

## **PMSA WESTERN CAPE TO HOLD CAPE TOWN CONFERENCE**

**PETER E RICHARDS**

*Published in the Project Manager Issue 11 (December 2011), Cape Media, Cape Town  
[www.theprojectmanager.co.za](http://www.theprojectmanager.co.za)*

The discipline of project management has made inroads into every sector of human endeavour. Traditionally, we think of project managers in construction, civil engineering, mining and information technology but this is a very limited view. Project Managers are everywhere. They can be found in the energy sector in the provision of plant for electrical power and gas; the entertainment industry with the making of movies, television programmes, radio shows and events; in the finance and legal sectors with the restructuring of companies by mergers and acquisitions; in every branch of Government and public service; in the fields of research and development from medicine to kitchen gadgets; the transport sector in the production of motor cars, the building of ships, aeroplanes and trains; education; industrial manufacturing; defence; change management; consulting assignments; product launches and in many, many other industries besides.

An independent research project recently undertaken by the Services SETA determined that there were over two hundred thousand people in South Africa who either carry the designation or fulfil the function of a project manager in the workplace. Clearly, objectives of every kind are achieved by conceiving and delivering projects.

There are two sectors, however, where project managers are starting to play an increasingly important role. The one is Social Development (SD) and the other is Local Economic Development (LED). The success of these sectors will determine the level of transformation of South Africa and its prospects for the future. At present, the strategic goals of Government in the field of Social Development include transforming social relations, with a specific focus on gender and victim empowerment; the strengthening of institutional capacity to deliver quality services; and, the reinforcement of important bilateral and multilateral initiatives aimed at improving the lot of the poor.

The purpose of Local Economic Development (LED) is to build the economic capacity of a region in order to improve its economic future. The approach is bottom up rather than top-down, as is usually imposed by national planners.

The process starts at City level with a focus on business skills training, the fostering of entrepreneurial development, local competitiveness, the increasing of sustainable growth and ensuring that economic development benefits all the citizens resident in a particular area. In this regard, consideration is given particularly to factors like spatial planning in order to maximise the future advantages of economic clusters. The idea is to promote innovation and competitiveness. Emphasis is also placed on attracting domestic and foreign investment to provide the infrastructure necessary to strengthen the local economy and so help it maintain existing markets and also to give it access to new ones.

The private sector has also entered the arenas of social and economic development and they do so in an endeavour to demonstrate good corporate citizenship. It does so under the labels of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Corporate Social Investment (CSI).

Its main stimulus is the King III Report and the need to report against a triple bottom line originally expressed as “people, planet and profit” but which now includes an expanded spectrum of values and criteria for measuring organizational success in terms economy, ecology, and society.

The challenges of delivering projects in these sectors are enormous. Stakeholder collaboration and management present unique problems to ensure project sustainability. And, whereas Government has made every effort to restructure the regulatory framework and to establish new departments and agencies to facilitate delivery in these areas, there are still many broken links and a tremendous lack of organisational maturity. Silos abound and many operate with limited authority or even with severe statutory limitations.

The private sector also exhibits many dysfunctions of its own. For example, by conceiving projects that are poorly aligned to core business, underfunded, or which could be labelled as no more than misdirected philanthropy. And, it is in these environments that Project Managers must discover how to harness and manage available resources and deliver sustainable outcomes.

In the light of all these issues, the Western Cape branch of Project Management South Africa has decided to hold a conference in Cape Town towards the end of the first quarter in 2012 in an effort to provide a forum in which the challenges of project delivery in these sectors can be discussed.

It hopes that the Conference will attract wide interest from academia, government, non-profit organisations, international development agencies and the private sector. Details of the Conference will be available soon for publication on the PMSA website at [www.projectmanagement.org.za](http://www.projectmanagement.org.za)