

## TOOLBOX: Local and student branches

### The challenge

Professional engineering institutions (PEIs) in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) tend to have only one main branch, making it **difficult to reach out to all engineers** in their countries and **keep their members engaged**. It is especially hard to attract young engineers and engineers that live in remote areas. These groups often miss training events and capacity-building/continuous professional development opportunities. The result is a non-diverse, limited PEI member base that has low levels of engagement.

### Initiatives

Several PEIs have addressed this issue by **opening student and local branches**. These branches organise outreach activities in universities, engage PEI members in their own local areas, and widen PEIs' membership base. Student branches, or Chapters, are generally based in universities. As with local branches, their activities are carried out by volunteers with support from the parent PEI.

#### Local branches/Chapters



PEIs open local branches

**Outcomes:** improved reach across the country, wider and more active member base, more localised member recruitment and engagement

**PEIs:** Sierra Leone Institution of Engineers, South African Institution of Civil Engineering, Nigerian Society of Engineers, Association of Professional Women Engineers of Nigeria, Institute of Engineers Kenya, South African Institute of Agricultural Engineers, Southern African Institute for Industrial Engineering, Nigerian Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers, Consulting Engineers South Africa, Institute of Municipal Engineering of Southern Africa, Malawi Institution of Engineers, Ghana Institution of Engineering, Uganda Institution of Professional Engineers, Institution of Engineers Tanzania

#### Student branches/Chapters



PEIs open student branches and organise activities in universities

**Outcomes:** increased awareness among young engineers, more young members, wider membership base, better understanding of engineering students' and young graduates' needs, stronger relationships with higher education institutions


**PEIs:** Malawi Institution of Engineers, Southern African Institute for Industrial Engineering, South African Institution of Mechanical Engineering, Institution of Engineers Tanzania, Association of Professional Women Engineers of Nigeria


#### Case study: Malawi Institution of Engineers (MIE) student branches

MIE has maintained a student branch in Malawi University of Science and Technology since 2016, and a branch in Malawi Polytechnic since 2006. Both universities are situated in the Southern region of the country, in Thyolo and Blantyre, respectively. These local Student Chapters provide a forum to discuss how engineering can help to (i) **address economic and societal challenges**, (ii) **promote ethical and professional standards** among engineering students, and (iii) **build links with industry** so that students can gain professional experience. Thanks to this initiative, the number of MIE members has increased: during the year under review, the membership cumulatively increased from 978 to 1110.

## Success factors and achievements

For each category of interventions, the table below identifies the implementation challenges and the success factors for these interventions. The table also highlights some of the strongest achievements.

Interventions	Challenges	Success factors	Examples and achievements
<p><b>Local branches/ Chapters</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Additional operational <b>costs</b></li> <li>→ <b>Scarcity</b> of <b>volunteers</b> willing and able to run the branches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Involving <b>volunteers</b> in the local branches to lower the operating costs and expand the reach of the PEI through volunteers' local networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ <b>Sierra Leone – Sierra Leone Institution of Engineers (SLIE): Opening local branches</b> SLIE opened branches in <b>two provinces</b>, which serve as <b>centres</b> of the Professional Engineers Registration Council and <b>facilitate</b> the <b>registration</b> of <b>local engineers</b>. The launch of these centres was preceded by intensive <b>activities</b> aimed at <b>raising interest</b> and <b>support</b> among local engineers and potential staff. The branches organise <b>workshops</b> tailored to local issues and involve local companies and professionals. Thanks to these local branches, SLIE can tap into local engineering institutions, lobby local governments, and reach more members. These two local branches have generated high interest and take-up by local members, who now can access workshops they normally would not have a chance to attend.</li> <li>→ <b>Kenya – Institution of Engineers of Kenya (IEK): Six regional branches</b> IEK opened six <b>regional branches</b> through which it has <b>recruited new members</b>: the Coast Branch (Mombasa), Western Branch (Kisumu), South-Rift Branch (Nakuru), North-Rift Branch (Eldoret), Central Kenya Branch (Nyeri), and the North-Eastern Branch (Isiolo). The Council of IEK coordinates the activities of the regional branches and organises national conferences, seminars, and representation of IEK in various national and international committees. The regional branches and their committees play a vital role by organising <b>lectures, demonstrations, and technical visits</b>, and by upholding <b>professional standards</b>. The success of the regional branches depends greatly on <b>members'</b> support, who are encouraged to take a proactive part in their activities.</li> </ul>

Interventions	Challenges	Success factors	Examples and achievements
<p><b>Student branches/ Chapters</b></p> 	<p>→ Turnover in the student body can make it challenging to <b>maintain continuity</b> of services</p>	<p>→ <b>Organising useful activities</b> for engineering students (for example, visits to industry and opportunities to learn more about new engineering technologies, visits to government authorities, etc.) This helps increase students' understanding of the importance of PEI membership.</p>	<p>→ <b>Tanzania – Institution of Engineers Tanzania (IET): Student clubs</b>  IET engages with universities through student clubs. Led by four or five <b>elected students</b>, these clubs raise awareness of the benefits of <b>IET membership</b>. In cooperation with IET, they organise short <b>courses</b> and <b>training</b> events tailored to students' needs (for example, on health and safety). They also organise <b>lectures</b> and <b>site visits</b>, and establish <b>partnerships</b> with organisations that <b>sponsor</b> students to attend relevant engineering conferences. As a result of this engagement, students know more about IET and are <b>more likely</b> to <b>register</b> after graduation.</p>