. Thus the IsiGodlo Trust was formed, allowing SAWID to honour its organic nature and to underwrite its character as a non-profit civic society institution driven by the effort of volunteers and able to raise public funds. Between 2003 and 2006 SAWID was driven by a series of volunteer steering committees at national and provincial level and an army of ad hoc helpers who gathered annually to host the national dialogue, sponsored directly or through the IsiGodlo Trust, with donations by government departments, para-statals like Eskom and Telkom, the private sector and individuals.

SAWID strengthened its influence and reach at national and provincial level despite the fact that it was driven by volunteers in the form of a Board of Trustees as well as the Steering Committee chaired by Dr. Brigalia Bam. It had little operational capacity and limited financial resources, yet managed to hold successful Annual Dialogues as was resolved in 2003.
The SAWID National Operational Model

The SAWID operational model from its inception in 2003 commenced with strong volunteer support, driven by issue-based activism. The main activity was the Annual Dialogue with the governing structure being the National Steering Committee. SAWID took a “no membership” approach, preferring to be an organization open to all women as individuals or groups on a non-partisan basis. Activities of the NSC expanded beyond the Annual Dialogue and Commissions were formed as Committees of the NSC to drive different areas of interest. The increasing recognition of SAWID, with a growth in interest, and increased participation and support by women, led to SAWID being forced to take on a more formal operational model. This recognition and support extended to civil society, government, the private sector, development and funding agencies, locally, and to some degree continentally, and globally. The IsiGodlo Trust, which was originally formed to mainly assist with fundraising and governance, took a leadership role to strategically guide the institutionalization and expansion of SAWID at both corporate and programmatic levels.

SAWID only began to build its operational capacity and implement its organizational strategy when the Independent Development Trust (IDT), an organization that contributes to the national developmental agenda, agreed in 2006 to form a partnership with SAWID through a capacity building programme for an initial three-year period. The aim, to support the organizational capacity and infrastructure of the SAWID programme, was underpinned by the mutual objective

Provincial steering committee members and members of the national gender machinery discuss SAWID’s strategic direction in July 2006.
to reach out to all women in order to fight poverty. This partnership allowed SAWID to start the long process of organizational development; employing staff, outlining programmes and defining operational plans for the SAWID secretariat. The volunteer structure of SAWID gave way to remunerated full-time employees; office space and a reduced role for the steering committee. A full-time secretariat was appointed in 2006-2007, and, as a result of this agreement; the staff complement grew to 11 people with defined roles. At the height of SAWID’s activities, this team comprised of 1 Executive Manager, 1 Senior Programmes Manager, 4 Managers in the fields of Documentation and Information, Regional Coordination and Support, Human Resource and Board Secretariat, 3 Administration Support staff (Programme Support, Finance Support and General Administration) and 1 Field Coordinator for Older Persons.

SAWID’s work in the seven years of its existence has focused on civic engagements, peace building, catalyzing, managing multiple stakeholders and innovation and development to achieve its identified 5 areas of operations: each intended to be led by a manager who co-designs, develops and implements relevant programmes with the commission, in partnership with stakeholders according to the identified principles of engagement for that programme.

Although SAWID initially came into being to provide a platform for women to gather annually to express their views and opinions about their future, insights gained during the first SAWID Dialogue in 2003 pointed to serious gaps in the national mechanisms for women’s empowerment. The dialogue soon moved from a gathering of women who saw themselves mainly as beneficiaries of government-initiated development programmes to women who became active development strategists and agents of their own development, eager to demonstrate and implement strategies and mechanisms to advance women’s, and in so doing, poor people’s, development, in partnership with government, State Owned Enterprises (SOEs), the private sector and Non Government Organizations. (NGOs)

The Programmes are:

1. Annual Forum & Emergent Dialogues
   1.1 Regional Coordination & Support
2. Pan African Peace and Reconciliation Programme
3. YSAWID
4. Socio-economic Programmes
   4.1 Development Caravan
   4.2 Special Projects (India Brazil South Africa (IBSA) Women’s Forum)
5. Older Persons
Since its inception in 2003, SAWID has successfully convened national dialogues that have contributed to personal healing, barrier-breaking, and awareness and dissemination of information materials regarding the national, continental and global development agendas. Thousands of South African women, including rural and urban women, politicians and the unemployed, church women and educationalists, ministers, public servants and development activists, have gathered to share opinions and exchange views on subjects critical to local development programmes, poverty eradication approaches, appropriate women’s development structures, and strategies for women’s inclusion in peace and reconciliation efforts in the context of our national development agenda, continental aspirations like NEPAD under the AU, and the global Beijing Platform for Action.

SAWID Strategic Workshop July 2006

The first strategic workshop was held in July 2006, to reflect on National and Provincial Initiatives since 2003, and to assess the impact of SAWID interactions. Many of the challenges articulated in 2006, namely a lack of clarity between SAWID, state organs and other women, a lack of national and provincial structures and a lack of financial, human and technical resources, continued to restrain provincial and local chapters.

The SAWID Indaba, March 2009

Between the 20th to the 22nd of March 2009, SAWID hosted an important strategic session to review the road the organization had traversed since its inception in 2003, to reassess its vision and mission, as well as to chart the road ahead. Participants at the SAWID Indaba included representatives of SAWID at district and provincial level, the IsiGodlo Board of Trustees, the Steering Committee as well as the SAWID Secretariat. The Indaba also benefited from the inputs of a number of Friends of SAWID.

Ms Viwe Qegu, SAWID National Steering Committee member, discusses the future of SAWID at the SAWID Indaba in March 2009.
The Indaba set out to address the following challenges:

• How to adequately respond to the many needs and demands of various stakeholders and partners while maintaining the focus and priorities of SAWID.
• How to deal with the fact that the extensiveness of the SAWID platform by its nature creates expectations of delivery on issues raised.
• How to locate SAWID within the South African women’s movement and to create coalitions with like-minded groups or organizations.
• Uneven understanding on the part of provinces on how to cascade SAWID’s vision, mission and goals to grassroots level while maintaining independence in action.
• No proper guidelines on provincial leadership since 2004.

Particular constraints and challenges were highlighted as follows:

• **Role of the Secretariat**
  Is there clear agreement regarding the actual mandate of SAWID?
• **Fundraising**
  How must fundraising be done at provincial level, where grassroots women sit?

• **Implementation & Accountability**
  What structures need to be in place to ensure implementation and accountability?
• **Membership & Volunteerism**
  How can a volunteer steering committee act in a productive and efficient way?
  How can an organization without paid members ensure the implementation of SAWID’s far-reaching plans for women’s empowerment?
• **Ensuring that there is Inclusivity & Non-partisanship**
  How does SAWID ensure that its comprehensive inclusivity checklist is honoured and cascaded down to community level?
• **Governance**
  How can national SAWID ensure good governance at provincial, regional and local level, given the volunteer nature of the steering committees?

Particular constraints and challenges in terms of programmatic issues were highlighted as follows:

• **Role of Commissions**
  What is the optimum role of the SAWID Commissions, and how can these commissions and programmes be cascaded to provincial and regional levels?
Repositioning of SAWID

• Role of Provincial Coordinators
  What is the appropriate role of the provincial coordinators?

In the report-backs from Provinces, it became clear that all provinces were deeply affected by changes in political leadership, the removal of Premiers, and uncertainty regarding incoming officials and political appointees. Another gap was the fact that not all the programmes, especially the Peace Programme and Older Persons, are down-stepped to every province, so that people in those fields can be co-opted to help localize recommendations and implementable programmes in those fields.

It was agreed that a Position Paper needs to be written to analyze SAWID’s continuing role and relevance, and to reposition SAWID, changing the branding, marketing and messaging, (especially through mass media like television and radio) and entering into direct communication with key stakeholders and Provincial Principals and Supporters.

The Need for an Organizational Review

It had become abundantly clear that there were gaps and challenges that SAWID needed to address, including changes in the South African and global environment, like socio-political developments, the changing status of the women’s movement and the gender machinery, as well as the global financial crisis and economic meltdown. The ultimate purpose of a proposed repositioning exercise was to explore a futuristic perspective that would define SAWID post its 5th Anniversary trajectory and that would factor in institutional and structural changes that had been identified at an organizational level.

In addition, organizational development experts point out that the sixth year of an organization’s existence is a critical one in determining its future sustainability, often resulting in either the death or renewal of the organization. A review process would allow SAWID to understand how it could use its role as an advocacy forum of women’s voices to be of service to the country’s broader development agenda.

Opportunities in the current national environment

• In the seven years of its existence, SAWID has placed itself well to be a driver and catalyst of a new and transformational development agenda that insists on novel and sustainable development paradigms that put women and the family at its centre. The Development Caravan has successfully initiated
such a transformational development agenda, and is training Social Auxiliary Workers at a time when provinces and national departments are all engaged in seeking solutions to similar problems. There is ample opportunity for scaling up the implications of the Development Caravan.

- SAWID has recommended the establishment of a Women’s Ministry and a National Planning Commission, and has inspired and engendered the Integrated Poverty Eradication Strategy. The current National Priorities that include Rural Development, Health, Education and Job Creation, as well as a reconfiguration of the state machinery, create space for SAWID to advocate for an inclusive macro-economic framework that includes women’s unpaid work, and to push for a government initiative to coordinate both early childhood development initiatives and the dignified treatment of older persons in the country.

- SAWID has the network and reach to harness the energy of women “foot soldiers” in the country who are passionate about SAWID’s programmatic areas like development, peace, older persons, and young women and who can create advocacy groups to influence policy and implementation strategies. SAWID can further convene the entire gamut of the women’s movement around a transformational women’s agenda, in order to strengthen participative democracy.

- SAWID’s role in the IBSA Women’s Forum places it in an admirable position to assist in a national Monitoring and Evaluation planning exercise where gender indicators can be embedded at local and municipal level to measure women’s development progress.

- SAWID is in an excellent position to assist in contributing to the design of the newly established Ministry of Women, Children and People with Disability, in particular, the programmatic areas, suggesting priorities and implementation strategies.
A discussion paper on the Repositioning of SAWID was drafted to catalyze discussion, provide a background to the status quo and explore possible future options. Through a series of meetings of the Repositioning Task Team, the Repositioning Paper was approved by the Board and a roll-out strategy was devised, which involved consultations with different levels of SAWID “structures”, partners and stakeholders. There was an agreement that the task team would convene repositioning workshops at provincial level to discuss the gaps and challenges identified and that a final draft document would be presented at the Annual National Dialogue of 2009 for discussion by the women of South Africa.

The roll-out targeted the following:
• The Extended SAWID Steering Committee
• Facilitators/Foot Soldiers
• Women in all nine provinces
• Stakeholders (Government, civil society, donors: old partners, new partners, Women’s Ministry, Planning Ministry, Women’s Organizations: PWMSA, ANC Women’s League)

The proposed questions to be answered by provincial women dealt with the following issues:
1. SAWID Membership
2. National SAWID Steering Committee: Structure, Composition and Function (Number, Term, Representation)
3. Provincial Steering Committees: Structure, Composition and Function (Number, Term, Representation)
4. Provincial and Regional SAWID Chapters
5. Resources and Funding
6. Patronage: Who, Where, Criteria?
7. Institutional Mechanisms for Provinces
8. Role of IsiGodlo Trust
9. Desired Communication Strategy
10. Relationship with Broader Women’s Movement

Members of the Extended SAWID Steering Committee.
A
n Extended Steering Committee meeting was convened in July 2009, where Ms. Vuyo Mahlati explained the need for a review of SAWID’s trajectory and future. In her presentation, she reflected on the changed global and national economic environment, where CSI money was no longer readily available, in addition to the reality of an altered political environment, with new ministries, and changed incumbents. It was emphasized that SAWID needs to continue to start from next door, but act on global fora as well.

The Extended Steering Committee supported the outcome of the March Indaba, in particular the SAWID vision and value system and supported the repositioning process as approved by the Board. They felt it was important to review what has worked and what has not worked; including the challenge of localizing SAWID. They discussed in detail the issue of women’s expectations of SAWID at provincial level; especially of implementing projects, and they felt that this issue had not been given the attention that it deserved. They stressed the need for the repositioning to culminate in something that addresses all the issues raised in the form of a guideline to provinces and underlined that ownership of SAWID should always remain with women, and that inclusivity must always be primary.

Following the consultation with the Extended National Steering Committee, Provincial Steering Committees were informed about the decision of the Board to provide them with an opportunity to ground SAWID upon the aspirations of South African women, empowering them to decide on SAWID’s location, its coordinating structure and how the national and provincial steering committees should relate to one another as resolved in 2005. This was subsequently followed up by invitation letters requesting provinces to coordinate forums for participation in the SAWID repositioning process.
Repositioning of SAWID

PROVINCIAL CONSULTATIONS: AN ANALYSIS
Emerging Issues and Implications

Overview

The provinces welcomed the opportunity to reposition SAWID with anticipation and excitement. Those who participated reconnected with other women in the province and their passion for SAWID was reignited. They appreciated the SAWID delegation’s presence in their provinces and valued the fact that the repositioning exercise would result in a renewed vision articulated by Sawidians themselves. Notwithstanding the anticipation and excitement, it was clear that the political climate has had a negative impact on SAWID’s activities. The process provided women with the opportunity to honestly reflect on the state of SAWID in the provinces. The women were vocal about their state of despondency before the repositioning and they therefore placed an enormous amount of value on the process as it came at an opportune time for them to renew their commitment to SAWID.

Of interest was the varying degrees of understanding of the nature of SAWID. This was reflective of the different entry points of women into SAWID and the lack of any general orientation. What was clear from the provincial reports was the overall dependency of SAWID on other stakeholders, which can impact negatively on the sustainability of the organization.

SAWID’s agenda

There was a high level of appreciation and affirmation of SAWID’s agenda and its unique character. This includes its vision, mission and values. However, the facilitation team experienced variations in understandings and interpretations by provincial women, as illustrated by their struggle to translate SAWID’s vision and mission into implementable activities. This is partly due to the “problematic language” used in the SAWID documentation, which is highly conceptual, resulting in terms such as “forum”, “dialogue”, and “platform” not being understood as strategies that they can use to respond to their own issues.

The SAWID programming in terms of Dialogues and Commissions were appreciated as far as the participation in the Annual Dialogue forum is concerned, particularly, the value of healing workshops, networks and information dissemination.

Delegates at the Free State Repositioning workshop.

Women participating in the Mpumalanga Provincial Repositioning workshop.
The emerging trend in terms of impact points to an appreciation for, and empowerment at a personal level, stemming from workshops on, for example, the writing of business plans, computer literacy, and how to start a business, which resulted in people starting their own Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and projects.

There is however, a clear lack of capacity in provinces to initiate, fund and carry out their own activities.

**Structures**

The provincial structures that were nominated in 2004 at the Annual Dialogue still exist, however, in many provinces the leadership has moved to senior positions in government/political parties. This has left a vacuum as there are no policies to guide the review of these structures. They do not meet, citing lack of resources and in some provinces it is only through the activities of YSAWID that SAWID is known. SAWID structures in the provinces vary in strengths and weaknesses but they are all dysfunctional, in the sense that there is very little happening on the ground.

**Membership**

Generally there was an agreement that SAWID should move towards being a membership organization. Women provided different reasons, but the issue elicited vibrant discussions from all provinces.. A number of concerns were raised, however. Those who favoured membership felt that SAWID had been too open and having members would allow for some controls to be put in place, allowing SAWID to become more organized and structured. Others felt that membership was about a growth process of the platform and not about personal gratification. Membership provides identification and encourages passion for the organization, and with membership, women will be obliged to commit to the values of SAWID. Some women were torn on the question of charging for membership as they felt it would compromise SAWID’s position of inclusivity.

The motivation was that membership should be free; otherwise rural and unemployed women would not be able to access SAWID. Those who felt strongly about non-paying membership provided alternative solutions such as pledges of commitment, organizational membership, individual donations and subsidized membership fees.

Provinces that were vocally opposed to membership were the Free State and Eastern Cape; citing that the reason that they were at SAWID and continued to serve was because of their passion. They argued that this passion would dwindle with membership, and be replaced with money. They pointed out that SAWID has thus far succeeded without membership. Possible conflicts might arise if SAWID changed to membership now. SAWID has been sustained by passion, they noted, and must continue as it was. They asked
Repositioning of SAWID

questions such as; “Will membership mean that we have to elect leaders, for, if so, it would kill the spirit of the organization”. There was a strong feeling that having paid members will change the nature and character of SAWID as a platform for all women of SAWID, and suggested that IsiGodlo should remain a fundraiser while the National Steering Committee should take over the role of governance.

Concerns were raised around the current functioning of the National Steering Committee as there is a need for role clarification between the SAWID National Steering Committee and the IsiGodlo Trust. Another concern was that SAWID is not a registered and legal entity. The reflections on this matter concluded that all provinces placed value in the role of the National Steering Committee, and wanted to see provincial representation. They would like to see this structure given a name that would suggest executive responsibilities, mandate and permanency. The feeling was that the name Steering Committee sounds temporary. They all felt that the current steering committee members should always remain in the committee with some provinces suggesting an ex officio status.

There was general appreciation of the fund-raising and financial accountability roles of the IsiGodlo Trust, however, the agenda of SAWID and strategic guidance was viewed as something that should include a structure with provincial representation.

KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Delegates

National structures

There was a strong affirmation of the work of the IsiGodlo Trust. However, there were different views and sometimes a misunderstanding regarding the Trust’s role in relation to SAWID. In some provinces they did not have sufficient insight into the work of the IsiGodlo Trust. Some inquired about the members of the Trust and the meaning of the word “IsiGodlo”. After clarification they supported the work of the Trust and wanted to maintain the role of the trust as fundraisers for SAWID. However, provinces felt that SAWID should register as a legal entity which would be managed by the National Steering Committee. This suggests that the IsiGodlo Trust must shift responsibilities of managing SAWID to this committee. Others were of the view that the IsiGodlo Trust should retain its responsibilities but change its name to SAWID Trust. Generally, the provinces acknowledged the need for governance as it underpins the sustainability

Ms Ntombi Shangase and Ms Maned Mhlongo from the SAWID Secretariat.
Provincial structures

Generally provincial structures are dysfunctional, and although there are office bearers, they are often barely active. There are no governing guidelines. Where provincial activity thrives, it is where there are partnerships with local government or NGOs. It becomes clear that there is no provincial agenda that drives provincial activities; hence meetings are only held in response to national calls.

There was an agreement that provincial structures are necessary to drive the work of SAWID, but that there should be representativity from the regions and districts. It was agreed that in the formation of these committees the inclusivity checklist would be the basis, but it was also clear that this would only succeed if the national structure would develop policy guidelines and provide a comprehensive framework. They agreed that they needed a core team that can drive the work of SAWID in the provinces as people have difficulty meeting. In order to cascade SAWID to local level, the provinces reached an agreement on the need to establish chapters at local level.

Patronage

The idea of a patron was strongly supported with a strong reflection on their experience with regard to the Patron. Based on the evolution and history of SAWID, it was discovered that almost all provinces had selected patrons based on their political status. On reflection it would seem that this arrangement proved to have both advantages and disadvantages for SAWID. In most deliberations, women strongly felt that SAWID should continue to have patrons but felt that they should not be political, with the exception of Limpopo that have approached the current First Lady to be their patron.

The provinces then came up with new criteria for a SAWID patron. The patron should be passionate about women’s development, have leadership skills, be a community leader in good standing with ample evidence of community work, be a woman of substance, with the ability to attract and obtain material resources, and be a person that people respect and who is in touch with women’s needs. The provincial patron should be a woman in line with SAWID’s values and vision, who has international status and is a role model, influential and knowledgeable on women’s issues.

Provinces felt strongly that there should be a term attached to the patron with a job description and terms of reference. At National level, they felt that the Founder of SAWID should continue as a patron.

Resources and funding

Provinces agreed that raising funds for their own activities is the responsibility of the province but
without clear guidelines and protocols it has been challenging. They expected the National SAWID to assist them financially in their operations, and even though they have now undertaken to do their own fundraising they still feel that the Board should meet them halfway in terms of operational costs. In the past few years the provinces have relied on partners such as the government, NGOs and municipalities for survival.

Provincial women sought clarity as to whether provinces could be registered and be given a mandate to manage their own provincial matters. Lines of accountability between the provincial and the national board need to be defined so as to avoid conflict. They undertook to set up fundraising committees in the provinces but noted that they would require a clear provincial fundraising strategy. SAWID Mpumalanga has a registered Trust and they would be in a position to do their own fundraising. Many provinces were interested in this model.

**Communication strategy**

Provinces recognized that communication in general between different levels of SAWID has been poor and fragmented. They applauded the recommendation to develop a communication strategy that will guide provinces and govern communication in general. They made a list of suggestions of ways to improve communication but also to market, brand and SAWID at provincial, national and international levels.

They commended newsletters that have been published in the last few years but would recommend that it is released and distributed more effectively and more often. They also requested that they are given the skills and opportunity to have their own provincial newsletters. They requested that their activities should also be part of the documentation, website and other media. They have suggested the use of communication tools like Facebook and sms, etc. They also suggested investing in communication tools that can be accessed by people in rural and remote areas, such as postage and community radio.

**Relationship with the broader Women’s movement**

In all the provinces the question was perceived to be referring to the Progressive Women’s Movement of South Africa (PWMSA) - showing a limited understanding of what the women’s movement is about. A paper was distributed that defined social movements in general, and in particular the Women’s Movement. In all the provinces women in SAWID had “issues”, and had experienced conflict and tensions with different women’s structures as they were all trying to define their mandate and how they fit into the women’s agenda. This inevitably has led to some serious tensions. SAWID women strongly feel that SAWID caters for all women’s needs and there is therefore no need for any other structure. Worth noting is that the SAWID women themselves belong to different formations and organizations, including the Progressive Women’s Organization. After long and sometimes heated discussions, they emerged with a position that SAWID should remain inclusive and form partnerships with all women’s formations in different sectors based on their common agenda. They feel that SAWID is an umbrella body because it encompasses all the women in the Republic.

**Recommendations**

- There is overwhelming support for membership with concerns around fees.
- There is a need for further investigation around this issue.
- SAWID is to register as an NGO and legal entity under the name SAWID in order to engage partners in terms of fundraising.
- A structural review of SAWID needs to be done.
The second day of the Annual Dialogue was dedicated to the discussion and report back from the Provinces on the process of repositioning that they had been part of, as well as a general discussion and the way forward. This day also happened to coincide with World Aids Day on the 1st of December and in honour of this day delegates from the Free State Province led the conference through a prayer session with candles in remembrance of all those affected and infected by HIV and AIDS.

Thereafter Xolile, a young woman from KwaZulu-Natal, rendered a beautiful poem about WOMAN, much to the delight of the crowd. In opening this session women were given the opportunity to speak about their experiences of SAWID and below are some of these testimonies:

Ms Lorato Scherpenhuyzen acknowledged the SAWID patron Mrs Zanele Mbeki for opening doors for women. She however highlighted the plight of women who work as farm labourers and expressed deep concern about their economic situation.

A Young Sawidian, Ms Khumbuzile Mbele, thanked SAWID for the impact that the organization has had on her life. “I now have an IT Engineering degree because of SAWID,” she said. She encouraged women to continue the legacy of SAWID patron Mrs Zanele Mbeki.

After these testimonies, the Chairperson of the Repositioning Task Team, Ms Vuyo Mahlati, made a presentation on the Context and Background of the Repositioning process. The purpose of the presentation was basically to share the feedback from the SAWID provincial meetings on the subject. She explained that these meetings were necessary, especially since SAWID was now in its sixth year and it was deemed that it is time for reflection, especially with regard to the direction that the organization needs to take. She reminded delegates that SAWID started in 2003 as a forum where women could discuss issues that are relevant to them, and that SAWID accommodates women in all their diversity.

Following this presentation, Ms Susan Nkomo shared experiences and insights gained during provincial
dialogues on the Repositioning process. She highlighted the following emerging issues from these dialogues:

**Emerging issues:**

- The vision and values of SAWID, of unification within diversity, were affirmed but there is still a challenge in terms of keeping in touch with women at grassroots level. Another concern is that despite the excitement about SAWID, there is a huge gap between the dialogues that are facilitated by the Secretariat and what happens at provincial levels.
- The sustainability of SAWID was another concern. There is a prevailing perception that there is a “national” SAWID which has to provide resources for provinces. This, Ms Nkomo observed, is evidence of a lack of formal understanding of how SAWID operates.
- Issues of relationship between YSAWID and “mother SAWID” was another matter of concern as there seems to be a lack of knowledge on how the two should relate. The general observation is that YSAWID tends to be more active at provincial level.
- There is an apparent communication challenge at all levels, for example, between national and local and within the provinces themselves. In particular, provinces expressed great concern about late notification of events by national;
- Another issue that was raised by provinces is the need for guidelines on how SAWID should operate at provincial level.
- The tensions inherent in volunteerism: Although there is a general appreciation of the benefits of volunteerism, tensions sometimes arise with regard to who belongs to the Steering Committee.
- In some provinces people were experiencing problems of resources. Finances proved quite a challenge for volunteers.
- Membership: While the general view was to move towards a SAWID that is membership-based, there was a concern about fees. There was a general feeling that fees could exclude those who cannot afford to pay them. Various membership options were suggested, for example, levels of membership such as individual versus organizational membership. Membership was seen as important in terms of giving people a sense of ownership and belonging;
• IsiGodlo Trust: Some provinces felt that the IsiGodlo Trust should remain as a governance structure, while others suggested a reconfiguration of the Steering Committee to make it a more permanent structure with some power. Sustainability emerged as an important issue with some provinces suggesting that they raise funds for themselves.
• Structure: Provinces suggested the need to set time frames, and a constitution that stipulates these was suggested;
• Ensuring inclusivity and broad representation in terms of provinces, sector, race and YSAWID was regarded as a matter of high importance;
• Patronage: It was agreed that more clarity on the criteria for patronage was necessary. The practice of nominating First Ladies of the provinces as patrons emerged though it was not intended. Some provinces felt that it was important for the patron to be someone who is an activist in her own right, a women of integrity who is in touch with women’s issues.
• A matter of great concern was that some provinces have had no dialogues.

Delegates were grouped according to their provinces to further discuss the repositioning of SAWID under the guidance of facilitators from their provinces. The aim of these discussions was to come up with a consolidated position with regards to the repositioning issues that had been raised during provincial dialogues.

Summary of proceedings
• It emerged clearly that SAWID is about development, social cohesion and solidarity, as is evident in our solidarity with women in Burundi, DRC and the Sudan. It is for development, for peace and values. Overall women are happy with the current value system and areas of emphasis.
• Regarding membership, there is general agreement, but the issue of fees is contentious. We therefore need to look at how women will become members. Membership is necessary for identity purposes, that is, what differentiates SAWID from other organizations? The issue of the responsibilities of members also needs to be clarified.
• There is general concern about and commitment to the issue of financial sustainability and the need to also look into income generation to help women start up projects.
• There is concern with regard to what commitment entails. Is it behavior or action?
• Fundraising was reflected upon and discussed but no consensus was reached. It was agreed that more information was necessary and to this end it was suggested that someone be commissioned to identify best fund-raising approaches and practices.

IsiGodlo Trustee, Ms Thoko Mpumlwana making a contribution during the Repositioning Dialogue.

SANID: “We are the ones we’ve been waiting for.”
The following issues were identified and/or agreed upon in terms of structure:

- There should be a distinction between agenda setting, programming and governance at local, district, regional, provincial and national levels
- A three year term of office was agreed upon
- The value of inclusivity was honoured.- At least two provincial representatives to be appointed from district to province and national;
- Functionality – It was proposed that IsiGodlo Trust’s function be limited to fundraising and the proposed National Council to be responsible for strategy. The National Council’s term of office should be three years.

Deliberations

Mrs Mbeki pointed out that currently the lack of uniformity between the names of IsiGodlo and SAWID was problematic. To deal with this issue, she suggested a move towards one structure and name with a clear mandate.

Furthermore, it was suggested that a ‘SAWID Board’ take responsibility for governance but there was a strong feeling that the IsiGodlo Trust has been there for more than five years and was functioning well. What was now required, however was to align names and continue the work with the possibility of the Board of Trustees having subcommittees that can perform different functions.

Ms Mathabo Kunene, Acting Executive Manager of SAWID and a Trustee of the IsiGodlo Trust, pointed out that it is important to be weary of having a large board that raises funds instead of a Trust that has legitimacy- she reminded the house that for donors this is an important issue. At this stage it is not necessary to worry about the name.

Clarity on the issue of a patron was provided. It was pointed out that the notion of a First Lady as patron was initially coincidental. What should rather be the focus is the profile of the woman who assumes this role. The Limpopo case was different because their First Lady happened to fit this profile.
SAWID founder and IsiGodlo Trust Chairperson, Mrs Zanele Mbeki, raising a point during the dialogue.

Another delegate reminded the house that women needed to be cognisant of what they wanted to be, for example, a part of civil society, a Non Governmental Organization (NGO), Non Profit Organization (NPO) etc. She questioned how SAWID has managed to survive for more than six years. What was the reasoning for wanting to change? She concluded by cautioning the house that “If it does not itch, don’t scratch it”.

A delegate pointed out that SAWID is for South Africans, however, we need a spokesperson for South African women. She expressed concern about the politics that appear to affect SAWID and maintained that in her capacity as a poor South African woman she recommends that the IsiGodlo Trust remain and that Mrs Mbeki continues to represent South African women.

Dr Bam stated that the IsiGodlo Trust had other functions besides fundraising, for example, programming, staff accountability, etc. and she urged women not to worry. She informed delegates that it is due to financial constraints that various other issues of SAWID were not consistently addressed, for example, YSAWID, Older Persons, the Development Caravan, and the Peace Commission. She concluded by appealing to those present to avail themselves for provincial dialogues.

In conclusion, delegates were urged to be mindful of the following:

- Ensure that we do not lose the work already done by the IsiGodlo Trust.
- The need to create a national structure with the necessary provincial representation, appointed for a three-year term.
- The name SAWID needs to be registered, and it is necessary to consult on what the final structure will be called.

Mrs Kunene further pointed out that some agreement was eminent but there was still a need to fine-tune certain issues. She cautioned participants to consider the legal responsibilities. She also urged women to consider the people who came up with the idea of giving us this opportunity to put our views forward. She further stressed that women should never forget that SAWID is about volunteerism.

In conclusion, gratitude and appreciation for all the hard work done was expressed to Ms Mahlati, Ms Nkomo and the rest of the Repositioning Task Team and SAWID chairperson, Dr Brigalia Bam, thanked the staff, delegates and sponsors without whom this dialogue would not have been possible.
The IDT, together with strategic partners, will enable poor communities to access resources, recognise and unlock their own potential and continuously improve their quality of life.

Winners of the IDT Contractor Awards 2009 with IDT CEO, Mrs Thembi Nwedamutswu, (left) and the Chairperson of the IDT Board of Trustees, Mrs Pumla Radebe, (right). The winners of all three categories were women.

The IDT is committed to the development and empowerment of women and the attainment of gender equality.