

From the Editor's Desk

It is with great excitement that we issue another bumper edition of Izwi lase OPSC. This thrilling edition comes a few days after we have celebrated Freedom Day. Who would forget 27 April 1994 when many South Africans patiently waited in long queues in order to usher in a new and democratic dispensation?

It was this memorable day, 13 years ago, that brought about hope for the future. It was this new dawn that steered us towards change and led to the formation of critical institutions such as the OPSC.

Looking back at the work of the OPSC since its formation in 1999, one cannot help but feel proud of the vast accomplishments achieved within such a short period. No doubt this came through hard work and dedication. These characteristics became even more evident in the last few months. Without a doubt, March and April were the busiest months for the OPSC; with numerous activities taking place almost simultaneously. These numerous activities became excellent fodder for this bumper edition.

In this edition, we feature articles on events that took place recently, namely, *Staff Information Session with the DG*, the *First Biennial Labour Relations*

Conference for the Public Service, the *Inaugural South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association Conference* as well as the *Inaugural International Human Resource Management Conference*.

We also bring you updates on the OPSC's contribution towards the fight against corruption as well as an article by one of the Interns who provides her views on the internship programme.

In conclusion, we would like to thank all those who took the trouble to send us ideas and contributions. Keep them coming!

We hope you like Izwi's new look as well as the content we have packaged for you. Enjoy it!

Ndi zwone!

The PSC upgrades its IT server room

Article by: Ezra Masango

Picture by: Patrick Mxolisi Mkhonza

In line with the PSC's disaster recovery plan and recommendations made by the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) on minimum IT security standards, the D: IT has just completed an upgrade of the server room. The project was started and completed during the last quarter of the last financial year. The upgrading was done in conjunction with XON Systems, an ICT service provider.

Says Sipho Ngcobo, Director: Information Technology: "A server is the backbone of any IT service and infrastructure. Without a server, we would not be able to enjoy the kind of IT service that we get on a daily basis. Moreover, a server requires substantial financial investment, and it is therefore very critical that it is secured against all sorts of losses, be it theft, tampering or even fire and flooding. It was with this hindsight that we embarked on the upgrading of the server room."

The new system features the latest technology; for instance, it sends SMS notification when there are changes in

temperature, power failures and flooding in the server room. There is also a sprinkler system, wire-mesh walls and fire-rated windows that will help control the spread of fire in the server room.

Ezra says that the project was seamless and was completed within budget and the required timeframe. "Planning, and I must say lots of it, accounted for much of our success. We can now all sleep at night knowing that we are protected against the unforeseen," he enthuses.



The new PSC
Server Room

The PSC accelerates the fight against corruption

Article by: Thembinkosi Laat

Last month saw the PSC augmenting its efforts to eradicate corruption in the public service. Testament to that was the launching of a week-long anti corruption advertising campaign as well as its participation in the National Anti-Corruption Forum (NACF) meeting held on 12 March.

“We need to constantly remind all public service employees that corruption is unlawful and detrimental to effective service delivery. The public also need to note that they have a role to play in eradicating corruption. This campaign was therefore aimed at mobilising all concerned,” explained Humphrey Ramafoko, Director: Communication and Information Services.

Regarding the NACF meeting, Roderick Davids, Director: Professional Ethics Research and Promotion, said that the focus of the gathering was on the role of the media in reporting corruption and the extent of corruption in the private sector.

“After robust debates, the general view that emerged was that the media should go beyond investigative reporting to include a more empowering and educational role in creating understanding of corruption, awareness of corruption reporting mechanisms and the rights of citizens. In addition, it was felt that positive developments in the combating of corruption should be reported upon more vigorously, and the need for diversification of the media was also noted.

“The meeting also emphasised the importance of a code of conduct for editors, the need for a public peer review of the media and the importance for the media to campaign for transparency within their own media houses. The significance of the NACF as a cross-sectoral body was noted. Overall, it was a fruitful meeting as this was the first time that different stakeholders were able to engage the media on its role in fighting corruption,” Roderick explained.

The meeting was also presented with the findings of a base-line study on corruption in the South African private sector. The purpose of the study was to assess the nature

and frequency of corruption within the private sector and the instruments and mechanisms that are used for preventing, detecting and responding to corruption. The study showed that bribes are often offered or demanded mostly by another company followed by third parties or intermediaries. It was also found that middle management is mostly involved in accepting and demanding bribes as well as offering and paying bribes.

“The NACF welcomed the report by business. Most importantly, the study confirmed that corruption takes place within the business sector as well as between the private and public sectors. It also showed that there are limitations in the corporate governance framework regarding specific anti-corruption facilities. The forum noted that deeper compliance to corporate governance is required. Nonetheless, it is encouraging to note that efforts are underway in the amendment to the Companies Act to strengthen this,” Roderick concluded.

“Most importantly, the study confirmed that corruption takes place within the business sector as well as between the private and public sector.”

NATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION HOTLINE FOR THE PUBLIC SERVICE

LET US FIGHT CORRUPTION TOGETHER

Corruption affects all sectors of our society. It is a particular problem for the Public Service as it affects its ability to deliver services to the community at large.

To report any act of corruption in the Public Service, please call the National Anti-Corruption Hotline for the Public Service at 0800 701 701

The Hotline number is:

- Toll-free;
- Accessible 24 hours a day in any South African official language; and
- Offers anonymity.

PSC co-hosts 1st biennial Labour Relations Conference

Article and Picture by: Sammy Morwe

The PSC joined hands with the PSCBC to co-host the first biennial Labour Relations Conference for the Public Service. The conference was held between 26th and 28th March at the Emperors Palace.



Delegates at the recent Labour Relations Conference

About 400 local, regional and international delegates attended the conference while 40 speakers delivered papers on various labour relations issues. Delivering her keynote address, Minister for the Public Service and Administration, Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi congratulated the PSC and PSCBC for organising the conference and for giving the delegates a platform to debate issues around labour relations. The Minister stressed the importance of dialogue as the cornerstone of labour relations and the need for harmonisation.

The conference succeeded in:

- Providing an opportunity for stakeholders to debate the latest trends pertaining to labour law and labour relations in the public service;
- Encouraging interaction between and among labour relations practitioners and other stakeholders in the field of labour relations in the public service;
- Creating a platform for the establishment of partnerships; and
- Exposing participants to diverse and provocative speakers

The sub-themes and commissions during the conference ranged from institutionalised dialogue systems to promote sound labour relations, the strategic positioning of human resource management in promoting sound labour relations,

the management of disputes and discipline to the role of labour relations in halving poverty and unemployment by the end of the decade.

There may not have been agreement amongst participants on all the presentations, but the information gained has provided delegates with enriched knowledge from which they can draw in the future.

An overview of some of the discussion that took place is as follows;

- The importance of dialogue as a prerequisite for collective bargaining was emphasized.
- Challenges posted by the ineffective application of human resource management practices to sound labour relations were highlighted. In particular, the apparent lack of attention paid to the implementation of these practices by public service management was identified as being problematic.
- The conference recognised the need to address disputes and grievances of employees through a structured approach and within prescribed time frames. The responsibility of departments to exhaust their internal dispute resolution procedures before referring disputes and grievances to institutions such as the PSC and the PSCBC was emphasised.
- As with dispute resolution the conference noted the importance of management in discipline of staff including the need for expeditious disciplinary processes.
- A landmark event for this conference was a discussion around the contribution that labour and the employer can make to growth and development in meeting the objectives of government.

In his closing remarks, the Chairperson of the PSC, Professor Stan Sangweni described the conference as a historic event and a resounding success. On the whole, said Professor Sangweni, the conference created a platform for knowledge sharing and debate. He added that a strong foundation had been laid for future conferences and that delegates need to consolidate the relationships that they had created by ensuring regular and meaningful activities around critical issues impacting on the workplace and workplace relationships.

PSC co-host the inaugural SAMEA conference

Article and Pictures by: Ben de Villiers

March 2007 was indeed a busy month for the OPSC; with many activities, including conferences, taking place. The South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA) conference was one of them. This inaugural conference was held from 28 to 30 March at the Birchwood Hotel and Conference Centre in Kempton Park.

Convened under the theme: "Monitoring and Evaluation in Action", the SAMEA conference was co-hosted by the PSC and the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ). It drew over 350 participants from government, NGOs, academia, and consultancies.



Prof Stan Sangweni
at the SAMEA
Conference.

The SAMEA conference featured 50 presentations with most speakers coming from South Africa as well as countries such as Egypt, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, USA, Australia, Germany, UK, Netherlands and India.

The objectives of the conference were to:

- bring together monitoring and evaluation specialists and users as part of SAMEA's mandate to promote the development of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) thinking and practice in South Africa;
- provide an opportunity for M&E specialists to take stock of what others are doing in the field and to provide an opportunity for participants to understand the state of development of M&E in South Africa;
- stimulate debate and research around M&E practice and its role in the society, given the specific development and service delivery challenges in South Africa;
- promote the integration of theory and practice in M&E; and
- publicise the existence of SAMEA and to promote its national and international profile.

The conference was a huge success having tackled and

provided insight on issues such as:

- monitoring and evaluation systems used in government;
- measuring progress in development cooperation projects;
- impact assessment of rural poverty alleviation; and
- new models for working with donor funded programmes.

In addition to the actual event, delegates were offered pre-conference professional development workshops starting on 26 March and ending just before the opening of the conference. These were hands-on, interactive sessions that provided an opportunity to learn new or hone existing skills.

We are proud to announce that Dr. Sefiso Khumalo has been elected as a Board Member of SAMEA; joining Indran Naidoo, who is one of the founding members of the association.



OPSC's Officials at the SAMEA Conference

HR Conference attracts HR Practitioners from across the globe

Article by: Kabelo Ledwaba
Picture by: Mxolisi Mkhonza

More than 300 HR practitioners from around the world convened in Cape Town for the inaugural International Human Resource Conference co-hosted by Public Service Commission and the International Public Management Association for Human Resources – commonly referred to as IPMA-HR.



Delegates at the IPMA Conference

With the theme *Building Public Sector Human Resource Capacity in a Developmental State*, the conference took place on the 19th and 20th April. The conference offered public sector HR professionals a platform to discuss challenges they face today.

Among others, the conference focused on:

- challenges in recruiting for the public sector in a development state and strategies in overcoming these;
- retaining a competent and productive public sector workforce;
- tactics on ensuring effective and sustained development of public sector employees; and
- building the ideal workforce – future challenges and strategies.

More than twenty speakers delivered presentation on a variety of topics, including:

- challenges in recruiting professionals for provincial service delivery;
- the war for talent: challenges and opportunities for the public service;
- challenges in applying affirmative action in the public service;
- retaining a competent and productive public sector workforce;
- creating commitment in public officials;
- the importance of Employee Assistance Programmes for a healthy and productive workforce;
- the human factor in building trust in government; and
- optimising public service delivery in all three spheres of government.

Outlining conference objectives to delegates, PSC Director-General, Odette Ramsingh, said that the impact of staff turnover such as the depletion of skills cannot be ignored.

"It has become quite apparent that staff retention strategies are crucial to the establishment of a competent and productive public sector workforce. It is my hope that the sub-theme dealing with retaining a competent and productive public sector workforce, will therefore unpack the various dimensions of this," she said.

In her keynote address, the Minister for the Public Service and Administration, Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, said: "Considering that more than one million people are employed in the Public Service, people are the Public Service's most valuable asset, and managing human resources effectively and strategically is the cornerstone of the broader transformation of the Public Service."

She added that the theme of the conference spoke to the critical need for the South African Public Service, in particular, to optimise the utilisation of staff and ensure that there is continuous performance improvement in the Public Service through the recruitment and retention of competent staff and their continuous development. "This can only be achieved if sufficient and detailed attention is given to the human resource management practices. We also need to give attention to the challenges with regard to job-hopping, especially within the Public Service," Minister Fraser-Moleketi said.

PSC spearheads skills development

Article by: Tinyiko Maluleke

Picture by: Thulisile Mthimunye

I must commend our government and the PSC in particular for a clear commitment to skills development and the fight against unemployment, especially amongst the youth. The internship programme is a commendable endeavour indeed!



OPSC's interns

While jobs seem not to be created as quickly as desired, the problem of unemployment is exacerbated by lack of skills and formal work experience. The internship programme is a sure way of alleviating unemployment, particularly among young graduates – providing them with practical work experience which eventually makes them marketable.

Even though the internship programmes is structured for a maximum period of 12 months; I certainly believe that with the right mentorship system in place and unwavering willingness amongst learners, a lot of valuable skills can be picked within such a short period.

In fact, I believe that the PSC internship programme is working extremely well. Take, for instance, the case of some of the interns who came before me and made the best of the situation, eventually proving their value. It is indeed encouraging for me to see the stride made by former interns. For example, Mxolisi Mkhonza, former IT intern is now permanently employed as Senior Network Controller while Dikeledi Nkhona, former HR intern is now permanently employed as Senior HR Practitioner and Lerato Monamedi, also a former IT intern who is now permanently employed as System Administrator.

It is not smooth sailing though. While as a student one will yearn to be employed, being in a work environment can be a sobering affair. After years of studying hard, most of us would have high expectations, particularly of salaries. Students also tend to believe that because they have qualifications they are therefore qualified and ready to tackle projects and responsibilities.

As an intern I had to quickly adjust my expectations and illusions about taking on projects and completing them without any difficulties. I had to adjust to the fact that there are many challenges to overcome, many things to learn, differing personalities to deal with, deadlines to be met as well as certain qualities to adhere to. For lack of a better word, I would say it has been a roller coaster ride. And everyday I look forward to the ride.

Once again, thanks to the PSC for the internship programme; who knows, I might still be roaming the streets with a brown envelop clutched under my armpit and cursing each and every NO VACANCY sign.

PSC Library gets a facelift

Article by: Joseph Malekana

Picture by: Tinyiko Maluleke

Some of you might have noticed the changes that came as a result of the completion of the first phase of the revamping of the Library. We are proud and excited to inform you that we have added new furniture, which no doubt makes the Library more appealing.

This revamping, which also included the redesigning of newspaper/reading area as well as a new computer workstation for IRC staff, was a humble attempt to ensure that you can relish our services in a pleasant environment.

In addition, we have created a boardroom that can easily seat eight people. The board room also has comfortable couches that can seat six people. You are most welcome to use the boardroom and can make your bookings through Nelly Lukhero (extension 1124) or through me (extension 1129).



PSC Library recently got a facelift

Phase two of the project is about to start and it will hopefully involve among others, new artwork, purchasing of relevant reading material, improvements on safe guarding reading material as well as continuous awareness regarding the use and availability of material.

I strongly believe that on completion of the revamping process, changes will be more evident and we will be in a position to serve you even better. We look forward to seeing you at our new Library.

PSC bids farewell to one of its longest serving members

Article by: Kabelo Ledwaba

Picture by: Thembinkosi Laat

Thursday, 26 April was a day of mixed emotions – a day of sadness and happiness. Sadness as we bid farewell to one of the PSC's longest serving member, Mr Johannes Pitsi. Happiness as friends and colleagues reminisced about the 'good old days'.

Hardworking, diligent, ever smiling, respectful, selfless, trustworthy, helpful and passionate were some of the many words that speakers used to describe Mr Pitsi.



Prof Sangweni and Mr Pitsi

"This is indeed an occasion that I would not have missed," said Professor Stan Sangweni. "Regardless of having had to work for 26 years as a temporary employee, he remained focused on his work. What sustained him was his dedication, commitment, diligence and hard work. In fact, I do not recall a single day when I was told that he was off work. Indeed he leaves behind a legacy after nearly 40 years of excellent service," said Professor Sangweni.

"Of course there were ups and downs. But he was never off sick. To you the younger ones, I would say use the little remaining time to check how he went about doing his work. Most importantly, learn to love your job more than the salary it comes with," advised Mr Johannes Kekana, Mr Pitsi's friend and former colleague.

Mr Alfred Maluleke, Mr Pitsi's former manager, described him as a hardworking person who truly loved his work. "He always did his work with a smile. He was a multi-skilled and valued 'handy man'. I clearly recall that we would not send any equipment to external repairs service providers without him checking the equipment first and ensuring that it could not be fixed internally. I am going to miss him very much. Socially, I knew him as an avid Kaizer Chiefs fan. In fact, at some point I stopped buying newspapers as he had all the updates – he was like a mobile fixture."

During the farewell proceedings, colleagues would now and then burst into song – singing the likes of '*ha ona ya tshwanang le yena*', a song reserved for the remarkable in society. As the song says, he is one of a kind. A rare breed indeed!



Left: Mr Pitsi and family

Right: Staff attending Mr Pitsi's farewell

Cheers to a Great 2007!!!

Words by: Thuli Mthimunya

Pictures by: Thembinkosi Laat

On 23 March, Director-General, Odette Ramsingh addressed head office staff in the first Information Session for 2007. In her address, the DG emphasised, among others, the need to create a friendly working environment for all employees. In addition, she also highlighted the importance of other employee incentive techniques such as performance rewards. The DG also encouraged staff to partake in extramural activities in order to create a balanced lifestyle.

A big thank you to the dedicated team which helped make this a successful event. To them, we say *na ngomso!*



Staff attending the Breakfast Information Session



DG addressing staff during the Information Session

Office Humour

WHERE WOULD YOU RATHER BE... IN PRISON OR AT WORK

IN PRISON...You spend the majority of your time in an 8x10 cell.

AT WORK...You spend most of your time in a 6x8 cubicle.

IN PRISON...You get three meals a day.

AT WORK...You only get a break for one meal and you have to pay for it.

IN PRISON...You get time off for good behaviour.

AT WORK...You get rewarded for good behaviour with more work.

IN PRISON...A guard locks and unlocks all the doors for you.

AT WORK...You must carry around a security card and unlock and open all the doors yourself.

IN PRISON...You can watch TV and play games.

AT WORK...You get fired for watching TV and playing games.

IN PRISON...You get your own toilet.

AT WORK...You have to share.

IN PRISON...They allow your family and friends to visit.

AT WORK...You cannot even speak to your family and friends.

IN PRISON...All expenses are paid by taxpayers with no work required.

AT WORK...You get to pay all the expenses to go to work and then they deduct taxes from your salary to pay for prisoners.

IN PRISON...You spend most of your life looking through bars from the inside wanting to get out.

AT WORK...You spend most of your time wanting to get out and go inside bars.

IN PRISON...There are wardens who are often sadistic.

AT WORK...They are called supervisors.

IN PRISON...You have unlimited time to read jokes.

AT WORK...You get fired if you get caught.

PREPARE YOUR SELF...

As salesman was assigned to secure an important client but failed in his mission. He SMSed his secretary and asked her to break the news indirectly to his boss. His note read, "Failed in securing client, prepare the boss."

He received the following SMS from his secretary: "The boss is prepared... prepare yourself."

WAGE NEGOTIATIONS

Employee: I have been here 2 years doing three men's work for one man's pay. Now I want a raise.

Boss: Well, I can't give you a raise, but if you tell me who the other two men are, I'll fire them.

ALWAYS GIVE 100% AT WORK

12% On Monday

23% On Tuesday

40% On Wednesday

20% On Thursday

5% On Friday