

## **REFLECTION ON THE PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION STATISTICS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGINEERS IN ACHIEVING SDGs**

The United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, underpinned by the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is a blueprint for a better future for humanity and a sustainable world in which to live.

The 2030 Agenda points to the important role of engineering practitioners in the achievement of all the SDGs. From SDG 1 (no poverty) to SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals), and within each goal's outcome targets, there are roles and services such as infrastructure, clean water, health and well-being, climate health, production, equality, gender, elimination of hunger and many more which require the leadership, skills, and technological invention of engineering practitioners in one or more ways.

Engineers have always known that the world cannot do without them, but the SDGs provide the world with the proof, but more importantly the SDG targets have highlighted the urgent need for more engineering practitioners both here in South Africa and the world over.

South Africa not only needs more engineers but requires a transformed profession to be entirely representative of our society, while continuing to enjoy the highest standards, as well as unimpeachable levels of trust and reputation.

In aspiring for a transformed engineering profession, as of the end of the first quarter, ECSA had 50 319 engineers registered in a variety of categories, encompassing specified categories, candidate engineers and professional engineers.

What is heartening to see is that registrations are strong in our younger age bands. Forty-five percent of our registered engineers are aged 40 and younger, and we're seeing a much greater proportion of black engineers overall. It appears that an improved proportion of women are applying for registration, too. For example, of the 565 new registrations were processed between April and June this year, 26.55% were for women engineers – far higher than the 14.35% of engineers overall.

Over the past decade Council has seen steady registration growth both in real numbers and percentages, and more from women. In 2012, for instance, 23.24% of the 1 734 registrations comprised women; in 2021, 36.43% of the 2 495 registrations represented women. The actual number of women registering per year more than doubled, from 403 in 2012 to 909 last year. This is encouraging because it indicates that the country is producing more young engineers, and more of them proportionally are women.

What is equally positive to see is the increase in the proportion of black female engineers registering annually with ECSA. In 2012 there were 272 registrations. Apart from a dip in 2020, registration numbers of black women engineers steadily climbed to a peak of 689 in 2021. By contrast, the registrations of all other female engineers over the same period have held relatively steady, fluctuating a little year on year.

These strides, albeit minimal are encouraging and point to the progression of the profession and the intervention by various stakeholders in transforming the profession.