

# Strengthening university research capacity through industry- academia partnerships



*"This was a good opportunity to  
gain real world experience on  
corrosion protection from the  
marine environment."*

Dr Silas Hango, Lecturer in Material Science,  
University of Namibia



**Building university research capacity is important to strengthening engineering education. Between 2017 and 2022 the Namibian economy is projected to move from an input-dependent economy into a knowledge-based economy with investments in research and development and skills development, according to the Namibia 5th National Development Plan.**

In 2017, the Royal Academy of Engineering's Higher Education Partnerships in sub-Saharan Africa (HEP SSA) programme, with support from the Anglo American Group Foundation and the UK government's Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) funded a two-year project on Quality engineering education through university-industry partnerships in eastern and southern Africa at the University of Namibia. The project aimed to create a collaborative partnership with the University of Cambridge and industry and academic partners across eastern and southern Africa to enhance the quality of engineering education and training through joint research and industry-academia bilateral secondments.

The University of Namibia's HEP SSA project seconded 16 academic staff to industry across eastern and southern Africa. The secondments strengthened partnership between local industry and academia, increasing academia's exposure to the challenges and needs of industry. In addition, the secondments resulted in 12 industry-initiated collaborative research projects that engaged academia, students and industry partners.

Research plays a vital role in building and strengthening partnerships between industry and academia. As a result of the HEP SSA project, the University of Namibia's regional university partners have also built research capacity and strengthened industry partnerships. The University of Nairobi, for example, undertook research with Kenya Power International to provide Wi-Fi for the public and local businesses using established power lines.

Another collaborative research project identified through HEP SSA provided an opportunity for the University of Namibia and the University of Cambridge to secure £20,000 from the Cambridge-Africa Alborada fund. The fund has enabled Dr Silas Hango, Namibian post-doctorate researcher, to undertake a six-month research project at the University of Cambridge addressing corrosion prevention at Walvis Bay Port in Namibia. This could potentially address a key challenge faced by an industrial partner.

The HEP SSA programme aims to improve engineering education across the continent through industry-academia partnerships with the aim of ensuring graduates hold the skills local and regional industry need.

For more information, and to get involved:

[www.raeng.org.uk/hepsa](http://www.raeng.org.uk/hepsa)

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**“The internship was quite interesting. The experience and exposure was very good. NORED Electricity has expressed willingness to join forces with the University of Namibia and make this project a success.”**

Mr Andreas Ndapuka,  
Lecturer in Electrical Engineering,  
University of Namibia.

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