

## TOOLBOX: Growing the membership base

### The challenge

Professional engineering institutions (PEIs) in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) often struggle with **low membership numbers**. This is due to the low visibility of PEIs and their offer among young graduates and engineers. Further, potential and existing members often cannot afford the membership fees or are not incentivised to do so. Usually, and even when in tandem with other income streams, over 80% of PEIs' financial stability rely on membership fees. As such, volatility of membership fees significantly **affects PEIs' operations and sustainability**.

### Initiatives

PEIs in SSA are increasing the range of benefits offered in order to incentivise new and existing engineers to register or maintain their membership. Relevant examples are laid out below.

#### Student and graduate membership

PEIs offer benefits targeting students and young graduates

**Outcomes:** increased visibility of the benefits of PEI membership, more young members

**PEIs:** Consulting Engineers South Africa, Institution of Engineers of Kenya, Institution of Engineers Tanzania



#### Local branches

PEIs facilitate more localised member recruitment and engagement

**Outcomes:** registration of engineers outside the capital, more workshops and meetings targeting local issues, lobbying local governments

**PEIs:** Sierra Leone Institution of Engineers, Malawi Institution of Engineers



#### Diverse and tailored benefits

PEIs offer a tailored, diverse and growing list of benefits

**Outcomes:** retaining existing members and attracting new members

**PEIs:** Consulting Engineers South Africa, Institution of Engineers of Kenya, South African Institution of Civil Engineering



#### Advocacy efforts

PEIs voice the concerns of their members to decision-makers

**Outcomes:** increased visibility, improved recognition of the value of PEIs

**PEIs:** Association of Consulting Engineers of Kenya



### Case study: The increased membership benefits of Consulting Engineers South Africa (CESA)

Through a good understanding of its members' needs and collection of regular feedback, CESA managed to diversify and constantly update its benefit offer, and grow its membership base as a result. A long list of exclusive benefits makes CESA membership attractive, including: support in negotiating and interpreting contract conditions, solving contractual disputes, and liaising with government and other industry bodies on contractual and legislative issues. Presenting itself as a valuable advisor, CESA supports its members in identifying business opportunities locally and internationally, provide them with industry information and competitive insights as well as best practice methodologies and guidelines. In terms of education opportunities, the **CESA School of Consulting Engineering** offers accredited training courses on technical and soft skills, and members can attend local and international events. Responding to the needs of the job market, through the **Young Professionals Forum**, CESA provides mentorship and assistance to young engineers employed by CESA-registered companies. Finally, CESA members have access to a **database of CVs** of other members, including unemployed graduates to be recruited, retired practitioners to be sourced as mentors or consultants, and potential partners.

## 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>Student and graduate membership</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Low visibility of PEIs among students and young engineers</li> <li>→ Limited understanding of the benefits of PEI membership among students and young engineers</li> <li>→ Inability to afford fees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Building partnerships with universities to reach out to students and establish student-led branches</li> <li>→ Reducing or freezing membership fees for a limited time</li> <li>→ Organising seminars to prepare engineers for the compulsory professional review for registration</li> <li>→ Organising training events, site visits, and lectures on the importance of the profession and professional membership</li> <li>→ Offering and facilitating internships, mentorship, and networking opportunities</li> <li>→ Developing a social media strategy to increase reach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ <b>Kenya – Institution of Engineers of Kenya (IEK): Training and mentorship offer</b> IEK has developed professional interview seminars, which prepare engineers for the compulsory professional review they undertake when they wish to progress from Graduate to Registered Engineer status, or from Registered Engineer to Consultant status. IEK also runs a mentoring scheme for aspiring engineers studying at secondary and university level.</li> <li>→ <b>South Africa – South African Institution of Civil Engineering (SAICE): Freezing membership fees for young graduates</b> One of the main reasons for the decreasing number of members is that many graduates cancel their membership after finishing their studies (when they lose the benefit of free membership). SAICE has, therefore, introduced a two-year suspension of membership fees for graduates to give them time to find a source of income.</li> <li>→ <b>South Africa – Consulting Engineers South Africa (CESA): Young Professionals Forum</b> See case study on page 1</li> </ul>
<p><b>Local branches</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Operational costs</li> <li>→ Lack of staff to run new centres</li> <li>→ Need to rely on volunteer staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Organising awareness campaigns to increase visibility at the local level</li> <li>→ Organising workshops and meetings targeting local issues</li> <li>→ Building strong relationships with local communities, including civil society and local schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ <b>Sierra Leone – Sierra Leone Institution of Engineers (SLIE): Northern and Southern local branches</b> Besides its Headquarter in Freetown, SLIE has opened centres in the Northern Province and Southern Province of the country with the aim of attracting and engaging engineers residing in other parts of the country. These centres are also local branches of the Professional Engineers Registration Council, which aims to facilitate the registration of local engineers. The launch of these centres was preceded by intensive activities aimed at raising interest and support among local engineers and potential staff. SLIE used its own funding to open the centres, which now run thanks to the help of local volunteers. This helps to limit the running costs. The centres organise workshops and public lectures tailored to local issues to attract further interest.</li> </ul>

Interventions	Challenges	Success factors	Examples and achievements
<p><b>Diverse and tailored benefits</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Keeping PEIs' offer <b>up to date</b></li> <li>→ Hiring <b>dedicated</b> staff to diversify the offer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ <b>Understanding members' needs</b>, and consulting them when defining offers and activities</li> <li>→ Providing a variety of <b>high-quality courses</b> and events at a discounted rate for members</li> <li>→ Tying benefits to <b>membership ID</b></li> <li>→ Providing tailored <b>professional and technical assistance</b> to members</li> <li>→ <b>Building good relationships</b> with government, companies, and academia to increase membership benefits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ <b>Kenya – Institution of Engineers of Kenya (IEK): Participatory approach to developing the <a href="#">2019–2023 Strategic Plan</a></b> IEK runs a wide range of <b>training and learning opportunities</b>, including training in contract management and construction site visits. During these visits, engineers learn about new developments in the engineering sector, such as the implementation of new technology. Members receive a certificate and can claim continuing professional development credits for their attendance. Other activities run by IEK include masterclasses on topical issues for the industry, such as ethics and integrity in engineering. IEK has actively engaged its members in the drafting of its Strategic Plan. It also offered them the opportunity to feed ideas into the training offer, strengthening their engagement with the institution in the process.</li> <li>→ <b>Tanzania – Institution of Engineers Tanzania (IET): Upgraded membership scheme</b> To make membership more accessible, IET reduced its membership fees. At the same time, IET introduced a <b>professional ID scheme</b>, according to which members must show their membership ID to attend an improved series of seminars, events, and training events. Combined, the special status attached to holding membership ID and lower membership fees incentivised more people to become full members.</li> <li>→ <b>South Africa – Consulting Engineers South Africa (CESA): <a href="#">Repository of practice notes</a></b> See case study on page 1</li> </ul>
<p><b>Advocacy efforts</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ <b>Sensitivities</b> in voicing certain opinions/lobbying</li> <li>→ Difficulties in <b>getting heard</b> by the government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ <b>Building partnerships</b> with companies, academia and civil society organisations focused on shared topics</li> <li>→ Identifying <b>political champions</b> to advance issues related to the engineering profession</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ <b>Kenya – Association of Consulting Engineers of Kenya (ACEK): Voicing the position of consulting engineers</b> In the past years, ACEK has experienced a major registration increase. This is because the association has been <b>voicing the concerns</b> of consulting engineers and gathering them around lobbying efforts that matter to them. For example, it raised the issues caused by new company ownership requirements set by the government, that required all shareholders to be registered as professional engineers while many companies are usually owned by business executives who can bring the necessary financial capital. In practice, foreign companies can bypass this requirement through complex ownership structures, putting local companies at a disadvantage. ACEK membership is a condition for receiving such assistance.</li> </ul>