

Development projects a core part of business

SIMONE LIEDTKE | CREAMER MEDIA REPORTER

Owing to the role of groundwater resource development projects in the wider socioeconomic wellbeing of communities, consulting engineering company JG Afrika's geohydrology technical director **Mark Schapers** says these projects are fast becoming a core part of the team's business.

He explains that in-depth knowledge is essential to ensure the long-term sustainability of groundwater projects, which, while relying on political endorsement, depend on a technical and scientific approach in conception and implementation.

"Our team conducts technical requirements and deliverables to the highest levels possible. Also, a value-added approach, whereby the team consciously invests in awareness creation, and promotion of beneficiary buy-in at a

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MARK SCHAPERS

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water resource project, as well as client support, which includes awareness of groundwater as a resource, are some of the points of focus for the team."

Schapers adds that this holistic perspective has always been a signature trait of groundwater projects undertaken by JG Afrika and is

one of the reasons the company was appointed by independent project and construction services consultancy Ramgoolam Group as the professional geohydrologist for Phase II of the Department of Education's (DoE's) Water and Sanitation in Schools Programme, targeting the rural areas of the Midlands region of KwaZulu-Natal.

"We can't expect learners to excel in an environment that [lacks] the most basic services. Water and sanitation rank right near the top, with electricity an equally hot contender," Schapers explains, adding that the rural areas are being targeted for these projects, as they were poorly serviced in the past.

The project, which is being driven by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Public Works on behalf of the provincial DoE, appears to be the forerunner of a host of similar interventions that will significantly improve access to water and sanitation for learners in remote areas of the province.

"The project is now officially addressing Phase II of the water and sanitation project roll-out, and is not set to be completed in the near future, as it is dependent on future funding allocations," he explains, adding that the phase is set for a "fast-track" intervention.

Schapers further explains that JG Afrika applies a methodological approach to its projects, starting with thorough desktop studies and the detailed planning of activities up to

Consulting engineer develops process for projects

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PROJECT work for global engineering company Hatch's Environmental & Social Services Group (Hatch ESSG) is picking up significantly, owing to its continual evolution of the Hatch project life-cycle process (PLP), which includes a strong focus on integrating the social, community and environmental aspects of projects with the engineering and overall project management functions.

"The PLP embodies our complete approach to deliver projects throughout our clients' life cycle, from concept to execution and through to operation in a structured and phased method," says Hatch ESSG interim lead **Evert Jacobs**.

The PLP Documentation Framework prescribes the fully integrated project delivery philosophy and front-end loading phases,

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which include work processes, project documentation and organisation, as well as information systems required to equip projects and guide project delivery disciplines.

Jacobs explains that this framework applies to projects of any scale, with the necessary modification of applied documents and methods available for PLP for small projects.

"The key strength is in the way we integrate social and environmental requirements into engineering phases."

Jacobs mentions that, in this year, the company is applying the PLP to the setting up of a client's programme management approach to social spending as part of an infrastructure development programme.

"Requirements for the project include the development of strong social and environmental development integration within a larger construction programme," he adds, explaining that Hatch ESSG had to integrate social and environmental goals and targets into existing developments and across infrastructure programmes.



EVERT JACOBS

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Hatch ESSG is still in the very early stages of setting up the programme, Jacobs adds.

"The biggest benefit so far has been the unpacking of the project elements into smaller components that provide a better understanding of the deliverables required to meet the individual discipline – such as social, environmental and engineering – objectives within the larger development plan."

The next step, he explains, will be to tailor the projects within the overall programme