

# Sustainable strategy engenders results



**PROJECT EXPERTISE** Knight Piésold is involved in a number of large-scale projects, including the second stage of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project

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Consulting firm Knight Piésold's sustainable, quality process ethos across the board, from executing projects to implementing transformation, has enabled the company to maintain its competitive advantage amid a currently turbulent consulting engineering industry.

Knight Piésold CEO **Vishal**

**Haripersad** tells *EngineeringNews* that the company's value system is based on making a sustainable, long-term impact, with every undertaking informed by this.

“The industry has been challenging over the past decade, because poor procurement and tendering practices have caused a depressed market driving down prices. This has affected the quality of professional services, as firms often reduce the quality of their services to maintain work.”

Despite the depressed market, Knight Piésold has maintained a stable project rate because of its commitment to providing sustainable, quality partnerships, says Haripersad. “We haven’t taken the approach of lowering the quality of our service – our approach is that we will never compromise on quality, striving instead for innovative solutions at cost-effective prices that can assist clients.”

Commitment is not linked to remuneration when partnering with clients and the company provides quality services as part of a long-term relationship that extends beyond the completion of a project, where Knight Piésold is always on hand to assist with maintenance and other issues as required.

Moreover, while the company is a multidisciplinary firm, “it does not jump across industries” in pursuit of money, but rather discerns where it can add value for clients in pursuit of projects, he adds. This has ensured sustained success in difficult market conditions and more than 97 years of operation for the company.

### **Project Portfolio**

Knight Piésold is currently involved in Phase 2 of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, mainly designing the Polihali tunnel, and the Polihali diversion, which encompasses two tunnels and a coffer dam, in a joint venture with six international firms. The company has been involved in the project since its inception more than 30 years ago.

Haripersad notes that it is one of the largest projects currently under way in Southern Africa in terms of technical complexity and costs. The company is well versed in projects of such a large scale and scope, having participated in many such projects over the years.

The company’s engineers are also working on the Neckartal dam project – a curved gravity dam constructed with roller

compacted concrete – in Namibia, through its Namibian operation. Haripersad indicates that it is the largest project ever undertaken by the Namibian government.

In Madagascar, the company is providing engineering consultancy for the tailings dam for Ambatovy mine, a nickel and cobalt mining operation. Haripersad informs that the company has been part of this project for a decade.

The company is also involved in multiple roadworks projects, including engineering consulting for the N2 Wild Coast toll road, in the Eastern Cape.

On the mining front, Knight Piésold is also involved in the Gamsberg zinc and lead project, in South Africa's Northern Cape province, as engineers for the tailings dam facilities.

### **Genuine Transformation**

Haripersad notes that, although transformation presents different challenges for different companies, this is inevitable, as it is needs-driven and a catalyst to address South Africa's legacy of socioeconomic problems, which Knight Piésold perceives as a moral imperative. He is concerned that many companies (especially foreign-owned multinationals) regard transformation as a business cost, which can be solved by spending money to meet requirements merely to stay viable, which should not be the case, as this is a superficial, short-term fix.

By contrast, Knight Piésold pursues sustainable, long-term transformation for the company as informed by its aforementioned ethos. This entails a pipeline approach, whereby the company focuses on developing communities in its areas of operation through its Bokamoso programme.

The programme has been running for more than ten years and aims to improve performances in the “critically important” subjects of maths and science in high schools. The programme has enjoyed success, with participant schools displaying improvements in maths and science results.

In addition to investment, the company provides equipment, learning materials and tutoring programmes to assist learners in getting the best possible marks at school. The highest performers are awarded bursaries to study engineering at a technikon or

university and, once qualified, are employed and mentored by Knight Piésold to assist them in progressing through the company's ranks, thereby developing the "best next generation of engineers, scientists, and technologists", explains Haripersad. "This pipeline approach entails a culture of training, development and investing that is consistently maintained, not only for our company but also the industry."

Haripersad enthuses that the company will open a learning centre in Lenasia, Gauteng, at the M H Joosub Technical Secondary School in July. 🇿🇦