

MEDIA RELEASE

EWSETA

RE Skills Programme ensures inclusive participation of Women in the Just Energy Transition

Standerton, 19 April 2023 – The electrical engineering Renewable Energy (RE) Specialisation Skills Development Programme was launched this morning in Standerton, Mpumalanga. The programme is the result of a partnership between the Energy and Water Sector Education and Training Authority ([EWSETA](#)), and [Power Africa, a U.S. Government initiative coordinated by USAID](#).

To create a more productive, competitive, and sustainable economy, EWSETA focuses on equipping the country's workforce with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in the new economic landscape where decarbonisation is a major driver to upskill the workforce.

This innovative programme supports 100 unemployed, young women learners, as well as 15 Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college lecturers from Gert Sibande, Nkangala and Ehlanzeni, to undergo training towards the attainment of a National Certificate: Electrical Engineering: Renewable Energy, NQF Level 3.

It is envisioned that on completion, the participating women will have valuable RE skills and, greater access to both employment and career opportunities in the renewable energy sector. The inclusion of TVET college lecturers is a key component to the programme's sustainability as these lecturers will be capacitated not only on the course curriculum, so that they in turn may train future cohorts, but also on the new renewable technologies that young learners today need to be exposed to.

"As part of our strategy to implement learning programmes and initiatives that benefit the sector in the long run, strategic partnerships remain our key delivery mechanism for impactful skills development," says EWSETA CEO Mpho Mookapele. "Our response to the JET is centred on three pillars, namely, upskilling/reskilling the current workforce, strengthening, and capacitating the Post School Education and Training (PSET) system and ensuring that inclusive economic participation is realised for the most vulnerable members of communities being youth and women. This programme is a testament to how collaboration between committed partners can ensure that no one is left behind in the energy transition roadmap of the country."

To meet its Paris Agreement commitments, South Africa is initiating several mitigation measures to reduce its Greenhouse Gas emissions and achieve its low-carbon development imperatives. Access to electricity is a major concern for South Africa, with President Ramaphosa announcing a new Ministry for Electricity at this year's State of the Nation Address (SONA). This programme aligns well with Minister Kgosientsho Ramokgopa's aims to fundamentally transform the electricity sector to achieve long-term energy security.

"The scale of South Africa's Just Energy Transition (JET) involves the opportunity to significantly redistribute resources and opportunities, opening up the potential for better pathways for women. I want to recognize the women here today for being at the forefront of this transition," said David Thompson, Acting Coordinator for Power Africa.

The fact that the programme targets women as the main beneficiaries is no coincidence. It has been specifically initiated to respond to the transformational challenges within the energy sector as

shown in planning data obtained from the industry, indicating that the current workforce is still predominately male, specifically at mid-level and senior management. As such, ensuring women's economic inclusion and equal participation in the JET is essential if transformational targets are to be achieved.

Additionally, the move to upskill and capacitate this first cohort of women with this qualification will have a significant impact on the regional economy of Mpumalanga as new green technologies are being introduced to complement existing economic activities and open new areas of opportunity. "Given the need for a JET, proactive measures will ensure Mpumalanga can integrate RE technologies into their green economy strategies and have a capable workforce that is capacitated to respond with relevant skills," remarks Mookapele.

"In addition, women who are currently employed in the energy and other sectors will be able to upskill and adapt to these new green technologies," she concluded.

The RE sector offers more than just upskilling and reskilling – it offers opportunities for investors, financiers, developers, component manufacturers, and suppliers. TVET colleges in Mpumalanga must not be left behind as the province embarks on decarbonisation initiatives, including reskilling and upskilling coal-fired power plant employees. Doing so would be at the detriment of a comprehensive and inclusive response to the energy transition as TVET colleges are in the main structure to respond to the surrounding economic activities through relevant and quality training for local communities who in essence will be the future workforce needed for clean energy generation and the opportunities it brings.

These opportunities require semi-skilled and skilled workers to take on occupations as well as entrepreneurial opportunities in the RE sector – making TVET colleges the ideal providers of such training, given their focus on vocational and occupational education and training, to produce skilled artisans.

"EWSETA is responsive to the changing skills development needs for communities that must transition as the world around us evolves," concludes Mookapele. "This partnership and programme will forge an optimistic future for Mpumalanga's women in the RE sector."

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About EWSETA

[EWSETA](#) is a skills development authority serving the energy and water sectors. It is one of 21 Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) established in South Africa in terms of the Skills Development Act of 1998 – amended. It plays a crucial function in ensuring that the National Skills and Development Strategy is executed within the energy and water sectors.

The main areas of focus of the EWSETA are the energy, RE, gas, and water services sector, as determined by the Honourable Minister of Higher Education and Training in terms of section 9(2) of the SDA, read in conjunction with Government Gazette No 33756, RG 9417, No. R1055 of 11 November 2010.

About Power Africa

[Power Africa](#) is a U.S. Government-led partnership, coordinated by USAID, that brings together the collective resources of over 200 public and private sector partners to double access to electricity in sub-Saharan Africa. Power Africa's goal is to add at least 30,000 megawatts (MW) of cleaner and more reliable electricity generation capacity and 60 million connections by 2030.