

SAWISE

The Association of South African Women in Science and Engineering

elementsix™



2009 National Women's day Event *Report by Prof. Anusuya Chinsamy-Turan* *(Chair, SAWISE)*

Overview

This year for the first time, SAWISE held 3 events (2 in Cape Town and 1 in Gauteng) all on the 6th of August 2009 to celebrate National Women's Day.

We are extremely grateful to Element six for having sponsored our two SAWISE National Women's Day events in Cape Town. The first of these events was a Science Café in the morning for schoolgirls to highlight the wide scope of careers in science (especially in fields that women seldom participate in) and to motivate and stimulate an interest in these careers. The second event was an afternoon programme of activities for women postgraduates and women already involved in careers in science. Both events were held at the MTNSciencentre at Canal Walk in Cape Town. Details of the events follow below.

We invited the Minister of Science and Technology, Minister Naledi Pandor, to attend either the Cape Town or the Gauteng SAWISE events depending on her whereabouts on the day. We were thrilled that she accepted our invitation and was able to launch the first-ever SAWISE-Gauteng National Women's day event.

Morning Event for School girls

A Science Café was organized to highlight careers in fields of science where women are generally poorly represented, such as engineering, mathematics, chemistry, physics etc. We had 6 young women speakers (three postgraduates and three women that are currently employed in the business sector). Two of the speakers were from Element six: a physicist, Dr. Jaynie Padayachee and a metallurgist, Emily Mokoena. A detailed programme of the event and the list of topics covered is attached (appendix).

About 150 grade 9 - 11 learners (and 10 teachers) from six different schools around the Western Cape attended the event. All the learners were specifically selected on the basis that they take mathematics and science on the higher grade at school and therefore are potentially able to gain entry into science and engineering faculties at various universities. The following are the schools and numbers of learners and teachers that attended the event:

Rhodes High - 30 grade 9-11 learners + 2 teachers

Thandokulu High - 29 grade 9-10 learners + 1 teacher

Kwamfundo High - 30 learners (grades not specified, but we invited grades 9-11) + 1 teacher

Bulumko High - 28 grade 9-12 learners + 3 teachers

Bergvliet High - 10 grade 11 learners + 2 teachers

Cape Academy 20 grade 10-11 learners + 1 teacher

Besides showcasing the careers in science, we also ensured that all the major universities in the Western Cape (i.e. UCT, UWC and US) were able to distribute pamphlets about studying science at their universities.



Packed to capacity, the auditorium for the SAWISE-Element six morning event.



SAWISE members and speakers at SAWISE-ELEMENT SIX morning event (Back Row: Dr. Laura Roden, Prof. Anusuya Chinsamy-Turan, Melinda Griffiths (Chemical Engineer), Thakane Ntholi (Geologist), Denise Saravanakumar (Chemist); Front Row: Emily Mokena (Element six), Thyla Van De Merwe (mathematician) and Jaynie Padayachee (Element six))



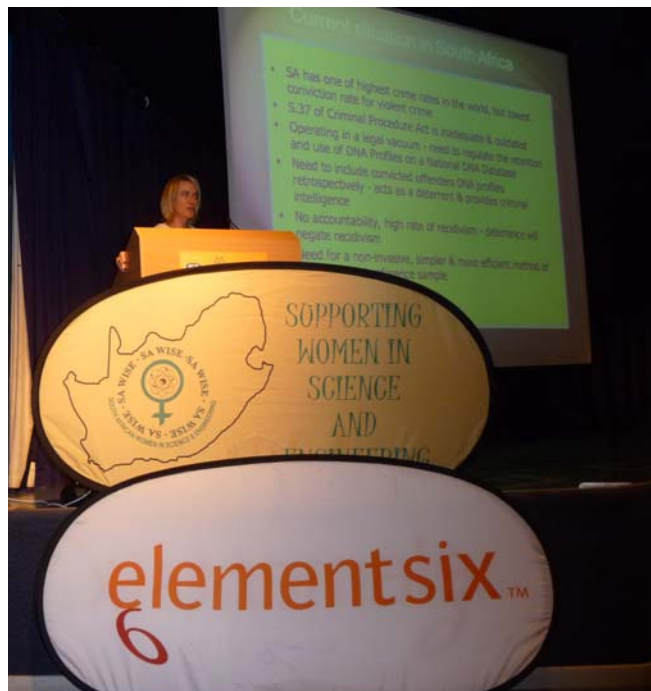
Emily Mokoena, Element six Metallurgist



Jaynie Padayachee, Element six Physicist

Afternoon Event for postgraduates and women professionals

This event was specifically aimed at women already involved in science. Vanessa Lynch from the DNA project was our invited motivational /inspirational speaker, and she spoke eloquently about her endeavours to expand and develop the National DNA database of South Africa to ensure accountability and deterrence among the criminal population. She was an exceptionally good speaker, and it was wonderful to see how she has taken the project forward in leaps and bounds because of sheer determination.



Vanessa Lynch of the DNA Project

After Vanessa Lynch's talk, HERS-SA did a short workshop on preparing for job selection interviews. This was extremely effective and we all were convinced that we needed more workshops such as this one, to show women professionals how to improve their chances in the job market, and to empower themselves.

Following on from the HERS- SA workshop we had a cocktail function and thanked all those involved in making the day such a huge success.



HERS-SA workshop

A number of our SAWISE speakers were interviewed on the SAFm radio show called "Science Matters" on three consecutive Thursdays (starting the week before the event, and ending a week thereafter). Some of those interviewed were Jaynie Padayachee and Emily Mokoena (both from Element six), Diane Wilcox, Denise Saravankumar, and Vanessa Lynch. All speakers were given an opportunity to talk about their personal careers and their involvement in the SAWISE-Element six event.

Print/electronic media articles:

[UCT daily news article](#), [Mail and Guardian](#), and the [World University Press](#)