

## Vision Statement – Jennifer A Thomson

### 1. The role of OWSD in South Africa, the SADC region and globally

I would like this to be a case of leading by example. The successes that OWSD RSA achieves (see below under 2) should be duplicated, where applicable, in other countries, the Southern African region and beyond. From my recent experience at the InterAcademy Partnership (IAP) meeting in South Africa, one of the ways we can influence activities and policy is through individual country Academies. OWSD South Africa falls under the South African Academy of Sciences (ASSAf) and I have seen how much value this adds to our activities. This includes the authority we hold with the national Department of Science and Technology. When I presented the OWSD RSA report on the inclusion of women in Academies at the IAP meeting I urged every Academy to form an OWSD-type organization. I would like to see every national chapter of OWSD being part of that country's Academy of Science.

### 2. Activities that OWSD should undertake

I will use the experiences of OWSD RSA to outline some of the activities every OWSD chapter should undertake. These include:

- Support of scholarship holders. All OWSD members should have a list of fellowship holders at their institutions and be responsible for helping them integrate into their new environment, mentoring, helping them to network etc. The RSA ExCo members are undertaking this role.
- Networking and career development. All OWSD National Chapters should organize networking and career development opportunities, and facilitate attendance by fellowship holders. Successful workshops held by the RSA chapter include writing and presentation skills, a British Council-sponsored communication and media skills and a 'Women in Science' conference for young scientists co-organized with ASSAf.
- Ensuring the presence of an active gender desk at all universities, technical and research institutions. In the experience of the RSA chapter this might best be done through the support of the national Department of Science and Technology, which requires every national chapter to have access to the relevant Minister in order to influence policy.
- Highlighting successful and emerging, women scientists. The RSA chapter is in the process of publishing a book on emerging women scientists, highlighting their challenges and successes. This will be used as a tool to encourage young girls and women to enter a career in science.
- Mentoring. Every year all OWSD members should be asked to complete a questionnaire on their roles in mentoring young women scientists. The RSA chapter has just completed a new membership drive and part of the responsibilities of members will be mentorship.
- Regional involvement. All national chapters should become involved in assisting other chapters in their regions. The RSA chapter is involved with the Network of African

Science Academies (NASAC), assisting them in their gender activities, and hosts GenderInSITE which focusses on applying the gender lens to decision and policy making.

3. What difference will I make to OWSD?

Firstly, my enthusiasm and passion! I co-founded SAWISE (South African Women in Science and Engineering) in 1996 and chaired it for a number of years. This organization, which is still active, emphasizes mentoring, career development, teacher training and scholar involvement. I am an excellent public speaker and use any platform available to advance the case for applying the gender lens to science policy, involving more women in positions of authority and advancing the careers of women in science and technology.

Secondly, in fundraising. I have been extremely successful in raising funds for my own research. I will use these same skills in raising funds for OWSD internationally.

Thirdly, in enhancing OWSD's public standing. I have great faith in this organization and its ability to make a difference in the lives of women scientists and, by extension, the lives of every man, woman and child. I will use every opportunity I can to champion the cause of OWSD and publicize its achievements.

Finally, I will take an active role in the general oversight of OWSD's programmes and in its strategic planning, ensuring that we are pro-active in seeking new opportunities to make an impact. I will also be responsible for ensuring the legal and ethical integrity of our actions.