

Accolades for sanitation researchers: WRC Knowledge Tree Award winners 2017



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WIN-SA aims to capture the innovative work of people tackling real service delivery challenges. It also aims to stimulate learning and sharing around these challenges to support creative solutions. Most importantly, WIN-SA strengthens peer-to-peer learning within the water sector.

The WRC Symposium held on 18 to 20 September 2017 will remain one of the memorable events in the history of South African water sector. This year's Symposium was held under the theme "Adaptation to The New Normal" which was selected to address the issues of water behavioural change, governance, policy, resilience and technology innovations.

With over 400 delegates, the event drew delegates from local and international water and sanitation industries, government, academia, funding institutions and investors playing a role in the water research, development and the innovation space.

Adding to the Symposium, the 3rd WRC Knowledge Tree Awards ceremony was held to honour researchers that have made a significant impact through water and sanitation research. The Knowledge Tree Awards are named after the WRC's strategic planning approach to the research impact.



Dave Still (Middle) receives the award from Dhesigen Naidoo, WRC CEO (left) and Errol Gradwell, EWSETA CEO (right)

The tree metaphor reflects strength in foundation referring to 'roots' firmly embedded in sound knowledge and strong growth while the 'branches and leaves' are growing vigorously from this knowledge. The awards also act as a WRC's yardstick with which to measure the impact in the key research domains.

Drawing from the exceptional cohort of researchers funded every year, a few individuals and project teams go a long way, in some cases beyond the call of duty in their efforts to make their research real and relevant to others.

"The WRC requires researchers to consider the potential scientific and socioeconomic impact of their research and to show in their proposals who could potentially benefit from the project, and to explain how they can increase the chances of potential beneficiaries benefiting from their proposed work", explained the WRC CEO, Dhesigen Naidoo while giving the ceremony's opening address.

Mr Dave Still (Partners in Development) – Knowledge Tree Award winner for sanitation innovation technology development

Mr Dave Still from Partners in Development (PID) was amongst the esteemed researchers to receive recognition for sanitation-related innovations. The WRC awarded Still for his innovation in developing the pour flush technology and its scale up, which has been instrumental in establishing a new interest in sanitation technology.

Still's award falls under the category for new products and services for economic development. This is a special WRC award given to projects that have contributed to job creation, economic development through the development of innovative technologies. This is exactly what Still has done with the development of the Pour Flush toilet technology.

Still has led a number of WRC research projects for nearly 30 years. He established his own consultancy which started as a home-based business. Today, PID has grown into an engineering and research consultancy which employs many people and contributes to projects on a local and national scale. PID has provided planning, design, training and construction management services to over 200 infrastructure projects. Dave has been instrumental over the years in writing guidelines and tools to support watsan activities.

Additionally, still has contributed immensely in the South African water and sanitation sector. Under his leadership in 2009, the WRC recognised the need for an on-site sanitation

option which addresses the aspirations of many South Africans for a flush toilet while overcoming the logistical challenges involved with standard sewerage systems, and simultaneously working responsibly within the limits of the country's water resources.

This toilet represented a significant step up the sanitation ladder from VIP latrines which are associated with poor user experiences. The Innovation for Rural Development Programme (IDRP) served a catalyst for scaling-up of this innovative approach.

Ms Cate Nimanya (Water for People) -Knowledge Tree Award winner for Sustainable Development Solutions

Ms Cate Nimanya, the Ugandan Country Director for the international non-profit Water for People was a recipient of the WRC Sustainable Development Solutions Knowledge Tree Award. This special award is given to WRC projects that have made an impact in providing sustainable development solutions and those projects that have had a positive effect on the environment, economy and society including: protection of water resources, optimal water use, equity between generations, current equitable access, environmental integration and good governance.



Cate Nimanya (Middle) receives the award from Dhesigen Naidoo, WRC CEO (left) and Ntombi Nala, WRC Board member (right)

Nimanya has done an excellent job. She led the Kampala Sanihub project which was funded by the WRC through a grant from Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The project showed that pit latrine sludge could be transformed into valuable commodities, such as biochar, using simple, easily and locally manufactured systems.

Through her project, better, simple sludge removal and treatment technologies enabled new sanitation entrepreneurs to enter the sanitation sector and a larger number of households to benefit from improved

sanitation facilities. This will have a dual benefit of providing employment and improving the health of the families in high density slum areas.

Prof Faizal Bux (Durban University of Technology) - Knowledge Tree Award winner for Transformation and Redress

The WRC awarded Prof Faizal Bux the Director of Institute for Water and Wastewater Technology at Durban University of Technology for his role in the area of Transformation and Redress. This special WRC accolade is given to project leaders who have made an impact in growing the capacity within the PDI (Previously Disadvantaged Individuals) and for providing sound leadership in their projects or HDI (Historically disadvantaged Institutions) as well as helping to promote development through the reduction of poverty and inequality in South Africa.

Of special interest to the WRC is the role that water may play in achieving social transformation and justice in the context of deepening democratic practices, the extension of water services and redressing the wrongs of the past.

Bux has a long career in water research with several WRC studies related to municipal wastewater system. Through his leadership in various research projects within the WRC, many postgraduate students especially PDIs played a significant role in all of his projects.

To date, Bux has graduated 39 masters and doctoral students (>90% PDI). It is with great joy that many of his graduates are occupying senior positions in the water and related industries in South Africa. In addition, his current cohort of postgraduate students is in excess of 20.

Professor Faizal Bux boasts 28 years of experience in the field water and wastewater treatment technology. His core research focus areas are wastewater technology, algal biotechnology and bioenergy production. Bux has an extensive network of university collaborators globally with active student and staff exchange. Bux is currently actively involved in bilateral projects with India, Brazil, Egypt, China, Algeria, Japan and global projects involving Oklahoma University (USA) and Aalborg University (Denmark).

The WRC looks forward to awarding excellence again in the next Symposium planned for 2019.