

Slow but steady towards a sustainable future

 By [Cindy Peters](#)

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In 2015 the UN adopted the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda along with [17 Global Goals](#). These goals provide guidance for a slow but steady march towards a more sustainable future; there is much work to be done.

Sustainability is one of the more exciting areas of development in South Africa with many a project afoot. Here's a bit of what's in store for 2016:

Addressing climate change

South Africa will be the [first developing country](#) to implement a carbon tax in 2017, showing its willingness to address anthropogenic climate change. Consumers, and [business in particular](#), have until then to prepare for the extra costs. The Draft Carbon Tax Bill will be implemented in three phases with the price increasing significantly after five to ten years. 2016 will therefore see much innovation and investment in green technologies to curb greenhouse gas emissions. The [pros and cons](#) have been debated, and big business has been dragging its feet, but the long-term solution looks like it's here to stay with Treasury resolute in its implementation.



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Learning made more accessible

Technology will continue to disrupt traditional education models with [more advancements](#) in cloud-based learning, massive open online courses, and mobile learning. These developments make education more accessible, particularly in rural areas. In 2016 we'll see more ICT partnerships with rural communities bridging the divide in access to education technologies. An example of a current development initiative is the [Vodacom Mobile Education Programme](#), in which Vodacom has provided the infrastructure and tools allowing rural-based teachers to keep up to date with technology-based education.

Collaborating with communities to curb rhino poaching

Rhino poaching will remain topical in South Africa in 2016 even though there has been no disclosure by government of the number of poaching arrests or rhino poached since [August last year](#). The [unconfirmed number of reported rhino poaching cases](#) from last year is 1,160. If this is the case, it would mean there has been a slight decrease from 1,215 in 2014. In the field of conservation, 2016 will see more community-based natural resource management approaches being adopted, which, according to WWF-SA, is a proven conservation tool for southern Africa. An example of such an approach is WWF-SA's RISE, the Rural Initiative for a Sustainable Environment in South Africa. It is a practical community-based approach to supporting wildlife conservation and rhinos.

El Niño dries out SSA

World population growth isn't stabilising any time soon. We're looking at projections of 8 billion by 2025 and almost 10 billion people by 2050. That's a lot of mouths to feed - according to the FAO, food production will need to [increase by 70% by 2050](#). The agricultural industry, particularly those in developing countries where most of the growth is taking place, will have to step up their game. A major obstacle though to increasing yields will be [agriculture's large environmental footprint](#). And with an El Niño-induced drought currently affecting most of sub-Saharan Africa, the region's agriculture sector won't be having an easy time of it.



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Leapfrog innovation in healthcare

[Leapfrog innovation](#) will occur in the health sector in less developed countries with start-ups providing less expensive, more

accessible healthcare options. This is according to Unity Stoakes, writing for Forbes.com. We've seen it happen before in the banking and ICT sectors in Africa, he now sees this entrepreneurial ingenuity also extending to healthcare. "The best and brightest inventions are coming from (and to) places you might not expect: poor nations with poor health outcomes," says Stoakes.

Gender diversity for economic growth

Gender equality will remain a central tenet in any company's sustainability agenda. Not just because it's morally and socially the right thing to do, but because economically, it just makes sense. According to the [McKinsey Global Institute's *The Power of Parity* report](#), advancing women's equality has the potential to add \$12tn to global growth. According to [Richa Tripathi](#), chief human resources officer for Tata Teleservices, in 2016, we will see organisations making more of an effort to hire women, promoting gender diversity, as well as more women appointed to leadership roles.

Revenue opportunities in waste

'Waste is wealth' is the mantra making its way across South African soil, from the unemployed seeking to earn a much-needed income, to business embracing a circular economy model. Two initiatives in particular embrace this modern form of waste management, where landfills are the last resort. [Waste to Wealth Africa](#) educates communities on how to turn waste into sustainable wealth, uplifting previously disadvantaged communities through recycling and environmental projects. The other is the Western Cape Industrial Symbiosis Programme (WISP), which helps businesses identify untapped revenue opportunities in waste. These kinds of initiatives are set to gain further momentum in 2016.

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