

# OUTA and AfriForum show civil society getting involved in improving energy and water management

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*"OUTA's campaign in the energy sector has just begun"*

"As the level of service delivery in South Africa breaks down to levels seen in other African states, it becomes critically important for civil society to mobilise and interrogate the reasons why service delivery is failing," says Ted Blom, energy analyst and advisor to the energy and mining industries and spokesperson for OUTA (Organisation Undoing Tax Abuse). The organisation recently lost its urgent bid in the High Court in Pretoria to interdict the electricity tariff hike.



He adds: "For members of a former functioning society with service delivery working, the adoption of a civil rights activist stance can be most uncomfortable and unfamiliar, but ultimately when Government has become deaf to the needs of its citizens, there is little other alternative if

one elects to remain in the country."

Ted Blom says, "Civil activism is still in its relative infancy in post-Apartheid South Africa. The nature of civil activism is that it is objective-driven - people only join an action if it has the likelihood of meeting their need or concern for action.

"OUTA's campaign in the energy sector has just begun," Ted states, "unfortunately with a lost court case, but such is civil action and it will not be deterred by the technical loss of one court case. OUTA is still gearing up its internal capacity, both on the energy desk as well as on the legal side, as it envisages many more legal bids will become necessary."

## **AfriForum: active communities**

"Water affects us all and every aspect of our lives and active communities can make a big difference when they act as a united group to hold government responsible and apply the 'do it yourself' principle to prevent pollution and preserve water," says Marcus Pawson, Head: Local Government at the civil-rights organisation AfriForum. The movement currently has 170,000 members and branches in 125 cities and towns in South Africa.

"AfriForum's Local Government portfolio has a twofold strategy," Marcus explains. "The first is to have government of all spheres held accountable for government services and environmental responsibilities. The second is a 'do it ourselves' approach where we reach a point that communication and good relationships with government have not delivered on promises and AfriForum then takes on the responsibility of fixing the immediate problem. In both strategies a legal strategy is applied to ensure that the best outcome is achieved."

Success stories include the AfriForum Blue and Green Drop Projects started in 2015 and that identified five towns where potable water was unsafe for human consumption. All affected municipalities were notified and placed on terms to fix the crises. All five affected towns were cleaned after a second round of water tests were done a week later.

Marcus adds: "The AfriForum Green Drop Project also revealed major infrastructure and management problems in Standerton regarding sewerage water polluting the Vaal River which flows into the Vaal Dam. AfriForum's local branch was unsuccessful in discussions with the local municipality to budget for repairs and do upgrades on infrastructure. Eventually in October 2015, the branch contracted an engineer who installed a concrete pipe for sewerage flow to the Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTWs) and not directly into the Vaal River.

"AfriForum is ready with a court application that will ensure government management of WWTWs are fully qualified and

staffed with the necessary variety of personnel that is needed on sites of every WWTW. If successful the result will greatly improve the management of the WWTWs in South Africa.”

## **African Utility Week**

Both Marcus Pawson and Ted Blom are speakers and panellists during the upcoming **African Utility Week** conference in Cape Town in May. The event features 250 more expert speakers from 17-19 May at the CTICC – gathering some 6,000 power professionals from local and African municipalities, utilities, other stakeholders and solution providers from around the globe.

The event will feature 250 exhibitors, a six stream strategic conference, a free-to-attend technical conference on the expo floor, three high-profile keynote sessions, technical site visits and the coveted industry awards gala dinner. The Utility CEO Forum will be an opportunity to discuss challenges and share best practice for high-level power utility executives from countries such as Ghana, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The **African Utility Week Industry Awards** also include categories for Power Utility Executive of the Year, Utility of the Year, Energy Efficiency Project of the Year and Power/Water Woman of the Year where pioneering utilities and innovative projects in the sector are recognised and celebrated.

The trade exhibition will be free when registering in advance and showcase power and water saving technologies and services for the industry, and feature hands-on demonstrations and CPD-accredited technical workshops on the exhibition floor.

**African Utility Week and Clean Power Africa** are organised by Spintelligent, leading Cape Town-based trade exhibition and conference organiser, and the African office of Clarion Events Ltd, based in the UK. The event forms part of a global energy event series, including European Utility Week, Australian Utility Week, Asian Utility Week and Latin American Utility Week. Other African flagship events in Spintelligent’s power portfolio are East African Power Industry Convention (EAPIC), West African Power Industry Convention (WAPIC), iPAD Rwanda Power & Mining Investment Forum and iPAD Cameroon Energy & Infrastructure Forum.

### **Dates for African Utility Week and Clean Power Africa 2016:**

Conference and expo: 17-19 May 2016

Awards gala dinner: 18 May 2016

Site visits: 20 May 2016

Location: CTICC, Cape Town, South Africa

Websites: [www.african-utility-week.com](http://www.african-utility-week.com)

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/AfricaUtilities> #AUW2016

Linkedin: African Power Forum

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