

# Schneider Electric wins Best CSR Programme at SEIFSA Awards

Schneider Electric South Africa was awarded the Best Corporate Social Responsibility Programme of the Year during the Steel and Engineering Industries Federation of Southern Africa's (SEIFSA) fourth annual awards held in Sandton recently.



Schneider Electric Anglophone Africa head of sustainable development Zanelle Dalglish

The company's submission on its Gwawkwani Village project captured the judges' attention, highlighting the company's dedication to sustainable development, serving vulnerable communities in a lasting and meaningful way.

"Schneider Electric is committed to ensuring that 'Life is On' for everyone, everywhere and at every moment. Through strategic partnerships we work very hard to empower these communities with access to energy and access to education, especially in communities in need of skills development, and in areas without electricity," says Schneider Electric Anglophone Africa head of sustainable development Zanelle Dalglish.

"We believe that access to both education and energy is a basic human right, one that fuels a community's ability to flourish educationally and economically," continues Dalglish.

## No municipal infrastructure

Gwawkwani, a rural village about 650km from Johannesburg, has about 100 inhabitants. With no municipal infrastructure in the village, residents faced a number of daily challenges to meet their basic needs for access of water, electricity and early childhood development.

Schneider Electric South Africa established a partnership with University of Johannesburg's (UJ) Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering Science (Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment) to ensure that Gwakwani villagers received these basic services through a number of sustainable interventions.

"This was made possible through Schneider Electric's Access to Energy solutions and the collective academic knowledge and skill sets of UJ's School for Electrical Engineering. Working in collaboration with industry, academia and community organisations is a key aspect of Schneider Electric's sustainable development strategy to establish an electrification model for off-grid communities," Dalglish explains.

Through this initiative, all households in the village were supplied with Schneider Electric Indiya and Mobiya solar lights, which are energy efficient and eco-friendly. The Mobiya lamps also offer cell phone charging, a service previously unavailable at the village.

## **Entrepreneurship training**

Villagers received entrepreneurship training to sell the lamps, and a Schneider Electric solar streetlight was installed, providing light outside their homes on pitch-dark evenings.

"We also assisted with the installation of a second borehole pump at the village to provide clean water on a regular basis, as the previous borehole was diesel generated and only switched on once a week. The community now also benefits from a newly installed drip irrigation system, allowing them to plant and grow vegetables to support themselves and sell their produce to surrounding villages," she says.

Containerised solutions were brought to the village in the form of a solar-powered bakery, and the village's first crèche. While the bakery has provided significant opportunity for economic activity, the crèche also boasts the village's first TV – providing the community's youngest members with access to educational programmes.

## **Sustainable interventions**

"The Gwakwani project was incredibly rewarding, and we were humbled to have been a part of this life-changing initiative. It is a great privilege for Schneider Electric South Africa to have such a unique and strategic partnership with the University of Johannesburg as the collaboration continues to deliver outstanding results. The Gwakwani project has made a large impact and showcases sustainable interventions due to this unique partnership that continues to grow from strength to strength. To receive this recognition from SEIFSA and our peers only cements our commitment to bettering the lives of South Africans in a sustainable and environmentally friendly way," Dalglish concludes.