



## **INTERNATIONAL DISASTER RISK REDUCTION CONFERENCE: 20-21 MAY 2008 IN BLOEMFONTEIN**

### **SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT MENTORSHIP PROGRAMMES TO ACCELERATE DISASTER MANAGEMENT CAPACITY BUILDING**

*Chris Swiegers and Mzamani Khoza: Involved with Disaster Management Coordination in  
the Department of Water Affairs & Forestry*



## **Presentation structure**

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2. Disaster Management Capacity Requirements
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## 1. The South African Disaster Management Scene

- South Africa's translation from minority rule to a fully fledged democratic state during the early to mid-1990s enabled the country, amongst other things, to progress its approach towards disaster management from a largely reactive civil defence society to a society which entertains pro-active disaster risk management approaches, focusing on the prevention and mitigation of disasters.
- Since 1997, following on relevant Cabinet decisions during that year, pre-emptive disaster management in South Africa went through substantial Green Paper and White Paper processes, largely focusing on public consultations. These processes culminated in the promulgation of the Disaster Management Act (No 57 of 2002) during 2003. Subsequently the National Disaster Management Framework was published during 2005 in terms of Section 6 of the National Disaster Management Act.
- The National Disaster Management Framework is aimed at outlining a coherent, transparent and inclusive policy on disaster management for South Africa. The focus of the Framework is largely on disaster risk management, as is evident from its four key performance areas (KPAs) and three so-called enablers, which are:
  - o KPA 1: Integrated Institutional Capacity for Disaster Risk Management
  - o KPA 2: Disaster Risk Assessment
  - o KPA 3: Disaster Risk Reduction
  - o KPA 4: Response and Recovery
  - o Enabler 1: Information Management and Communication
  - o Enabler 2: Education, Training, Public Awareness and Research
  - o Enabler 3: Funding arrangements for Disaster Risk Management

The three enablers are necessary to perform adequately in the four key focus areas and the National Government is extremely serious about the education, training and public awareness components thereof.

- The National Disaster Management Act establishes an extensive disaster management structure for South Africa consisting of various hierarchical components, including:

- Local municipalities are not obliged to establish and maintain disaster management centres, but many of them do.

- A hierarchy of disaster management frameworks for the three spheres of government;
- A hierarchy of disaster management plans, broadly in line with the three spheres of government, in which relevant institutions position themselves to implement disaster risk management in line with the relevant disaster management frameworks, according to their budgets and capacities;
- A national disaster management information system (NDMIS) which should offer a wide spectrum of support and archiving functionalities to institutions which are involved with disaster and disaster risk management. The NDMIS disaster management structure as per the National Disaster Management Act is currently being established and largely informs the capacity requirements for disaster and disaster risk management resources, including the human resources component.





- The hierarchy of disaster management centres obviously requires a specific breed of disaster managers. They must be able to lead those institutions which report to them and those which look up to them for guidance, both in terms of policy and strategy development and implementation, and in terms of support and coordination during and in the aftermath of disasters. These disaster managers must be very well informed about all the operations, budgets and capacities of the spheres of government within which they work. They must have a working knowledge of intergovernmental relations and, above all, they must have excellent knowledge of the support possibilities and constraints between the various spheres of government, for instance, funding. The training requirements to provide suitable disaster managers for this purpose clearly lie in the realm of public administration, strongly based on the new disaster management legislation, together with generic disaster management principles and practices.
- Unfortunately this is not the only type of disaster manager needed. From a practical point of view, pro-active disaster management, based on risk reduction and mitigation, is largely driven in a line-function context, for instance through informed decisions by managers in the agriculture, water, transport, health, etc. Line-function departments in all three spheres of government require disaster managers which are trained/informed in respect of both the relevant line-functions, together with a large dose of the needs as outlined in respect of managers for disaster management centres in the previous paragraph.



### **3. Disaster Management Education and Training Status Quo**

- Apart from a limited number of diploma courses with limited scope, there is currently no specific under-graduate course for the training of disaster managers in South Africa. Targeted training for disaster managers is currently largely focused on post-graduate education and training.
- Various South African universities offer post-graduate disaster management training courses and the number is growing. For instance, the University of the Free State, through its Disaster Management Training and Education Centre for Africa (DiMTEC), provides their post-graduate disaster management students with a thorough schooling in most of the institutional and legal aspects pertaining to disaster and disaster risk management. The Cape Town University focuses strongly on disaster risk assessment in their post-graduate disaster management training. Similarly there are various other universities with their own specifically developed post graduate disaster management modules.

### **4. Government Support for Post Graduate Education and Training**

- During 2005 the Department of Science and Technology (DST) entered into an agreement with the Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) to financially support a number of graduates to enrol for a post-graduate course in Disaster Risk Management at the Free State University as part of their National Information Society Learnerships (NISL) Programme.
- The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) was appointed as the implementing agent for this three year programme and the management of the programme was done via a Steering Committee on which all participating institutions were represented. Around 15 students were selected for each of the first and the second intakes of students.
- Other leading national departments in the National Disaster Management Advisory Forum were also invited to serve on the Steering Committee, seeing that they also require disaster managers. With the financial contributions of the other participating departments this initial three year programme has been extended to support at least five intakes of students.



## 5. Government Mentorship Programmes

- The initial intake of students at the Free State University enrolled for an integrated Masters Degree which had to be obtained in a minimum of two years' time. This course consisted of a structured syllabus, culminating in the submission of a thesis, or rather, mini-thesis. Currently the students enrol for an honours level qualification, and thereafter, when they have successfully completed this level, they enrol for the master's level.
- Two groups of students: the working class and fulltime students.
- The Steering Committee referred to in Section 4 above decided that those parts of the two year study period which were not utilised for contact sessions or exams should be utilised to expose the candidates (fulltime students) to the real world of emergency and disaster management. Participating departments at all three spheres of government were requested to house these students on a rotational basis for at least four months at a time within their components which deal with emergencies and disasters.
- The institutions which currently participate in this mentoring process, following on an initial (five months) induction process in the CSIR, where the students receive focused training in issues such as technical report writing, computer literacy, etc., included the following:
  - o National Disaster Management Centre within the Department of Provincial and Local Government;
  - o Department of Water Affairs & Forestry;
  - o A limited number of provincial disaster management centres; and
  - o A limited number of municipal disaster management centres, amongst others the Tshwane (Pretoria) Metro Disaster Management Centre.





The initial practical experience is critical in that the rotational exposure and mentoring of the students carry huge benefits, inter alia:

- o Students receive hands-on experience of emergency and disaster management practices and procedures (risk management, funding, preparedness, etc.) within each of the three spheres of government, which differ vastly from one another
- o Students are exposed to both the line-function and disaster-related interactions between the three spheres of government, which is of crucial importance, especially in the case of major disasters
- o Students receive practical exposure to both everyday and disaster-related operations of relevant line-function departments
- o Students can study the dynamic interaction between line-function legislation and disaster management legislation in practice. It should be noted that the South African Disaster Management legislation is only operational to the extent that emergencies and disasters cannot be adequately attended to in terms of relevant line function legislation
- o Students are afforded the opportunity to select their preferred research areas into which they wish to specialize for purposes of their mini-theses in their final year of study
- o Students are assigned an academic study leader and a specialist technical advisor for assistance in their mini-theses





## 6. Conclusions

- The first batch of students has recently graduated. Irrespective of the sphere of government, or the line-function department, where these graduates will be employed, the view is that they can and will make a huge difference, due to their extended, accelerated exposure to the wider South African emergency and disaster management scene with all its role-players.
- The aim is to extend and improve this mentorship programme by, amongst others:
  - Including more governmental institutions to participate in the mentorship programme; and
  - Utilising more universities for the post-graduate training, thereby internalising more areas of disaster and disaster risk management expertise.
- **The view of most of the participants in this governmental mentorship programme for disaster and disaster risk managers is that pro-active disaster management will be firmly embedded in our everyday thinking when the managers that we train through this process and which are sensitized to the negative impacts of wrong decisions, start to occupy senior positions in our everyday life.**

*Thank you*