

## SADCAS Hosts a Marketing and Communications Workshop

The Marketing Workshop was held on 18 April 2016 at The Farm Inn, Pretoria, South Africa and was attended by 14 NAFPs, 2 SADCAS staff, 2 SANAS staff, 1 MAURITAS staff and 2 KENAS staff. The IAF and ILAC Secretariats Dr Elva Nilsen and Mrs Sharon Kelly were in attendance during the workshop. The workshop was facilitated by 4 experienced marketing professionals who are actively involved in the communication and promotion of accreditation namely: Mr Jon Murthy – Chairman of the ILAC Marketing and communications Committee (MCC) and IAF Communications and Marketing Committee (CMC); Mr Marcus Long – Vice Chairman of the IAF CMC; Ms Wanji Yang – Member of the ILAC MCC and IAF CMC; and Ms Sylvana Ricciarini – Member of the ILAC MCC.

The workshop was opened by Mrs Maureen Mutasa, CEO SADCAS who in her remarks welcomed the delegates to the workshop and outlined the objective of the workshop. She noted that accreditation is still a fairly new concept in the region and therefore promoting the benefits and importance of accreditation and marketing of accreditation services has been the thrust of all the indigenous accreditation bodies in the SADC region namely MAURITAS, SADCAS and SANAS. “We are privileged to have experienced marketing professionals who are actively involved in the communication and promotion of accreditation with a perspective from all the main regions of the world as resource persons for the workshop,” she said. She then thanked the resource persons of the workshop for their time and efforts in preparing for the workshop. She also thanked PTB Germany for sponsoring all the participants to the workshop and urged all participants to actively participate in the workshop and declared the workshop open.

The workshop explored all the main channels of communication their advantages and disadvantages and concluded that whatever channel is used it must be well coordinated and that duplication is good to emphasize the message, and that the message must be simple, clear and focused on target group. The participants were also given an outline of the promotional available at the ILAC and IAF for use in marketing and communicating the benefits of accreditation and were encouraged to use these materials in their promotional efforts including a demonstration of the ILAC, IAF, ISO and IIOC public sector site which show cases different global examples where accreditation has been used to support public policy efforts. It was noted that evidence on the benefits of accreditation through external research, case studies and public sector stipulation is important in communicating and convincing the wide application of accreditation and use of accredited services. The more we can share the evidence the easier it will be to publicize benefits of accreditation benefits especially amongst policy makers and regulators. Sometime was spent on using websites as a platform of promotion and marketing and how to get the best out of this tool. On social media it was noted that a significant number of accreditation bodies had moved onto to the social media using tools such as twitter, LinkedIn and Wikipedia. The pros and cons of each social media tools were analyzed and applicability in our region discussed fully.

During the experience sharing session Ms Yang emphasized the need to understand the user and what the user wants. She articulated how the accreditation body in Taiwan had addressed the needs of the electronic industry of which Taiwan is a major exporter through ensuring international recognition of its accreditation schemes relevant to the sector. In conclusion she urged all participating accreditation bodies to understand their markets and to come up with services that meet the market needs and not to forget about the domestic market besides the export market. In her presentation Ms Ricciarini noted that there is a lot of information available for promoting the benefits of accreditation and marketing accreditation services. She noted that everyone in the accreditation body has a role to play in marketing and that there is usually a good knowledge base in the accreditation body. She also reiterated the need for a coordinated approach and team work in promoting the benefits of accreditation and marketing accreditation services.

The workshop ended with a vote of thanks by Mr Viki Mbuya Kanama, the Chairman of SADCA who in his remarks thanked the resources persons of the workshop, Team SADCAS, Ms Linda Diroromwe and Ms Tsitsi Mazibuko for all the logistical arrangements made which made the workshop a success. To SADCAS, the output from the workshop together with the experiences from attending the ILAC MCC and IAF CMC meetings held from 19 to 21 April 2016 served as the basis for the development of the framework for the 2016/17 marketing plan which was subsequently developed on 22 April 2016.