



ENGINEERING AN IMPACT ON SERVICE DELIVERY THROUGH PARTNERING

The South African Association of Consulting Engineers' (SAACE) first African President, Webster Ndodana presented his presidential message and theme for the year at a function recently held in Johannesburg. The President's key focus for 2006 will be transformation of the consulting engineering industry to ensure that it remains relevant in the context of a transformed construction sector.

Ndodana, the 53rd president in the Association's history has taken on the role at a time when the impending Construction Charter is set to define the broader transformation of the industry with respect to the racial and gender composition of ownership, control and management.

Ndodana is intent on 'Engineering an impact on service delivery through partnering', which is his Presidential theme for 2006. During his presidency Ndodana will be focusing on three key issues which he believes to be the cornerstones in the process of transformation: service delivery; capacity building; and partnering.

Despite huge capital investment over the past 10 years, service delivery is still poor in many areas. Delivery is not only being hindered by the lack of capacity and expertise within municipal structures but also by the lack of knowledge within these institutions as to the role that consulting engineers can play and the service that they can offer. The lack of service delivery causes the poorer sector of society to boycott these services and this leads to non-payment. Ndodana believes that, "We need to transform this vicious circle into a virtuous circle". He proposes a possible solution of procuring the services of appropriately qualified and experienced engineers from member firms to manage the projects from design and implementation right through to

completion. This he contends will ensure accelerated service delivery; results driven management capacity; and the capacity development of municipal officials.

It has recently been reported that there are major capacity problems in Municipalities in relation to the delivery of services caused mainly by the many vacancies in elementary and operator positions. These vacancies impact on daily operations, maintenance and overall service delivery, but more importantly on the ability to spend Municipal Infrastructure Grants (MIG) funds appointed to deliver basic services. A number of factors have contributed towards the current crisis. These include poor salaries, re-grading, restructuring, lack of career development, early retirement, lack of experienced management and driving equity targets without taking cognizance of the availability of suitably qualified personnel.

Ndodana believes that it is essential that engineering capacity be rebuilt in local government at all levels. In terms of the Health and Safety Act and Regulations, "...engineers have a legal and moral responsibility and should advise clients accordingly. They must among other things, carry out sufficient inspections at appropriate times to ensure compliance with the design and keep a record of those inspections.

It is necessary for the public sector to require suitably registered professionals to be appointed to positions requiring a level of technical expertise. This will contribute towards establishing an informed client base so essential to a process of successful partnering.

Partnering is becoming an increasingly popular mechanism for project delivery within the construction industry world

wide. Ndodana contends that in the construction industry partnering should be structured through agreement between the following three parties, namely; the South African Association of Consulting Engineers (SAACE); the Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG); and the respective Municipality. This partnership would maintain a sustainable industry that will improve the living conditions of all South Africans.

Ndodana believes that, "The Construction Industry Charter is the vehicle through which we will work to bring about sustainable transformation and it is vital that member firms have a thorough understanding of the Charter in order to achieve these goals".

"The issue of fronting needs to be eliminated. Companies that bring on board people just to add a face but who do not add value to the business and do not know the role and function of the business need to be challenged".

"It is incumbent on me as President to encourage the effective advancement of employment equity in the sector and to promote the principles of non-racism and non-sexism. Transformation is a national imperative and its achievement is essential," says Ndodana.

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TRANSFORMATION FOR MEANINGFUL PARTNERSHIP

All GAMA members receive Electricity + Control