

Sustainability lies at the heart of engineering, science

SRK Consulting (Africa) took a keen role in [Sustainability Week](#) 2016 held earlier in June at the CSIR Conference Centre in Tshwane.



SRK professionals at the SRK Sustainability Week exhibition stand included marketing manager Jaya Omar, climate change consultant Paul Jorgensen, and social and sustainability consultant, Victoria Braham.

“Sustainability today lies at the heart of what consulting engineers and scientists like those at SRK aim to achieve every day,” said SRK’s climate change consultant Paul Jorgensen, “and it is encouraging to see how businesses are reconsidering their business models with the green economy and climate change in mind.”

Best practice in planning, management

Attending sessions on sustainable cities, mining, food security, water conservation, integrated public transport, carbon strategies and green finance, SRK’s professionals reported learning from successful case studies raising the bar of best practice in planning and management across all sectors. The event also raised issues that have not been getting the attention they deserved.

“The discussion on sustainable cities and food security indicated a gap in knowledge systems and planning in the developing world,” said Victoria Braham, social and sustainability consultant at SRK. “The vital links with rapid urbanisation are not being addressed, with policy focused predominantly on food security in rural areas. Climate change is also adding a complex dynamic to the adaptive and mitigation measures available to small-scale farmers.”

“The discussion on sustainable cities and food

Included in the agenda were talks on transport and mobility, providing insight into the difficulties of implementing integrated public transport in a country reliant largely on minibus taxis, she said.

Water risk

Fiona Evans, environmental and water specialist at SRK, said the sustainable water seminar was “hard-hitting and inspiring” – exploring water risk from localised, national and regional perspectives.

“It was shown how South Africa’s current utilisation of water exceeds the reliable yield, so that drought years are likely to bring large-scale water restrictions across the country,” said Evans. “Poor governance of water issues and a reactive rather than proactive mindset has aggravated the situation with wastage, leakages and inefficient water use.”

At the same time, she said, bold and exciting steps were being taken in conserving water and improving its quality. These included: public-private partnerships at municipality level; intelligent landscape architecture and stormwater features to create ecological zones in urban parks; corporate efforts to offset water usage through technical interventions and community awareness programs; and water foot-printing mechanisms to manage consumption.

A further important field addressed at Sustainability Week was the challenge faced in sourcing funding for green technologies, said Jorgensen.

“Useful discussion took place on how to target funders with an integrated and well-considered approach based on the mandate of the particular financier,” he said. “It is vital to match the objective of the business with the aims and policies of the funder.”