

# Could decentralised energy systems further social justice in SA?

 By [Sindy Peters](#)

28 Jul 2017

Thought leader on climate change, poverty and social justice issues and long-term activist for freedom, [Tasneem Essop](#) has launched an initiative that she hopes will put the power back into the hands of the people... quite literally.

Describing her aha moment at the 2017 WWF-SA Living Planet Conference, Essop's concerns about the serious challenges of poverty and her broadening understanding of the impact of climate change on the poor collectively ignited the idea to launch the Energy Democracy Initiative.



Image source: [cop20entlima.lamula.pe](http://cop20entlima.lamula.pe)

She lamented the missed opportunities from South Africa's hard-won freedom which she believes have not materialised in more meaningful ways. Renewable energy, however, provides a means to redress this. "People will have power," she said, "and they will have power in doing so."

The Energy Democracy Initiative is a startup that aims to work with grassroots communities, empowering people to not just be consumers of electricity, but to actually generate electricity. Essop emphasised that communities will plan, deliver, fundraise and eventually own their own decentralised energy systems.

## The initiative entails a three-phase programme:

- During phase one, the community selects 30 people as its 'energy-democracy champions' who will participate in the programme. They will be equipped with a basic knowledge about energy, climate change, and democracy.
- In phase two, they will receive technical training in terms of the technology options, how they work, and how to plan a decentralised energy system.
- The third phase will cover governance, project management, implementation, and fundraising, followed by implementation and rollout.

“ @Energydemocracyinitiative community capacity building workshop in Belhar, Cape Town with [@TasneemEssop](#)

[pic.twitter.com/MfqlDenf44](https://pic.twitter.com/MfqlDenf44)— FES South Africa (@FES\_SouthAfrica) [June 7, 2017](#) ”

The sustainability of the initiative and for the community, Essop explained, lies in its ability to sell surplus electricity either back to the municipality or to Eskom. "Those battles still need to be fought because the regulatory environment doesn't allow for it, but I wasn't going to start with the obstacles," she said.

"This technology has the ability to bring power back to people. It has the ability to ensure that we achieve social justice because people will not only be employees in some company, but can actually be the owners of the means of production and generation of electricity."

*Tasneem Essop previously worked for the Global Climate and Energy Initiative at WWF International after working as an international climate advocate for WWF South Africa. She is also a serving her second term as a commissioner in the National Planning Commission of South Africa.*

## ABOUT SINDY PETERS

Sindy Peters (@sindy\_hullaba\_lou) is a group editor at Bizcommunity.com on the Construction & Engineering, Energy & Mining, and Property portals. She can be reached at [sindy@bizcommunity.com](mailto:sindy@bizcommunity.com)

- 2022 Lesedi Award winner Faeza Marshman on what drives her giving spirit - 9 Dec 2022
- #ESGAfricaConference: Why integrating the environmental and social components of ESG is key - 3 Nov 2022
- #ESGAfricaConference: ESG an opportunity for purposeful shareholder engagement - 1 Nov 2022
- #ESGAfricaConference: Success in ESG starts with leadership, partnerships and good governance - 31 Oct 2022
- #ESGAfricaConference: What should ESG reporting look like in Africa? - 26 Oct 2022

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>