

CESA Gender Mainstreaming - Women in Engineering

“As long as outmoded ways of thinking prevent women from making a meaningful contribution to society, progress will be slow,” ~ Nelson Mandela

Action Statement

As we embark on solutions to enhance gender diversity in our predominantly male-dominated engineering industry in South Africa, it becomes paramount to dissect the issues, explore viable solutions, and seize the opportunities that lie ahead. Specifically, our goal with our last webinar was to discuss ways to increase the number of female engineering practitioners who achieve professional registration with the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA) and to elevate their stature within the industry. In pursuit of this objective, it is essential that we scrutinize the roles played by various stakeholders in the process:

How could employers contribute to enhance the participation, retention, and promotion of women in engineering positions?

Employers could:

- Create a conducive/enabling environment by providing life/work options.
- Embrace meritocracy, i.e., a system where engineers are appointed to positions based on their ability and relevant qualifications.
- Be intentional about getting them ECSA-registered by creating opportunities to gain experience in the various disciplines necessary
- Attract and retain women in engineering positions.
- Provide new graduates with adequate training and experience.
- Implement systems and policies that remove barriers such as unconscious biases.
- Denounce discrimination on the grounds of gender.
- Remove gender bias regarding salary scales.
- Provide incentives for getting professionally registered such as a bonus/salary increase.
- Organise industry inputs through universities in the form of lectures.
- Put measures in place to protect female employees from sexual harassment and gender-based violence (GBV) as reported to be experienced mostly by women full time on site.

How could other individual engineering practitioners contribute?

- Avail oneself for mentorship to coach young engineers towards obtaining professional registration.
- Be a dedicated volunteer and mentor who encourages mentees to register with ECSA early in their careers.
- Be a credible role-model.
- Always challenge negative stereotypes regarding engineers/engineering
- Mentors, particularly male, should step in and be their female mentees' allies.
- Male engineering practitioners should be sensitised to the situation/challenges of women in engineering and educated on sexual harassment.

How could regulatory bodies and voluntary associations contribute towards the wellbeing of engineering?

- Create fit-for-purpose policies, e.g., Identification of Engineering Work
- Create awareness of the possibilities of engineering as a career among especially high school learners in rural and disadvantaged areas
- Promote meritocracy where a suitable qualification and competency determine whether a person gets appointed or not.
- Host targeted dialogues on gender inequality in the industry.
- Encourage role-modelling.
- Influence national/provincial/local government policies.
- Examine tender requirements as they impact women in engineering.
- Make professional registration more attractive by conducting interviews which shows care for the candidates and willingness to learn.

Compiled by:

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