

Sustainable  
Construction

SOUTH  
AFRICA

# TALKS

BY SAINT-GOBAIN  
CAPE TOWN  
JUNE. 05, 2025

## Inclusivity In Sustainable Construction

# TAKEAWAYS

Our very first Sustainable Construction Talk in Sub-Saharan Africa took place on the 5th of June 2025, World Environment Day.

**The topic: Inclusivity in Sustainable Construction:  
How do we build an ecosystem of stakeholders so that  
sustainability is at the right cost?**

**In alignment with the World Environment Day Theme:  
Our Land Our Future**

**#wearegenerationrestoration**



5 June 2025 | 09:00 – 13:30

Workshop17 Watershed  
V&A Waterfront  
Cape Town



The Sustainable  
Construction  
Observatory  
BY SAINT-GOBAIN

# DISCUSSIONS MEDIA



This event provided a platform for industry leaders and change makers to explore how we can ensure a just transition towards sustainability in the construction sector. As urbanization is predicted to accelerate in Africa, and the demand for infrastructure intensifies, this conversation highlighted the importance of collaboration and considering the socio-economic dimensions of the transition towards sustainability.

This document captures the key insights that emerged from the discussion, with the aim of inspiring continued dialogue.



[Play video](#)



# PANEL DISCUSSIONS



## Panel Discussion 1:

### Climate Resilience and Opportunity in the Built Environment

Why does sustainable construction at the right cost matter in South Africa / Sub-Saharan Africa and what might that look like?

#### 1. Climate Change Intensifies Strain on Developing Economies

Climate change places disproportionate stress on developing countries, particularly affecting daily wage earners in sectors like construction. The increasing frequency and severity of climate-related damage make infrastructure repair more difficult and costly, compounding existing vulnerabilities.

#### 2. Contextual and Inclusive Approaches to Construction

There is no one-size-fits-all solution; buildings must be designed with context-specific needs and local end users in mind.

Meaningful collaboration with communities ensures community buy-in. Clear development road maps are essential to prevent the loss of biodiversity.

Designing with biodiversity, user comfort, and a multidisciplinary perspective at the forefront offers an opportunity to create spaces that are sustainable and socially responsive.

The selection of materials plays an important role in reducing environmental impact and enhancing resilience.

#### 3. Sustainability as a Catalyst for Socio-Economic Transformation

The transition to sustainable construction presents significant opportunities for job creation, provided stakeholders are adequately trained.

Re-skilling workers is key to enabling a just and inclusive transition.

Innovation and collaborative design, especially when inclusive of local communities, can result in more equitable spaces for people to thrive.

# SPEAKERS' views at a glance

## Panel Discussion 1



### **Justin Smith**

Head of Scale at Sustainable Finance Coalition WWF

Climate change places significant strain on developing companies, where repairing climate-caused damage becomes increasingly costly and difficult for lower-income individuals. The loss of biodiversity poses a significant challenge. We need detailed road maps of development to reduce environmental impact and ensure social dimensions are considered as well.

### **Estie van Zyl**

Sustainability Manager at Saint-Gobain Africa

Climate events such as droughts or floods cause interruptions in the supply chain, and those who are most impacted in the construction industry are daily wage workers. We need to consider an integrated approach to develop more sustainable and climate-resilient supply chains to protect our planet and livelihoods simultaneously.



### **Mlondolzi Hempe**

Partner at PJC & Partners

In light of these challenges, equitable access to innovation and design, and embracing community buy-in to tie socio-economic benefits into the transition towards sustainability is important. We need to create spaces for communities to thrive, whilst integrating sustainable material usage and design.

# PANEL DISCUSSIONS



## **Panel Discussion 2:**

How can we create a connected network of stakeholders that ensures sustainability is pursued at the right cost, socially, environmentally, and economically?

### Enablers of Sustainable and Equitable Design

#### **1. Collaborative Visioning**

- Cross-disciplinary collaboration among design teams is essential to developing inclusive, equitable spaces with a shared purpose.

#### **2. Climate-Resilient Material Selection**

- Material performance, resilience, and the end-of-life cycle must be evaluated and transparently communicated to allow end users to choose more consciously.

#### **3. Operational and Financial Strategies**

- Effective operational management and incentivizing end-users to occupy more sustainably can advance sustainability performance

#### **4. Local Empowerment Through Production**

- Supporting local manufacturing can increase the demand on local industries, driving the need to up-skill and upscale.

#### **5. Inclusive Circular Economies**

- Embedding a culture of care into circular design strategies ensures inclusion of micro-industries, driving social benefits for lower-income communities.

#### **6. Incorporating Indigenous Architecture**

- Incorporating indigenous architecture and knowledge systems into modern design practices not only improves buildings' sustainability performance but also promotes cultural inclusion and equity.

# SPEAKERS' views at a glance

## Panel Discussion 2



**Marloes Reinink**  
Director of Solid Green Consulting

We need to collaborate deeply and consistently across the design team ensure the design is contextually appropriate. Additionally, we need to prioritize educating stakeholders and vendors in order to create more opportunities for partnership on sustainable construction.

**John de Wet**  
Environmental Sustainability Manager at Stellenbosch University

In the transition towards sustainability, partnership to create accessible funding opportunities is a crucial step in making the transition. Effectively outlining and communicating the long-term financial benefits of making the transition supports the decision to pursue this transition.



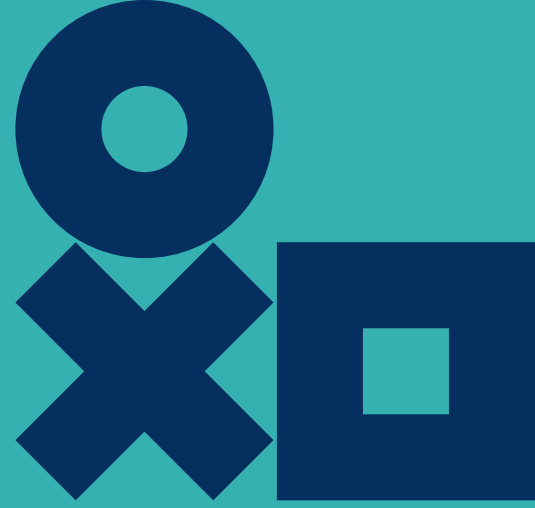
**Franette Ventura**  
V&A Waterfront Development

Effective operational management and effective change management embedded with a culture of care is a foundational building block to support a just transition. In partnering with craftsman and local industries, we can encourage industry up-skilling and upscaling to meet the demands of building and occupying sustainability whilst also producing economic benefits for local stakeholders.

**Alison Groves**  
Director: Discipline Lead: Built Ecology Green Star AP  
(NB, EB & INT) at WSP in Africa

Sustainable construction is inherently inspired by indigenous architecture techniques used for centuries. We need to partner with experts in design to shift perceptions of indigenous architecture from being outdated, to aspirational. Partnering with design experts to include indigenous techniques ensures that the transition towards sustainability is one that is culturally relevant as well.





To find out more and to read the last edition of our Barometer,  
visit the Sustainable Construction Observatory page at:  
<https://www.saint-gobain.com/en/sustainable-constructionobservatory>

For a more in-depth look at sustainable construction and its acceleration levers,  
please visit our online magazine, Constructing a Sustainable Future:  
<https://www.constructing-sustainable-future.com/en/home/>



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If you have any question about the Sustainable Construction Observatory,  
please contact us at the following address:  
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