

**Twenty-third Session
Vienna, 28 March – 4 April 2006**

**Item 13 of the Provisional Agenda:
Activities relating to the Working Group on
Evaluation and Implementation**

Capacity Building and Awareness Campaign (South Africa)

Capacity Building and Awareness Campaign (South Africa)

Introduction

After establishing Provincial Geographical Names Committees (PGNCs) in all nine provinces the SAGNC has taken upon itself to drive capacity building and an awareness campaign in all provinces in order to create awareness and address some of the challenges that were facing PGNCs. The process took place for the duration of three months beginning from May 2004 up until July 2004.

Challenges that were identified

All provinces have adopted different models aimed at ensuring the realization of their mandate as outlined by the South African Geographical Names Act (Act No. 118 of 1998). These models are based on the material condition per province but also to a limited extent on what the provinces identified as priorities.

Most provinces have not developed measurable business plans to direct their efforts to a core set of priorities and those with business plans are not implementing it religiously. This has translated into the work being implemented on a project-to-project basis. The following issues are regarded as key factors determining success rate:

- Financial Capacity of the PGNC
- Organizational capacity and the various skills needed
- Information gathering and processing
- Political buy-in and support at a provincial level
- Increasing public interest in the work of the committee

Positive things to build up on

- All provinces have established provincial committees, with modest equitable representation. There is still under representation of women and minorities. The

- committee skills profile of most committee members adds value to the work of most committee, e.g. universities, relevant institutions and traditional leaders.
- Since most committees utilize the services of non-committee members on an ad-hoc basis, there is no clear indication or strategy of utilizing the services of various professions in the relevant and value-adding fields (e.g. mapping, information technology, aviation, etc).
 - Since most committee members were appointed based on representativity. Most Committees operate as a collective rather than specific allocated responsibilities. And with an exception of one or two provinces, decision-making processes are to happen by consensus and the committee would not have to decide by voting.
 - All provinces have attempted to establish lower structures in the form of subcommittees or district/local committees.
 - The provinces have mainly been working in cooperation with the provincial department or their immediate agencies as the key provincial political and strategic support partners.

Conclusion

The naming of geographical features before this campaign has always been marred and characterized by controversy which has been perceived as political point scoring, reverse discrimination, assertions of unnecessary financial costs and lack of community and stakeholders consultation. These perceptions have been perpetuated by cases where litigation has been used to resolve disputes over naming process in Limpopo and the City of Cape Town. Even in cases of areas where the state or government had no direct influence like universities, had spilled over into other related issues like governance, credibility, priority, etc. However, if the naming process is managed properly and understood by all parties, it can mobilize communities behind a common nation-building vision, restore national pride and promote patriotism.

One thing that this campaign has been able to sell is that geographical names are used for a number of planning and development purposes (mail delivery, road mapping, municipal services, demarcations, telephone directories, aviation beacons). The current situation of name duplications and wrongly spelt names may continue to undermine the efficient delivery of these services. With these in mind, the scope of interest of the geographical names process is therefore expanded beyond the normal political point scoring of costs, minority rights, reverse discrimination, etc.