

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

28 August 2014

### **GIBB specialists stress sustainability at this year's IAIAA conference**

The theme of the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual National Conference of the International Association for Impact Assessment, (IAIAA): “*Metsi-Water-Amanzi-Mati-Madi: Sustaining Development for Life in Southern Africa*” brought into sharp focus the parlous state of the country's water supply reserves, its treatment and the way it manages wastewater.

GIBB played a significant part in this year's conference with the firm's General Manager to their Environmental and Sustainability Services Sector, Urishanie Govender taking one of the panel seats and three submissions from five of their employees.

Set against a background of frightening headlines such as ‘a looming crisis of monumental proportions’, ‘a multi-faceted crisis’, ‘a mismatch between water supply and demand’, the conference attracted expert opinion on ways to tackle possibly the country's most pressing issue, yet one of which most of the population are oblivious to.

Acknowledging that action needs to be taken to alleviate the critical situation in virtually all aspects of the supply and treatment chain, experts from leading South African engineering consulting firm, GIBB presented papers that offered sustainable solutions that considered all likely impact scenarios of infrastructure development projects.

Karien Erasmus, GIBB's Sustainability Manager drew the audience's attention to *The impact of large scale water infrastructure development* in her paper. “Large scale infrastructure developments impacts greatly on the environmental and social contexts at a regional and sub-regional level,” she said.

“However, the sustainability of large scale infrastructure projects, typically such as the development of dams, is sometimes challenged by issues related to ineffectively

*GIBB is the leading South African black-owned consulting engineering firm with a Level 2 Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) rating and a reliable network spanning the African continent. The firm occupies a market share of approximately 4% and delivers world-class solutions across a diverse range of markets. With over 55 years of experience, GIBB is the partner of choice for the private sector, parastatals and governments who seek knowledgeable people, expertise and excellence.*

managed social impacts and involuntary resettlement. Many large scale projects do not take cognisance of post resettlement monitoring procedures, and as a result, many communities are worse off than they were prior to being resettled.”

She added that addressing these issues requires a framework and model that recognise the related social issues relative to the region. An important component of this proposed sustainability model relates to pro-active and focused community engagement.

By way of an example, Environmental, Health and Safety Manager at GIBB, Roland David’s paper on the *Implementation of environmental, health and safety systems in the water supply industry*, examined the implementation of practical environmental, health and safety (EHS) systems critical to sustainable operations in the water supply industry.

“This is to ensure that risks to employees and the environment are clearly identified and mitigated, but this needs to be followed through and not ignored once the project is complete as it often results in an unsafe environment and ultimately impacts on worker productivity and community dissatisfaction with the implementation of projects such as these,” he said.

In this study, a risk assessment was undertaken for the Urban and Peri-urban Water Supply Project, using a five point scale, classifying risks according to their impact to the operations and the long term effect of the risk.

“Our initial conclusions indicated that the monitoring aspects of the EMP’s need to be implemented into EHS policies and procedures as soon as possible so that continuous monitoring is uninterrupted post construction,” warned David.

Ends

#### **Note to Editors:**

Leading South African black-owned consulting engineering firm, GIBB, announced its partnership with the largest architectural firm in the country, SVA. The partnership will strengthen the skillset of both companies and grow its confidence in Africa.

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With an impressive track record of delivery spanning over 70 years, SVA has successfully delivered over 1000 architectural projects.

In partnership with SVA, GIBB will now be able to offer clients a full range of architectural services including Master Planning, Urban Design and Building Design.

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