



Sustainable Energy Africa Celebrates 12 years of SEED success.

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Speech by Peta Wolpe
Managing Director from Sustainable Energy Africa

Welcome to all of you and thank you for coming to our celebration of 12 years of developing and running the SEED Sustainable Energy for Environment and Development programme - a national capacity building programme that has pioneered sustainable energy practices within South African cities.

Tonight we are celebrating 12 years of SEED, the launching of a short film inspiring and educating people on energy and our cities and showcasing an exhibition that was taken to a pre cop 15 climate change exchange.

When I started to think about my introducing this event it felt a bit odd given my history with SEA is only 2 years and this programme is 12 years old and still going strong. But perhaps I can stand here quite confidently singing its praises without feeling I am patting myself on the back. So here goes.

In thinking about the programme and SEA's work generally I was struck by the degree of frustration amongst many of us working in the energy/climate change sector whatever our role might be. I have heard both within SEA, from myself and from many of you deep frustration at the slow pace of change, at the inertia that we all have to deal with, the lack of action and the lack of responsibility we see around us for our actions and behaviour.

At the global level there was much anticipation leading up to the COP 15 meeting and yet it failed to deliver. We have read the reports and heard the talks – it didn't achieve what it set out to do. Another frustration and another disappointment.

At the local level there are also concerns – the feed in tariff, the slow move to developing RE and EE measures, and the slow implementation of the strong policies and strategies sitting on the table.

All of this is true but as I started to look back over the 12 year history of the SEED programme – I began to see the shifts and changes and its ability to pioneer and bring the new. We have to remember that it has taken 150 years or more since the industrial revolution for us to reach this point. Change does not happen fast - it is a process and it can be hard to see that change.

So perhaps it is very timely that we take stock and look back in such a way as to encourage and inspire our move forward.

History

After 1994 government focus began to change as apartheid died and the new South Africa emerged. In 1994 SA had a highly centralised supply oriented energy sector, the system served the mineral/energy complex at the heart of our economy and predominantly white residential needs. At about the same time some 14 years ago a programme was run through the then DME – called HEAT – household energy action training – The idea was to train people involved in the low income sectors – a sector that during apartheid had been ignored - around basic energy services and safety. The people behind this programme – the idea and spearheading of it were Mark Borchers and Sarah Ward...

After two years of running the programme the need for this sort of engagement became increasingly clear and they started discussions with DANIDA (actually DANCED in those days) around what became the SEED programme. The political transition following 1994 presented an opportunity to reshape the energy and development landscape. They recognised this need and the opportunity for a transition in city development to more efficient, secure, poverty-alleviating and clean energy services approaches as well as the need to build capacity – human and institutional.

The Phases

What is remarkable about this programme is that it has not been static. It has taken cognisance of the political, social, economic and environmental landscape. It has moved and changed along the road. It is a programme that has journeyed and shifted according to the need to change. It has seen the gaps and taken the opportunities. And remarkably Danida has travelled that journey with us – has seen the potential and supported us in putting our vision into action. This programme has seen four phases – as follows

- **Phase one**

the model was to work with a few key cities by putting a SEED advisor into the city who would work with the city. They were accountable to us and to our objectives so they would not be drawn into other city priorities. Each advisor was allocated a line manager within the city. Their focus was to integrate energy efficiency and sustainability in housing delivery. This approach of forming close partnerships with cities and working from within “the belly of the beast” rather than as an external organisation, proved very effective. In parallel to the city focus, SEED placed advisors into an NGO in each city which supported and complimented the municipalities work.

- **Phase two**

This phase focused on city wide data collection and planning processes resulting in the state of energy report – the first of its kind - and the development of city energy strategies – also pioneering work for South African cities.

- **Phase three**

It became apparent that, even with the existence of strategies, implementation was a huge challenge for cities, so this phase focused on implementation, bringing technical assistance to cities and supporting the mass implementation of SWH rollout, for example.

- **Phase four**

This phase started last year and focuses on urban resilience for SA cities – taking into consideration spatial, transport and infrastructure planning as well as focusing on the energy needs of the unelectrified informal sector.

- SEED has been and is responsive to local, national and global changes
- It has maintained links from grassroots right through to national government and thereby ensured that implications of such hi-level policies and strategies is rooted in reality on the ground
- It has built linkages with national and provincial departments, with SALGA, South African Cities Network, ICLEI, academic institutions and other important energy and climate networking organisations
- It has pioneered sustainable urban energy strategies and management thereof
- It has brought and built capacity to implement technical solutions
- It has developed the capacity of a huge number of people through training and through its partnerships, learning exchanges and network meetings which have remained constant through all the phases.

When you look back at all of this and see what has come out of the work, shifts that have been made, the people who have moved on to forge changes in other areas of this work – it is remarkable how much has happened. People whose capacity has been built by SEED are now scattered through various national, provincial and city government departments, and continue to hold the sustainable energy agenda. We know that cities are large beasts whose course does not change fast – which can be frustrating for those trying to effect such change. But through our depression and frustration lets remember that a lot has been achieved over the past decade through SEED and others working in this area, and take heart that we are all bringing change and I say all because it is not simply through SEA, nor Danida but all of you who have engaged with us and journeyed with us that have contributed to the success of this programme.

I want to therefore thank all you here tonight for your part in making SEED a successful programme.

To the cities in particular for your time, for your engagement with us

To the various NGOs, academic departments and networks and your engagement with us

To all SEA staff, all project managers and project coordinators both present and past and to the administrative team members who have given so much to make the programme work

To Danida for their continued trust and incredible and inspiring support in our work. We all know that funding is trickier but they have backed us, collaborated with us, partnered with us and continue to do so.

BUT our work is not finished and we need to look to the future, to where the change needs to continue. We need to challenge ourselves, our own resistance and inertia. We have to look carefully at the planning of our cities, at taking the LTMS forward and moving towards low carbon futures.

Speaker

I want to now introduce our guest of honour Mr Osman Asmal better known as Ossie, who was born and still has links with Bergville in KwaZulu Natal.

He has worked with the Kwazulu-Natal Parks Boards, Universities of Durban Westville, the City of Cape Town and the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality. He is currently Director: Environmental Resource Management with the City of Cape Town.

It is so fitting that you will be talking this evening - Ossie was involved with the SEED programme from almost the beginning. He was line manager to one of the first advisors in phase one in Cape Town and then Ekurhuleni. Phase one of SEED had a project steering committee and Ossie chaired that committee for some time. He has since 1998 been one of the lead officials in elevating the profile of energy and climate change issues within and at the city of Cape Town. He has also played a role in increasing the profile of environment and energy issues for metropolitan cities with national and provincial government level. Your contribution to the SEED programme, to this work, to bringing change and being a champion has been significant. Thanks you for speaking tonight.

Danida

We are so sorry that Carsten Laugesen from the Danish Embassy could not be here tonight. He has partnered with us for some years and has been an amazing support to us. He has however, sent a message which Yachika Reddy, the current programme manager of SEED will read out.

Exhibition

Before we move to see the film, I just want to say a few words about the exhibition which you can't exactly miss.

This exhibition was taken to a pre COP 15 climate change exchange in Copenhagen and gave an overview of the work of the urban environment management programme which is a Danida supported programme being run in partnership with the Department of Water and Environment Affairs. The objective of the programme is the alleviation of poverty through improved service delivery within the environmental management of urban areas. As Ambassador Fredriksen from the Danish Embassy stated "The objective of the programme is to improve the livelihoods of more than 2 million poor households in the 5 big South African Metros (eThekweni, Ekurhuleni, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Sedibeng." The exhibition which was developed by SEA because we have been involved in some of the projects through the SEED programme, gives an overview of the climate change work done by the UEMP programme in eThekweni, Ekurhuleni, City of Johannesburg, and City of Cape Town. We thank Danida and the department of water affairs for funding the programme and this exhibition. We thank the cities for assisting in compiling the information and Monica Graaff and Angela Tuck for creating this magnificent exhibit. Karen Germishuys did an amazing job in creating the slide show and Bablu Singh and Chris Wessels for their photography. Please take time later to look around with a glass of wine and snack but first we will watch the film.

Documentary

We would like to show you the documentary that SEA commissioned based on the work of the SEED programme, our long history of work with cities. This short film is beautifully directed and produced by Luke Younge, through his company Lucid Pictures which produces videos and other audiovisual content for a variety of businesses and ngos. He produced a short on solar energy and won first prize in the Commonwealth Vision Awards. The executive producer of this short film is film producer Clifford Bestell and of course this film could not have been made without the support and funding of Danida. Again they trusted our process and let us run with this film.

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