

DEA-CSIR “Special Needs” and Skills Development Programme 2014-2016

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Introduction and Problem Contextualisation

- Some emerging, small-medium scale business entrepreneurs, companies and community trusts do not have funds to comply with the EIA Regulations.
- In order to address this challenge, the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) Chief Directorate of EIM Capacity and Support initiated the **“Special Needs and Skills Development Programme”** to assist with the required environmental services.
- DEA commissioned and funded the CSIR Environmental Management Services (EMS) unit in Stellenbosch to run this programme.
- The programme consists of 2 themes:
 1. **“Special Needs”**
 2. **“Skills Development”**



Introduction and Problem Contextualisation

Theme 1: “Special Needs”

- EIAs in South Africa are not expensive compared to international standards (% of total project cost), however, they are required for relatively small developments, placing a burden on small to medium enterprises (Retief, 2014)
- In terms of the EIA regulations of NEMA 2010, the legal mandate for this programme is as follows:
 - **Regulation 70** of the EIA Regulations, 2010 “Assistance to people with Special Needs” states that:
 - *“the component authority processing an application must give reasonable assistance to people with: (a) illiteracy; (b) a disability; and (c) any other disadvantage, who cannot, but desire to, comply with these Regulations.”*
- To align with Regulation 70, the CSIR (funded by the DEA) will assist emerging, small-medium scale business entrepreneurs, companies and Community Trusts by undertaking *pro bono* environmental services for them

Introduction and Problem Contextualisation

Theme 2: “Skills Development”

- Current model proposed is the training of 4 graduates on 18 month contracts by CSIR in:
 - project management
 - environmental legislation
 - report writing
 - governance/administration etc.
- Graduates exposed to various conferences, courses and workshops, i.e.:
 - South African Environmental Observation Network (SAEON) Graduate Student Network (GSN)
 - ACCESS Science Communication and Facilitation Workshop
 - DEA&DP training on NEMA regulations and IAIA Air Quality Management Workshop
 - CILLA Project Management I
 - SANBI Biodiversity Planning Forum
 - Society of South African Geographers (SSAG) Student Conference 2014
- This programme can make a major contribution to the sector by providing young graduates with **crucial skill sets** to promote sustainable development in-line with the vision of NEMA, while empowering local communities.



Who “qualifies” as a special needs case?

An applicant identification model was developed by the EIA pro-bono Office at NWU (Retief, 2014). The definition for a “Special Needs” case in terms of Regulation 70 of NEMA are as follows:

Definition of a “Special Needs” case

- I. An **illiterate** person who is unable to read and write or do basic numerical calculations in a functional way,
- II. A **disabled** person who is constrained by a long-term or recurring physical, sensory, communication, intellectual or mental impairment,
- III. A **disadvantaged person** who is constrained by circumstances or condition.

Who “qualifies” as a special needs case?

This definition was manipulated to identify primary criteria for selection of a “Special Needs” case (Retief,2014). The CSIR has adapted these and will use them to determine who qualifies for the service:

Primary Criteria for selection of “Special Needs” cases

Criterion 1: Will the cost of the EIA jeopardize the financial viability of the proposed project/development?

Criterion 2: Will the cost of the EIA significantly erode available funding designated for social upliftment and/or job creation?

Approach to the identification of clients

- The DEA launched the programme in January 2014 by appointing the first **4 interns** who are being hosted in the **Environmental Management Services (EMS)** unit at CSIR in Stellenbosch under the supervision of a manager.
- Following the publication by F. Retief at NWU, the identification of clients who qualify as “Special Needs” commenced in June 2014 and contact was made with:
 - Various **government departments**
 - Local and district **municipalities**
 - **Community trusts**
 - **NGO’s etc.**
- Contact has been made with over 150 I&APs, the successful channels to date being through bodies such as:
 - **Land Bank**
 - **Department of Rural Development and Land Reform**
 - **Department of Environmental Affairs**
 - **Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**
 - **Local Chamber of Commerce** institutions



Approach to the identification of clients

Current engagement with the following I&APs:

- Zibophezele Community Trust in Eston, KZN for the cultivation of a **sugarcane plantation**.
- Local SMME, Bobza Solutions, in the Eastern Cape for a locally run **multi-purpose business centre**.
- Howick Chamber of commerce for a local **piggery**, an **abattoir** and 2 small-scale **quarries**.
- National Department of Trade and Industry for local **bio-energy facilities**.
- National Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry for the implementation of **freshwater aquaculture**.



Challenges

1. The identification of clients

- Unable to directly communicate with clients (illiteracy, lack of resources such as the internet on their side etc.) and Lack of funding at grassroots level
- Lack of feedback from government departments in sourcing potential clients
- Budgetary and time constraints

2. Lack of Project Description

- Relatively detailed design and project description is required to lodge an application for EA.
- Lack of guidance in terms of project management on their side creates gaps in the technical aspect of their project ideas, i.e.
 - Need to know the specific land parcels and land description
 - Details of the technical aspects and equipment
 - Waste output volumes, pollution levels etc.



Creates the need for a “**project incubation phase**” between the conceptual development and the EA process. Potential for government to appoint **incubation operators** (i.e. DTI/DAFF)

Current Projects: Mzimvubu River Catchment Rehabilitation Project

Background:

- Mzimvubu Water Project (SIP3) is a 10 year project- development of the Ntabelanga Dam to supply irrigation, domestic and industrial water and hydropower generation.
- Concern arised when the Mt. Fletcher Dam in the upper reaches of this catchment experienced high siltation rates.
- The Mzimvubu River Catchment (Maclear, Eastern Cape) is a heavily degraded system with steep gradients and high energy runoff.
- Very little topsoil left, historic land use practises lead to the degradation of the area (use of fire and continuous cattle grazing).

Aim of the Project

- Natural Resource Management (DEA) is undertaking the rehabilitation of this catchment to prevent/reduce sediment input into the dam basin.
- Hard and soft sediment traps, improvement of vegetation cover and soil fertility and structure.

CSIR's involvement

- Environmental Screening Study for one composting and one bio-char facility near the catchment to provide material for the improvement of soil fertility.
- This *pro-bono* study will form part of our “Special Needs” work.

Current Projects: Zibophezele Sugar Cane Cultivation

Background

- Cultivation of some virgin land to sugarcane on Inglebrook Farm (Mkhambatini Municipality, KZN)
- Zibophezele Community Trust is undertaking this project in order to create employment opportunities for local growers in the area
- Triggers a Basic Assessment in terms of:
 - **GNR No. 546 Activity 12** (Clearance of 300m², 75% is indigenous vegetation)
 - **GNR No. 546 Activity 13** (Clearance of 1 ha/more, 75% is indigenous vegetation)
 - **GNR No. 546, Activity 14** (Clearance of 5 ha/more, 75% is indigenous vegetation)

CSIR's involvement

- The intern team at CSIR with the assistance of a senior project manager will be conducting the **Basic Assessment** for this project.
- Mutually beneficial for the community trust and the experience and skills development of the interns.



Way forward for the programme

- Ongoing process to identify clients with suitable project specifications and solid feasibility designs (Incubation phase necessary)
- The need for engagement with private firms who may be able to provide input in terms of specialist studies (corporate social responsibility).
- Our clients have mainly come from KZN and the Eastern Cape to date, aiming for future engagement with other provinces in order to have a meaningful effect on development and rural upliftment.
- Continue to expose interns to “real-life” scenarios and allow them to gain the necessary skills to contribute positively to sustainable development in South Africa.



References

National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) (Act no. 107 of 1998) EIA Regulations. Republic of South Africa.

F.P. Retief (2014) Development of criteria for the selection of suitable candidates who deserve assistance with special needs in terms of EIA Regulation 70. North West University.