

Engenamic and Wits University drive electrical energy capacity-building agenda for Africa

“Energy, and sustainable access to energy (in particular electrical energy), is a great development enabler, enabling other infrastructure and development, industrialization, and economic growth. It also facilitates access to the evolving global “digital or knowledge-based economy”, which access will be key to future African growth and development within the evolving global economic paradigm.”

Ian McKechnie, CEO of management, project and engineering advisors **Engenamic**, was commenting on the capacity-building programme initiative, dubbed ***enableAFRICA***, that **Engenamic** is spearheading together with the **University of the Witwatersrand**.

He further noted that particular challenges are facing the electrical energy sector in Africa. “For example, the continent is vast and characterized by large distances between natural sources of energy and load centers, and deep disparity in the nature and characteristics of the energy grids that will need to be established and interconnected to realize a sustainable energy future for the continent. Furthermore, and notwithstanding the development of grid-based access to electricity, off-grid electrification (and associated “small power systems”) is also a major component (and challenge) in developing access to electricity across Africa. Small power systems include, for example, localized generation (particularly, but not only renewables), and mini/micro grids (localized smart grids).”

McKechnie stated that the aim of the ***enableAFRICA*** programme was to establish and facilitate a collaborative and inclusive pan-African network, aimed at building and unlocking *broad-based sustainable capacity* in infrastructure development, establishment and operation, through:

[if !supportLists]· [endif]**Skills development** (technical & non-technical), as key to building sustainable capacity.

[if !supportLists]· [endif]Relevant **research and knowledge development**, focused towards African needs and priorities.

[if !supportLists]· [endif]**Confidence building**, through facilitating, de-risking and supporting investment and industry, and through facilitating engineering, technical and project support.

He stated that a key objective of the programme is to build this broad-based sustainable capacity *in Africa, for Africa*, and (as far as possible) *by Africa*, and in doing so to *synergise* with and *capacitate* existing (and future) organisations, agencies, programmes and projects in a symbiotic manner.

He commented further that the approach adopted in formulating the initiative and associated vision has been an inclusive one. South Africa, the African region (and further afield) are faced by real constraints, including availability of skilled and financial resources as mentioned above. “It is therefore important that the existing facilities and capabilities across the continent be leveraged and mutually supported, and a holistic approach across the three key attributes is coordinated, integrated, facilitated and supported”.

McKechnie concluded that as the team moves forward to engage with role players across the continent to develop this inclusive ***enableAfrica*** initiative further, they are excited and enthused by the potential to meet the challenges and to build sustainable enabling capacity in the energy sector - *by Africa, in Africa, for Africa*.