About 450 young women from all walks of life heeded the call and came in their numbers to attend the Young South African Women In Dialogue (YSAWID) forum that started on the 10th of December at the Assemblies of God Conference Centre in Meyerton. The afternoon started with the registration process that saw most women queuing up to get their room numbers. Bed linen and pillows were a common sight near the entrance to the registration hall and buses that brought the women from nine provinces filled the driveway of the conference center. The little town of Henley-on-Klip, Meyerton, was a hive of activity with the arrival of the young women who had gathered to empower themselves with knowledge of survival strategies and personal and economic development.

After a prayer prepared by the Archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Church, and read by Ms. Polixeni Dzeretos from the Greek youth community, the YSAWID delegates were formally welcomed to the 2007 dialogue by Ms. Ntombi Mekgwe, Speaker of Ekurhuleni municipality, who in turn was greeted with the spirit-lifting isizulu song Ehizwe e lamakhosikazi, meaning This country belongs to the women.

From the moment SAWID Chairperson Dr Brigalia Bam took to the stage, all were enchanted by her charisma. Her
message of the day was “hope,” and economic empowerment and poverty were the main issues she hoped would be tackled. According to Bam, everyone should live in a home where there is no poverty, and no woman, child and family should ever be subjected to hunger. “Poverty is a word that should cease to exist. It should be eradicated.”

Bam gleamed with pride as she boasted about her age and inspired women of all ages to take care of themselves. The 74-year old Bam said that every woman should know who she is and love herself. “A woman must be grateful for what she has and have confidence in who she is. Her walk and posture must reflect what is inside.”

She noted that strength and spiritual energy should be priorities for women, and that in life one needed to learn to share with, and belong to, other people.

She said that SAWID was more than just a dialogue and that every woman should leave the conference feeling empowered. “This forum means that you empower yourself so that you can empower the people that you have left behind.” She pointed out that a lot of people do not have the privilege to attend these kinds of events and that those in attendance must be grateful. “This forum is a great platform for sharing ideas.” In conclusion, she reminded young women to grow up to be wonderful women, and to learn, exchange ideas and contribute. “You are our pride and you are our hope for the future, so, people of hope, God bless you.”

On Thursday the 13th of December, Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo–Ngcuka, SAWID patron, arrived with an entourage of bodyguards and yet managed to remain approachable to the young delegates in the hall. She broke the ice with a vibrant song that got the delegates on their legs, and did not waste any time to dive straight into the matter at hand, giving the ladies an informal talk and a piece of her mind regarding their very bright futures. The Deputy President emphasised the role of friendship and self-respect, and noted how they play a crucial role in the journey of self development.

Another important aspect that she touched on was the fact that the issues they faced as young South African women were painfully similar to those of young women in other African countries. She pointed to the fight against the scourge of HIV/AIDS, the need for skills development programmes and the search for inner beauty as a few of the many steps necessary to achieve personal development. Her graceful exit left the hall with an awareness of the possibilities open to young women.
Challenges

Women had gathered in Henley-on-Klip, Meyerton to resume a dialogue started in Saldanha in December 2004, when around 1200 young women identified the four pillars of activity necessary for their development. The 2007 dialogue had been convened to focus on the first two of these four, Personal Development and Economic Empowerment. The opening session was not without its fair share of drama and misunderstandings, however. Ms. Girlie Njoni, General Manager of SAWID, welcomed the guests from their respective provinces and organizations, representing young women from NGO’s, political parties, educational sectors and women in business, and soon found herself extinguishing fires, as women demanded that settling in problems be addressed first. The floor was opened for comments and complaints regarding issues of transport, catering and accommodation.

All was calm after Njoni’s heartfelt apologies for the initial discomfort of the participants and her explanations of the motivation for the choice of the venue. From her words, one could sense a change in the winds and they were more understanding as some of them began to sing and dance like before. Her words brought stability to the crowd and she closed by saying, “the aim of the conference is to sort out our problems and I hope this conference will do just that.”

In conclusion, young women observed that they had come to be respected and developed, and demanded that they themselves be used as resources in the provision of catering, transport and venues.

It was suggested that mops and buckets be put in the bathrooms so that women could keep the bathrooms clean. It was agreed that a list of women’s skills and talents be circulated in order to compile a database of provincial women’s resources.
As it is SAWID’s policy to bring together different faiths, beliefs and cultures, which enables us to celebrate and appreciate our diversity, Moipone Molwabi from the Free State Province led the multi-faith devotions on Wednesday December 12th with this affirming poem:

I am an African

I am an African, Ke MoAfrica, ke dinyane la laiso, le bitwa ka motlodi
Ke Koto dithoro ke amohela ka tsho ya Modimo leMakgosi.

Ke moAfrica ke ana Tlapi, tsho o wa kweneng.
Ke ngwana netshi le hlapa ka lebese ke a tsho.
Bo rikgo ha ba neela ka nna Badingo ba re:
  e Morotaping o marumo o setlinga sa Mphelo...

Bo ntale Moholo bina thoko ho ona mme mo Afrika motswadi pepe tsehehla sa bare ke motwena
wa maselesele a rta:
  ya mokgeseng. Ledimo la marabeng.

I am an African, ke moAfrica ke tsa ka meso, ketele, setshoto ke bitwa Badingo Ka Modimo e
mocha rapela wa kgale tlatlhamo, ke hodswa ka ditala-tlana tsa moAfrica ke moAfrica ke phathela Badingo.

Botle ba moAfrica bo balwa ka mekgwa, le mekgabo. Afrika o kgaba ka botle, o ka seso o motle
  o a botele,
  Ke ngwana wa Modimo le Badingo ke ngwana wa sechaba,
  ke ngwana wa Afrika.

Mahala le mabola a badimo ha ke rapela a bula ditswe a mamela ho fa
Modimo maloela waka,
  katleho le mafhewano o ngwana wa moAfrica. Botle ba afrika bo theliwe ka ditsha, diletse,
dipalesa, diphofofo le mekgabo e mete.

Ke moAfrica ke ngwana wa Afrika, ke felha setshoto ka je dipabi ke phathela badimo.

I am an African, I am an African, Ke moAfrica.

The Status of Young Women: Where are we?

Gender Commissioner Ms Nomboniso Gasa provided a background on the
status of young women, starting by
telling everyone to accept themselves
and learn from their experiences. She
encouraged people to grab the
opportunities they get. She said that
the youth should be committed to
create an environment to make it easy
for them to attain their goals and also
emphasized that people should enjoy
their youth. She suggested a dialogue
between the Commission of Gender
Equality and YSAWID in order to tackle
some problems together.

Respondent Ms Lebohang Pheko
explained the role of SADC in the
region which is to bring all SADC states together into one. She said people should be able to define themselves and feel proud of that. Young people should put themselves at the centre of their own lives and link their dreams to their reality. She urged them to move away from lives that are unsatisfactory and be ready to claim their spaces in the community.

SAWID Patron Mrs Zanele Mbeki, speaking from the floor, highlighted the fact that young people have a new space and environment and they should make full use of it. She noted that YSAWID was creating a platform for women to design, produce and export their own “black dolls” and they should fully take advantage of these opportunities available to them.

**Telling the Story of My Life**

An innovation in the 2007 YSAWID Dialogue was undoubtedly the Reflexive Sessions presented by Mr. Benjy Francis and his talented team of colleagues from the Afrika Cultural Centre, who paved a way for women to empower themselves by telling their unique stories through arts and crafts, media, music or still or video photography. Young women were taught how to use their skills in storytelling to express their own unique realities.

Francis wanted the delegates to ask themselves the following: Why am I here? Who am I? What do I want? What would I like my future to look like?

The delegates chose their preferences and dispersed to the venues where they would grasp the basic skills that would help them realize their childhood dreams again.

The variety of the arts essentially included; Multimedia training (Media) by Alex and Sechaba, assisted by Tumi and Patty. Visual Arts & Crafts, with Connie and Nina, assisted by Joy and Pamela. Theatre & Drama, by Prince, assisted by Water Lilly and Linda. The music section was facilitated by Michael, helped by Mohau and Sipho.

The creative movement facilitator Ms Falacia Goodman, assisted by Busi and Modiri enjoyed the ample space of the whole conference hall to accommodate these beautiful African women that were about to discover that this art was more than just an expressive tool. She organized the group into a circle and began explaining what creative movement was all about.

These particular delegates were of different shapes and sizes; tall, short, slender, full figured, over-weight and people with disabilities, but they all left the hall with a new vision of themselves. The expression on their faces was that of acceptance of their bodies, realizing that those D cup breasts and 42 sized body is there to stay.

* See article on page 6
Talents and Opportunities:
Hey, Mister Toymaker, Where Are The Black Dolls?

Poet Ms. Napo Masheane, author of Caves Speak in Metaphors, wove together her native Sotho and English, celebrating her African ancestry and sharing her affinity with oceans, mountains, nations, dust and hills of struggle.

Napo's interesting fusion of Sesotho and English brought the women to their feet and had them ululating the entire session. A daughter of the soil and leaves, she spoke her songs of power to sounds of encouragement, and left the women feeling proud of their bodies.

In her poem Fat Love “So this is for fat girls / who hold the sun entwined in their arms” she honours the generations of women in her family and all other women who do not quite fit into the comfortable images proclaimed by the false idols of tv, radio and cover girls: “Fat girls who sharpen swords / with their teeth to swallow adversity! Thumping, calling healing through our purses / Their being bears breathless authority / Their presence imposes esteem / Harmony resides in the depths of their spirits. She embraced the bodies of women and proclaimed that all women were beautiful and they should not try to be something that they were not.

Dressed in her colourful traditional outfit in a non-conventional cut, one of the delegates, Johanna, with her vibrant voice and a touch of dominance in her flamboyant gestures, sang out the words of her poem in the youth-filled hall.

Her poem reflected the mountains, valleys and rivers that give the province of Limpopo its rich heritage. The tribes that reside in the province and their cultural background formed the foundation of this enchanting poem and the Vhavenda, Bapedi and Batsonga in the hall broke out in ululation.

Young and beautiful, the consciousness-raising poet Natalia Molebatsi entered barefoot from the back of the hall with her soulful voice, singing an extract of her poem “Hey mister toymaker, Hey mister toymaker, where are the black dolls.”

The heads of the audience moved in synchronicity with every pace and movement she made, as she explained how her day began in her quest to buy her daughter a doll.
The moral of the story was quickly grasped and her exit was an encore of her grand entrance. As the young women retreated to their respective rooms in the early evening, they whistled the catchy tune of the poem “Hey mister toymaker, Hey mister toymaker, where are the black dolls.”

Opportunities in the Navy
Many people did not realize that the South African Navy can be the ideal environment for their personal and economic development, through the many opportunities there are for studying and overcoming the fears that tend to consume young women.

The Navy, although with a strict recruitment criteria (catering for young people aged 18 – 22) offers young women the opportunity to explore the male dominated marines and supplies funding for studying, resulting in the advancement of one’s career and consequently, one’s economic status and development.

Commander Judy Moodley, who facilitated the presentation, is a Business Consultant in the Navy, and is currently studying for her Masters degree. She is a powerful example of how a young woman, with the right information, can tap into resources and emancipate herself in areas never thought possible a few years ago.

YARD (Youth in Agriculture and Rural Development)
The Minister of Land Affairs and Agriculture, Minster Lulama Xingwana, noted the many opportunities for young women in agriculture. 300 000 bursaries are available for courses like Town Planning, Engineering, and Quantity Surveying, and skills training is available on farming and export. The minister urged young women “to take the reins from us and make us proud.”

It was also noted that Landbank assists young women who want to start agricultural projects with funding and training.

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AIDS LIFE LINE
Toll-free number (from a landline): 0800 012322
24-hour telephone and face to face counseling

STOP GENDER VIOLENCE
Toll-free number (from a landline): 0800 150150
7:00am – 9:00pm

LOVELIFE
Toll-free number (from a landline): 0800 121900
WORKSHOPS

1. Financial Management Workshop
Facilitator: Ms Nyiko Neer
The objective of the workshop was to empower young women to manage their own lives and finances.

The main issue raised was how to manage the finances that young women do not have. In this participative and interactive session, issues like the importance of education and the setting of goals were discussed, and recommendations were made which included writing everything down, being specific, and meeting deadlines. Another recommendation was the idea of mentorship. The inspirational session was closed with the reminder that “the richest place on earth is the cemetery” because a lot of people die with their dreams in their hearts. To prevent that from happening it is wise to start living our dreams from today!

2. Project Management
Facilitator: Mr. Vincent Mazibuko and Ms. Nomawethu Duruwe
More than sixty people attended this popular workshop that provided a step by step approach to project management success. The presentation and course materials showed how individuals, companies, organizations and NGOs can successfully conceive, plan, implement and maintain projects, coordinating efforts, mentoring new employees in a project and following through with each detail.

3. Leadership Development
Facilitator: Ms Lebo Letoba
About 20 people attended the leadership workshop and they were eager to learn about how to develop their own leadership qualities. The objectives of the workshop were to explore the skills required to be a leader, to see how legislation supports women’s development, to assess leadership styles, to plan for leadership development, to inform people that leadership is not static and to show which qualities women bring to leadership.

Main issues raised by participants were empowering people and encouraging them to work in their communities, and exploring skills like guidance, responsibility, and people skills in order to be a leader. It was also noted that being a leader is not so easy, since one is dealing with different personalities, and must be able to take firm decisions.
Main recommendations suggested by the participants were that as a leader one needs to communicate with one’s team in order to get good results, respect one’s team, be able to manage time, and be disciplined so one can work effectively and have an idea where one is going with one’s team.

4. Enterprise development
Facilitator: Funeka – A construction company owner

About 15 people attended a workshop where a young woman told how she started her own construction company, sharing the hardships and great opportunities that she came across along the way. The aim was to provide the building blocks for a successful business. Participants were taught the steps to follow when trying to register their businesses.

Recommendations included the creation of a business plan and having the registration documents when approaching one’s potential sponsor, and maintaining a professional appearance at all times. Young women were cautioned about the theft of their ideas by those pretending to help, and they were encouraged to grab all opportunities that they get and be part of all the networking forums in their industries.

5. Life Skills Training
Facilitator: Ms Tandiwe Njobe

The little group of young women who were gathered in the white tents that were erected outside the conference hall had one common goal: to find life skills. Their hunger to learn could not even be discouraged by the sweltering heat. They eyed each other with caution as Tandiwe Njobe, the facilitator, made everybody introduce themselves. The main themes were: functional skills for life, learning and work.

The women highlighted their areas of concern which included finding a balance between their work, school and personal life. All the women shared the same issues and they all revolved around self love, family and passion for what one does. It was recommended that women should prioritize their responsibilities, keep journals, stay in touch with what is happening around them and most importantly, start reading more so that they can increase their knowledge.

6. HIV/AIDS and Immune Response
Facilitator: Ms Tine Van Der Maas

23 women attended this workshop on the alternative and best way to treat patients with HIV/AIDS and other diseases. Ms. Van Der Maas showed a video on a nutritional approach to
the treatment of HIV/AIDS. No main issues came up during the presentation as many people were in awe at how effectively Ms van der Maas’s remedies almost resurrected the critically ill. What did come out of the workshop is that a healthy, well cared for and well nourished body and mind is the crucial key to fighting HIV/AIDS the natural way.

7. Personal Development: Plan for my life
Facilitator: Mr. Benji Francis and colleagues

About 35 people attended this workshop where the participants looked at drawing up a plan for life. Issues of self-assessment, the building of self-image, the understanding of cultural and environmental influences, social relations, ubuntu, emotional and anger management were explored.

The main objective of the workshop on personal development was for one to be able to identify the self better in order to challenge cultural stereotypes and be able to stand up for one’s beliefs.

The facilitator also indicated that we should reflect on our history, our circumstances, and where we come from. By reflection one learns to take considered actions. One other lesson learnt is that when one wants to take a personal journey, one should be guided by one’s dreams and act with a clear understanding of objective, passion and drive. If one meets with challenges or obstacles, one should find a way to work around them. By challenging the norm the sky truly becomes the limit.

8. Computer Training (Konani Technologies)

Although the 25 training computers were only installed on the second day of the dialogue, the registration for available training opportunities had been booked very early. Four facilitators from Konani Training and a YSAWID volunteer, Ms. Julia Matetoa of Correctional Services, provided hands-on training to more than 100 young women who wanted to explore the empowering capacity of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs). Women were reluctant to leave the computers and thoroughly utilized the opportunities availed to them.

9. Volunteer Work in the Community

A group of 120 volunteers spent an afternoon visiting Emthonjeni Community Centre and the Red Cross in Evaton. The participants acted as volunteers, cleaning, gardening, trimming and doing maintenance at the Red Cross venue. At Emthonjeni, young women shared information with other volunteers who serve at the community centre and learnt hands-on-skills in community service and volunteerism.
USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS

UMSOBO BWU YOUTH FUND
Tel: 011 651 7000

NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE
Toll-free number (from a landline): 08600 96684 (0860 YOUTH)
- Works with young people who are unskilled and unemployed
- Works with university students and FIT colleges
- Works with young professionals

NATIONAL YOUTH COMMISSION
Private Bag X838
Pretoria 0001
Tel: 012 309 7800
Fax: 012 324 4759

NATIONAL YOUTH INFORMATION SERVICE:
Toll-free number (from a landline):
0800 000 001
WWW.YIS.CO.ZA
Open 8:00 am to 4:30 pm
Deals with:
Bursaries
Career Counseling
Relationships
HIV/AIDS

AIDS LIFE LINE
Toll-free number (from a landline):
0800 012322
24-hour telephone and face to face counseling

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This newsletter is dedicated to the memory of Mr. Sakhile Mazaule, Facilities Manager of the Assemblies of God Conference Centre. YSAWIDIANS share the deep sadness and loss experienced on his passing two days after the end of the dialogue. His attitude of helpfulness, service and dedication to his work impressed all of us deeply.

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We value your comments, suggestions and contributions. Contact us at sawid@sawid.co.za
DECLARATION YSAWID DECEMBER 2007

We, the young women of South Africa, have gathered at the Assemblies of God Conference Centre in Gauteng for the 2nd National Young South African Women in Dialogue (YSAWID) forum, from the 10th to the 14th December 2007, in the context of YSAWID’s broader strategic direction of mainstreaming the YSAWID platform through localizing the program. This strategy places poverty eradication through the economic empowerment of women across their developmental stages as a top priority.

Having been drawn from all nine provinces, in our ethnic diversity, representing various faith-based organizations, NGOs and social mobilization organizations, employed and unemployed women, students, entrepreneurs, and young women with disabilities, we converge under the theme “Personal Development and Economic Development, Young Women Taking Action” which captures the essence of the four pillars that are central to young women empowerment, namely:
- Personal Development
- Economic Development
- Bridging the Gap and
- Democratic Rights and Responsibilities

Guided by the YSAWID Vision

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

And the YSAWID 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 wherever decisions are taken on all issues that impact on our lives. We commit to work together to ensure that fundamental rights gained through our liberation are entrenched and protected, and that emergent challenges are addressed.”

And further guided by the core values of YSAWID

“We are patriotic, accountable and responsible citizens of South Africa. We are self-reliant, independent and tolerant. We are young 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 underlies all the above values.”

We acknowledge that:
- There has been significant progress in improving the lives of South African women, underpinned by the establishment of a strong gender machinery (Commission on Gender Equality, Office on the Status of Women, etc). However, gender disparities are still apparent, in particular in the socio-political and economics sphere.
- Key to the challenges that constantly confront young women, are lack of access to employment opportunities, poverty, education, poor participation in leadership structures, sexual or gender-based violence, poor quality health care and substance abuse (alcohol and drugs).
- There continues to be a persistent inequality in the South African context between young women and young men, which perpetuates lower levels of productivity in the economy, poor participation of young women in strengthening our democratic state and the inability of young women to fully understand their civil liberties.

We believe that:
- Closing the gender gap and enhancing young women’s participation in development is essential not only for achieving social justice, and reducing poverty, but also to contribute to economic growth.
- Investment in young women will lead to sustainable development and the creation of a second layer of leadership in South Africa.
- A concerted multi-pronged effort is needed to enable young women to benefit from the democratic state.

We therefore resolve to:

I. PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT
- Facilitate the positive enhancement and growth of individual self-esteem and to nurture individual potential.
- Revive the role of young women in anchoring correct moral behaviour in society.
- Develop self identity which allows us to share our own stories, and estrich our self-worth.
- Enhance our ability to make choices that we can live with and that are important in changing our lives for the better.
- Broaden our understanding of gender discourses which currently define the interaction between young women and young men.

II. BRIDGE BUILDING
- Facilitate and encourage inter-generational dialogue amongst women (young and old);
- Develop intercultural and inter-faith dialogue forums and explore our different identities;
- Develop and support initiatives that focus on the development of the Girl-child;
- Encourage programmes that seek to strengthen peer support and education amongst young women in partnership with existing Non Governmental Organisations and Community Based Organisations;
- Explore existing best practices on peer support amongst the youth.
- Continue to mobilise against any form of discrimination (Age, Creed, Disability, Race, Gender, etc).

III. DEMOCRATIC VIGILANCE
- Strengthen the understanding of the role of young women in building a strong democratic state.
- Empower young women to understand their civil liberties, duties and responsibilities.
- Support Legislations and Policies that facilitate the participation of young women in the socio-economic and political agenda.
- Promote the participation of young women in strategic and critical leadership positions.
- Facilitate an in-depth understanding of the role of the African Union, (AU) the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and other protocols that seek to advance other democratic principles, or the governance and empowerment of young women in Africa and globally.
- Build a strong young women’s movement which will champion the interests of young women on all fronts.

IV. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- Explore opportunities that facilitate economic access for young women.
- Lobby the Department of Education to integrate commercial subjects as compulsory to ensure early development of entrepreneurship.
- Build networks of support between young women in the second and first economy using the Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (ASGI-SA) platforms.
- Support JIPRA (Joint Initiative on Priority Skills Acquisiton) initiatives and ensure that information cascades to the local levels.

In Conclusion
We, the young women of South Africa, shall continue to dialogue on issues relating to our personal development and self-worth. We shall continue to fight against women and children abuse, HIV and Aids and poverty.

We pledge to support all endeavours that are aimed at fully emancipating the young women of South Africa in particular, and all African women in general. We shall be in the forefront of seeking economic opportunities for young women, and forming networks and partnerships with organizations that share our vision. We further resolve to engage the private sector and developmental institutions on the development of young women and girl children with specific attention to skills development, economic development and participation, poverty alleviation and the many other challenges faced by young women.