

Royal Academy
of Engineering

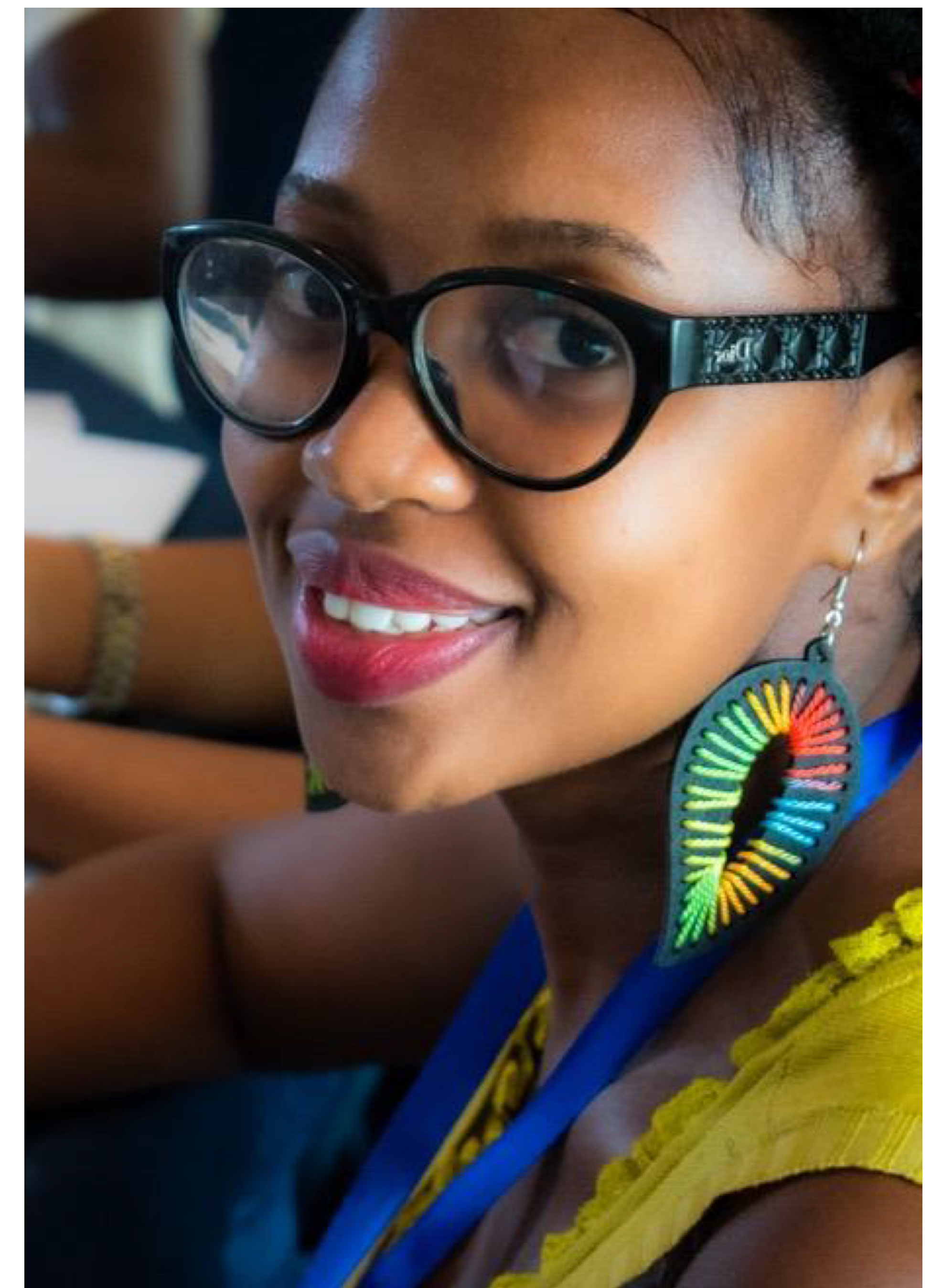
RAEng
Africa
Catalyst
case study
WomEng



“We have been having challenges reaching out to girls but with the outreach programmes we are going to run, it will be easier to reach out to girls even in remote areas.”

Kumbirai Maravanyika,
lecturer at Masvingo
Polytechnic, Zimbabwe.
Member of Zimbabwe
Institution of Engineers and
Women in Engineering

It is estimated that women make up less than 10% of the engineers in sub-Saharan Africa. Engineering is a key driver for sustainable development, yet the continent's full workforce potential is not being utilised. There is no one-size-fits-all approach for developing diversity and inclusion for engineering bodies in sub-Saharan Africa. However, providing funding for global organisations like WomEng amplifies impact for local women in engineering bodies across the continent by thinking global and acting local.



From 2018 to 2020, WomEng led the 'Capacity building in Engineering in sub-Saharan Africa' initiative that addressed the lack of women engineers on the continent. This was funded by the Royal Academy of Engineering as part of the GCRF Africa Catalyst programme.

Working closely with women in engineering (WIE) bodies from professional engineering institutions in eSwatini, Malawi, Tanzania and Zimbabwe, the project aimed to improve engineering bodies capacity to promote gender diversity and relevance within engineering and among engineering professionals in sub-Saharan Africa.

The first phase of the project focused on strengthening the institutional capacity of relevant stakeholders through training and leadership development, which were attended by over 100 women from WIE bodies in the target countries. The impact of such sessions was felt by civil engineer Faith Mzandu who, following her leadership development experience, was appointed as a member of the Advisory Board for the first ever African Drone and Data Academy (ADDA) run by Virginia Tech University and funded by UNICEF in Lilongwe, Malawi.

Yet, the initiative recognised that building capacity within engineering

bodies also requires ensuring that these institutions are provided with a pipeline of female talent looking to join the industry. To address this, the funding enabled WomEng to coordinate a series of outreach programmes, GirlEng for secondary school students and fellowship for tertiary level engineering students, designed to educate future talent about what it means to be a female engineer. During this process, 365 female secondary school students across four countries increased their awareness about engineering opportunity with over 90% of participants wanting to pursue a career in STEM. A further 200 tertiary level engineering students, 50 from each country, were provided with key leadership and employability training, as well as networking capabilities.

Within just two years, the GCRF Africa Catalyst funding granted to WomEng had produced some notable outcomes within the target countries. This included a new WIE body in eSwatini established through strong stakeholder engagement, as well as the significant expansion of member reach and engagement across Zimbabwe.

Today the mission of organisations such as WomEng is more important than ever, underlining the need to drive global advocacy and support for a diverse and inclusive engineering industry. By empowering women

engineers on the ground, we can develop the next generation of female engineers, transform the sector and help build a society that is resilient to future crises.

GCRF Africa Catalyst aims to strengthen professional engineering bodies in sub-Saharan Africa so that they can effectively promote the profession, share best practice and increase local engineering capacity, to help drive development.

For more information, and to get involved, please visit www.raeng.org.uk/global/sustainable-development/africa-grants/africa-catalyst

"I got more confidence on inspiring women engineers, learnt how to be a good speaker, a good leader."

Institution of Engineers, Tanzania Women Chapter member