**NEWS ARTICLE**

Engineering promotes sustainable development and empowers communities

**(Date) 2023:**The [World Engineering Day for Sustainable Development](https://worldengineeringday.net/) on 4 March definitely has an impact on how engineering is perceived, says **Elana Forbes**, a structural engineer at globally trusted infrastructure firm [AECOM](http://www.aecom.com). “It is extremely important to increase awareness of the industry continuously,” says Elana.

A motivating factor to get young people to pursue a career in the industry is the idea of sustainability. “We inspire young people to pursue careers that not only are intellectually rewarding and stimulating, but which are also socially and environmentally responsible. We have the power to create positive change through our work, as engineering is not just about technical problem-solving, it contributes to the greater good for society.”

Assistant Resident Engineer **Megan de Jongh**, says: “If you are interested in problem solving and asking why and how, then you should consider a career in engineering. I believe engineers make the world a better place and that there is a very gratifying feeling from knowing you are making a difference.”

She adds: “STEM careers are for anyone who are willing to work hard and likes a challenge. Being part of a project that improved the lives of the surrounding community has been one of the highlights of my career so far. Sustainable development is a responsibility that we as engineers should take ownership of.”

**Luvendren Govender**, based in the mechanical engineering department in the Durban office and heads up a fairly young team of junior and candidate engineers and Revit modellers, highlights that the challenges facing South Africa creates opportunity for young engineers and young students who want to pursue a career in engineering to answer those challenges and develop solutions. “It creates a space for them to make a difference in our local communities.”

Elana adds that engineering plays a critical role in sustainable development “because as engineers we are responsible to design and oversee buildings and infrastructure that underpins modern society.” She explains that sustainable development is the practice of meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Engineering combines technical aspects with creative design under the umbrella of a multidisciplinary industry. “The best part about the industry is seeing what you create in real life, like driving past a building and knowing you worked on that. Not many professions can actually say so,” says Elana.

**Jean-Pierre Rousseau**, Practice Area Lead, Structures and Building Civils, concurs that “engineering is the ultimate playground. The field challenges us to utilise all we can harness from mathematics, science and technology in contributing to how the world is shaped around us.”

In terms of advice for aspirant engineers, Elana says a strong academic foundation is vital. “Secondly, be curious, because engineering is all about problem-solving and to be successful in your career you must be willing to ask a lot of questions. “Always seek to understand the underlying principles behind your work. If you do not understand something, obtain clarity. And then, of course, there is the importance of getting hands-on experience, because whilst classroom learning is important, it is different from being in the field.

She continues: “Be passionate and committed. Engineering is a challenge, but it can be incredibly rewarding. To be successful, you must be passionate about your work and committed to learn and grow throughout your career. Always keep an open mind and embrace new challenges and keep on striving for excellence.”

Jean-Pierre advises to take a balanced approach to your learning and development. “Engineering is not only about mathematics. You also need to be well schooled in language. The ability to script, code and program has become a differentiating factor. Ethics, financial and legal knowledge is also important. In the world of digital integration and global collaboration, good soft skills cannot be understated.”

Luvendren says: “At AECOM we are quite fortunate in that we get to work on local and international projects, from vehicle manufacturing plants to breweries and infrastructure. We are doing a lot in the BIM space and energy analysis in terms of energy modelling, which speaks directly to sustainability.”

“South Africa is a beautiful country filled with potential and great opportunities in the field of engineering. AECOM has world-class technology, skills and experience readily available for young engineers in South Africa,” says Megan.

“The world is your playground,” concludes Jean-Pierre. “South African engineers are ranked as among the best in the world. Our educational institutions are top class, and we graduate into a substantially more complex market than abroad. This spawns innovation and lateral thinking, which are highly rated engineering traits. Locally, our country is battling an ageing infrastructure fleet on all fronts, which needs urgent intervention and creative solutions to ensure a growing economy. What better place to be?”

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**Notes to the editor**

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