

Scoping Workshop - Pretoria, South Africa (17 March 2010)

The Partnership's launch in Pretoria was followed by its first workshop - a scoping event designed to identify the issues most affecting the engineering profession and institutions across Sub Saharan Africa. This produced a lively discussion on a number of issues, including:

- renewable energy and sustainability
- recognition of the engineering profession and better understanding of engineering issues by policymakers
- cost and availability of publications and knowledge resources
- harmonisation of engineering standards across Africa
- the lack of resources for Continuing Professional Development
- encouraging young people to enter and remain in engineering
- funding, including the gap in understanding between needs and funding programmes
- the potential for mentoring by UK and other private sector to support the development of local engineering companies

Throughout the discussion the true dearth of capacity within the engineering institutions of sub-Saharan Africa became apparent. Many representatives explained the personal and professional difficulties they have encountered in keeping their institutions operating at even the most basic levels. Daphne Guthrie, who represented the UK Institution of Civil Engineers, spoke with an engineer from Gabon, where there is currently no engineering institution. He had come to the event at his own expense to seek advice on how to get started. His enthusiasm was very much representative of the spirit in which the event was held.

Attendees provided input into a forward calendar of events and conferences alongside which workshops could be held. Holding the launch and scoping workshop in parallel with the SAICE *Indaba* not only allowed for a more efficient use of resources (SAICE heavily subsidised the costs of both the workshop and the launch event) but also provided attendees with an excellent opportunity to network and exchange knowledge and ideas.