



PRESS RELEASE - FINAL

World Environment Month: Energising opportunities for youth in a sustainable world

The South African National Energy Development Institute (SANEDI) is marking World Environment Month to highlight the opportunities that green economies present for young people who are equally recognised and celebrated in June.

The global shift to sustainable energy technologies presents a unique opportunity to empower, skill and develop South Africa's youth to take advantage of the energy transition. The green economy is rapidly expanding, offering a wealth of exciting and impactful opportunities for young people.

Addressing youth unemployment through the green economy

South Africa's youth unemployment reached a staggering 43,4% in 2023 on the backdrop of a sluggish economy and the continued triple burden of unemployment, inequality and poverty. The status of youth inclusion in South Africa's economy can be addressed through the transition to sustainable energy technologies as the globe pushes to reach net zero emissions by mid century.

The green energy transition isn't just about changing technology; it's about changing the future. And for that future to be sustainable, it must be built with the ideas, energy, and expertise of young people.

"The green economy is not just about jobs; it's about empowering young people to be the architects of a sustainable future. By embracing these opportunities, young people can build rewarding careers while making a lasting positive impact on our environment and development," said SANEDI General Manager: Energy Efficiency and Demand side management, Ms. Faith Mkhacwa.

The Future is in Their Hands

- **They will inherit the consequences:** The youth are the ones who will inherit the impact of climate change and the state of our environment. They have a significant stake in ensuring a sustainable future through a successful green energy transition.
- **Fresh perspectives and innovation:** Young people are brimming with fresh ideas and innovative thinking. They can challenge traditional approaches and propose creative solutions for renewable energy generation, storage, and distribution.
- **Tech-savvy generation:** This generation is comfortable with technology, making them well-positioned to embrace and contribute to the development of new technologies crucial for the green energy transition, like smart grids and energy management systems.

Walking the talk: Investing in the Future Workforce

Given the significant role energy will play in reaching these goals, SANEDI is actively working to ensure that this transition will not leave youth and women behind. One way it is doing this is through its team and staff who are well represented by women and youth. Youth represents 53% and women represent 62% of SANEDI's staff, keeping the organisation well represented and diversified for inclusive development and exposure to the significant work the organisation carries out in testing and developing new energy technologies for the South African market.

“SANEDI is ensuring that the pathway to a low carbon economy through cleaner, sustainable energy sources is just and inclusive of women and youth. We do so by keeping our staff and skills candidates well represented and this shows in the effective and efficient ways in which we carry out our projects,” says Mathe.

By including youth in projects under SANEDI's largest portfolio, Energy Efficiency, the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) Practitioner Skills Programme equipped unemployed youth with skills related to data collection and processing of EPCs. The programme has empowered 70 learners (all youth and 50% were female) across Gauteng, Western Cape and KZN to have skills required to perform data and information collection for EPCs.

The second phase of the Skills Development Programme aims to empower an additional 500 unemployed graduates with EPC auditing and Energy Audit skills for buildings. The programme also aims to register the trainees to become EPC Professionals once they have completed their training, furthermore encourage them to start their own energy service companies (ESCOs) that will contribute to the growth of the ESCo market in South Africa.

Using energy more efficiently is one of the fastest, most cost-effective ways to save money, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, create jobs, and meet growing demand for electricity. Investing in energy efficiency isn't just good for the environment – it's a smart economic move. By using energy more wisely, we can unlock a multitude of benefits for individuals, businesses, and the planet. Energy efficiency unlocks a powerful trifecta: saving money on your bills, protecting the environment, and powering a growing future.

Through the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) Practitioner Skills Programme youth are now employed at Inspection Bodies, Energy Service Companies while SANEDI has roped in two of the EPC Practitioners to support our effort in managing the National Building Energy Performance Register. This register will hold details of all valid Energy Performance Certificates. In this light youth are leading the way for an energy efficient country that reduces demand and its carbon footprint by using energy sustainably and efficiently.

Overall, including youth in the Sustainable energy transition is not just about the present, it's about securing a sustainable future. Their ideas, skills, and passion are essential for navigating the challenges and seizing the opportunities of this critical transformation.

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About SANEDI:

The South African National Energy Development Institute (SANEDI), established by the Government, directs, monitors, and conducts applied energy research to develop innovative, integrated solutions to catalyse growth and prosperity in the green economy. It drives scientific evidence-driven ventures that contribute to youth empowerment, gender equity, environmental sustainability, and the 4th Industrial Revolution, within the National Development Plan (NDP), through consultative, sustainable energy projects. For more information, go to www.sanedi.org.za.

Issued on behalf of SANEDI by One Union:

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