

A burning desire to deliver meaningful green energy projects

 By [Nicci Botha](#)

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Ensuring the delivery of green energy to Africa while working in a dynamic team where everyone learns and grows, and making real positive changes in rural communities are the things that make Katherine Persson, general manager: Windlab, tick.



Katherine Persson, general manager: Windlab

Why are you so passionate about sustainable energy?

I have been fortunate to have always worked and studied in the sustainable development and renewable energy fields. Making a positive contribution to the environmental and social condition of the future is just something that has always been a part of my DNA. Apart from feeling like I was just made to work in this field, the other thing that gives me so much positive energy is the people that I get to engage with and meet along the way. So many of my colleagues and friends in this industry share my burning desire to deliver projects with a positive and environmental impact and this makes so a really exciting, inspiring and satisfying experience. Also I think my kids will thank me one day for putting so much effort into this line of work.

Tell us about some of the projects you are working on in Africa?

I am really fortunate to be working on some very exciting projects across Africa with an absolutely amazing team by my side. Besides all the projects that we have in our South African portfolio, we are hoping to start construction on the first utility-scale wind project in Tanzania in 2019 and are also developing Africa's first utility-scale hybrid renewable energy facility in Kenya. Public-private partnerships are an important part of how we do business in Africa and we are utilising some industry leading approaches to community engagement and project involvement which helps us to do great and exciting work.

The minister has promised another round of REIPPPP bids. Realistically, what is South Africa's long-term wind energy capacity?

The potential of wind energy in South Africa is about so much more than just the technical question of how much wind energy can we integrate onto the grid. We have much more to offer. I see a long-term future of the industry in South Africa

as a world-leader and shining example of all the many benefits that our projects can offer. Just think what we can create if we keep building on the success of REIPPPP so far and look beyond this to the future benefits of clean energy, manufacturing, jobs, skills development, socio-economic investment and more as part of the sustainable development of projects for REIPPPP and also other offtake avenues.

If you could go back, what advice would you give your younger self?

Well there was that one boyfriend that I probably should have avoided... No seriously, I would tell myself not to underestimate the value of building strong and beneficial relationships and creating a personal and professional network of support to see me through the years. I would remind myself that being honest and authentic is always the best way and that is it really worth doing the hard yards to build knowledge and learn your trade. And I would tell the younger me to go out and find a female business mentor, which is something I always wish I had done earlier in career.

ABOUT NICCI BOTHA

Nicci Botha has been wordsmithing for more than 20 years, covering just about every subject under the sun and then some. She's strung together words on sustainable development, maritime matters, mining, marketing, medical, lifestyle... and that elixir of life - chocolate. Nicci has worked for local and international media houses including Primedia, Caxton, Lloyd's and Reuters. Her new passion is digital media.

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