



## **Africa Academy for Environmental Health launches the African Women Environmental Health Network**

At a recent workshop held in Johannesburg, South Africa, female members of the Africa Academy for Environmental Health from eight institutions in six countries agreed to form the African Women Environmental Health Network (AWEHN).

The workshop was funded through the Association of African Universities Mobilising Resource Capacity Initiative to Develop Gender Equity in Higher Education Institutions offering Environmental Health. This programme targets institutions in Southern and East Africa, to develop the capacity of female academics in their fields of research and academic practice.

The workshop held at the Birchwood Hotel, Johannesburg from 11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> July 2011 tackled the development of a career in research, and as part of these discussions the need to expand research networks and links was raised. The unique challenges which face female academics and practitioners were also raised and it was felt that a forum to raise and assist one another with these challenges was needed. It was agreed by all attending that the need for an improved communication system and the development of research proposals with a regional and continental context would benefit from a formal network.

The AWEHN concept was developed to undertake the following functions:

- Provide a forum through which female academics of all ages and career stages can interact.
- Provide a network through which regional and continental research can be developed and conducted.
- Provide a mentoring scheme through which young and inexperienced academics can seek constructive criticism and feedback to their work.
- Provide a database of all female academics working in environmental health in Africa.
- Provide a forum where academics can interact with practitioners in the development and implementation of research proposals.

The AAEH hopes that this network will reach all regions of Africa and allow research in environmental health to prosper in coming years. A website for the network is currently being developed and will be launched in due course.



Female academics attending the AAEH workshop in Johannesburg from Malawi, South Africa, Namibia, Swaziland, Kenya and Zimbabwe. Back left to right: Bonita Allies, Tanya Haman, Martha Chadyiwa, Margaret Keraka, Thabsile Nkambule, Tendai Demberere, Christabel Kambala, Esther Kaunda, Sylvia Mudau, Ndinomholo Hamatui. Front left to right: Margaret Macherera, Annah Anusa, Charlotte Maphuthuma, Eveline Muroyi.