

**Over the past year, the Chief Directorate: Government and Media Liaison has consolidated a team of highly energetic and enthusiastic people dedicated to facilitating liaison within government about communication matters; building partnerships with the media and servicing it with information from the Government as well as developing strategies for the marketing of South Africa internationally.**

From 14 members at the beginning of 1999, the team has grown to 30 – representing a great diversity of experience and background. The team is now almost at full strength, having grown from two in mid-1998.

During the course of the year, the chief directorate was restructured to incorporate three directorates. However, owing to budgetary constraints, only one director was appointed during 1999. With the restructuring of the GCIS in November 1999, the name of the chief directorate was changed from Media Liaison to Government and Media Liaison, reflecting its work more accurately.

### Successes

Much of the year's work has been project-based, with great improvement in the project management skills of staff. Key innovations developed during the year include:

- The purchase of a video conference facility primarily to increase access to government news for journalists based either in Gauteng or Cape Town.
- Introduction of a 12-hour operations centre for government media work.
- A much improved system of e-mail communication with community media.
- Consolidation of plans to introduce a daily on-line news service on behalf of government – *Bua News Online*.

### Challenges

Key among the challenges facing the chief directorate are:

- Developing standard guidelines for the responsibilities

- of government communicators in relating to the media.
- Training staff to offer a service of better quality to the Government.
- Developing a programme of regular dialogue with journalists.
- Providing a better service to foreign correspondents on behalf of the Government.
- Developing, in co-operation with the Department of Foreign Affairs, improved information systems to South Africa's missions abroad and the diplomatic corps resident in South Africa.
- Providing support to the implementation of a South African marketing and communication strategy to targeted countries abroad.
- Further facilitating the transformation of government communication structures in line with the Comtask recommendations, and assisting with the development of communication strategies.
- Initiating an annual award system for government communicators.
- Offering more strategic support to the clusters of communicators which meet monthly to plan integrated programmes.
- To review the efficacy of arrangements for post-Cabinet media briefings.

### A. Directorate: Media Services

The Directorate: Media Services was intensely involved in media work to support the introduction of a new term of government during 1999, as well as a number of State visits, key government campaigns and an international conference.

In the first two months of the year the directorate worked on two major events, namely: British Prime Minister Tony Blair's visit to South Africa in January 1999, and the opening of Parliament in February. The latter attracted tremendous media interest as this was the last time former President Nelson Mandela addressed Parliament.

From March to May 1999 the directorate was involved in Human Rights Day activities and the HIV/AIDS train campaigns. The directorate also participates in the communication team on HIV/AIDS, in collaboration with the Department of Health. During March and May there were two HIV/AIDS train campaigns aimed at spreading awareness of HIV/AIDS to many parts of the country. The GCIS was also involved in the initial conception of communication plans around the X111 International Conference on AIDS to take place in Durban in July 2000.

In May 1999, staff were seconded to the Independent Electoral Commission to assist with media work around the general election in June. Accreditation was done for about 400 local and foreign media covering the election, and an operations centre was set up at the GCIS for the period.

In June, the directorate was involved in the overall planning and implementation of a communication strategy for the Presidential Inauguration. The GCIS was represented on the Inauguration Planning Committee and facilitated interviews with Minister Kader Asmal, chairperson of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on the Inauguration, and Deputy Minister Aziz Pahad, chairperson of the Inauguration Planning Committee. The directorate was responsible for the accreditation and pooling of about 800 local and foreign journalists.

After the election and Presidential Inauguration came the opening of Parliament in July and delivery of the new President's first State of the Nation Address. The GCIS media briefings were arranged according to the new cluster approach of the Government.

Other key campaigns between June and December for which the directorate provided media support included:

- The Municipal Demarcation Board.
- The announcement of the South Africa-Nigeria Binational Commission after the return to South Africa

of a team of Ministers led by the Deputy President, as well as the South Africa-Nigeria Dialogue Series press conference and dinner.

- Formulating a media plan for the launch of the Department of Trade and Industry web site in August.
- Media strategy for the Arms Procurement project.
- Arranging media liaison for the centenary commemoration of the Anglo-Boer/South Africa War.
- Media arrangements for the signing of the SA/EU Trade Agreement.
- Assistance to the Department of Foreign Affairs as South Africa hosted the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) during September, and joint preparations with the British High Commission (media) to prepare for the visit of Queen Elizabeth II to South Africa to coincide with CHOGM.
- The Y2K Communication Task Team.

During November the directorate assisted with media liaison for the Jobs Summit-related presidential visit to St Lucia, which had been declared a World Heritage Site. During December, the team arranged media liaison for the African Population Conference in Durban and the Southern African Region Consultative Conference which ran concurrently.

The directorate has also assisted the departments of Trade and Industry, and Transport with a media strategy and plan for the Taxi Recapitalisation project, and participated in planning sessions for an awareness campaign on disability and a communication strategy for Census 2001.

Ongoing work for the directorate has included:

- Arranging regular post-Cabinet media briefings.
- Continuous dialogue with community and local media formations, which included a roadshow during October to highlight the services of *BuaNews* to community and local media around the country.
- A training programme for staff to improve their writing, editing and media liaison skills. Other training courses

focused on public speaking, time management, project management and human resources development.

- Advanced planning to make *BuaNews* available on-line free-of-charge on a subscription basis from early in the new year. The *BuaNews* web page will be linked to the main GCIS web site at [www.gcis.gov.za](http://www.gcis.gov.za), and will include *BuaNews* stories as a service to community media, government media releases, a photo section, as well as links to other interesting sites. Because of constant marketing initiatives, there has been a marked increase in demand for the service.

## **B. Directorate: Client Relations**

### **Subdirectorates: Ministerial and Departmental Liaison**

Since July 1998, the GCIS has attempted to build greater integration and coordination into the communication efforts of the national Government through biweekly meetings of communication leadership. It sought to augment this with monthly cluster meetings, which would allow for more substantive discussions and joint planning.

In July 1999, the GCIS reviewed the effectiveness of these structures in achieving the objective of greater integration. Communication clusters were reorganised to mirror the new Cabinet clusters and clusters of Directors-General. This structure attempts to build greater levels of synergy between the programmes and policies of the Government, and its communication activities. The clusters are structured as follows:

- Social
- Economic
- Investment and employment
- International relations, peace and security
- Justice, crime prevention and security
- Governance and administration.

This section of the GCIS has been responsible for collating the communication strategies of Ministries, in line with the overall communication strategy presented to the

Cabinet by the GCIS in July 1999. Clusters and Ministries have been encouraged to apply the overall strategy to their programmes, messages and themes.

This approach has met with some success, and is introducing a greater sense of planning and coordination into government work. However, much still needs to be done to address training and capacity shortcomings within departments, to raise the level of professionalism among government communicators, and to inculcate within departments an appreciation of the primacy of communication in strategic planning and management decision-making.

A number of departments have begun to restructure their systems and approach to communication in line with the Comtask recommendations, and two questionnaires have been sent out to monitor progress in this regard. In addition, work sessions have been held with a number of departments with this end in mind.

### **Subdirectorates: Parliamentary Office**

This office represents the GCIS at Parliament, and is primarily responsible for servicing the information needs of the Parliamentary Press Gallery, Parliament and other service and international organisations based in Cape Town. In the latter half of 1999, the office adopted formal responsibility for the Information Resource Centre at Parliament, and plans are under way to staff the office with a dedicated information officer, pending budgetary allocations.

In addition, the Parliamentary office assists the GIC office with requests related to community and regional media in the province, where required.

The office was responsible for managing government communication related to the opening of Parliament in July. Information distributed by the office included, for example, the composition of the new Cabinet and highlights of policy and programmatic priorities announced by the new Ministers.

**It was also part of the team implementing the GCIS Parliamentary Briefing Week in August, and assisted with voter education material during the elections in the province. Cape Town-based support was given to a number of projects mentioned elsewhere in this report, and the number of public enquiries received by the office increased significantly over the year.**

**Subdirectorates: International Liaison**

This subdirectorates began in 1999 with only one deputy director, growing to include an additional deputy director, an assistant director and a principal communication officer by the close of the millennium. The year proved to be one of consolidation – servicing a diverse range of requests from government departments whilst at the same time comprehensively planning for the international challenges facing South Africa as we head towards the African Century.

Members of the subdirectorates have been involved in a range of projects, often in a leadership capacity. Among these are:

- Y2K
- National Human Rights Day
- Presidential Inauguration
- Jobs Summit implementation
- Defence Equipment Procurement Package
- President's United Nations Visit to address the UN and Investment Conference.
- SA-Sweden Week.
- Democratic Republic of Congo communication strategy.
- Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.

Project-based work during the year has been underpinned by an intense process of research and consensus-building in the Government, led by the GCIS, towards a Framework for an International Communication Strategy which was passed by the Cabinet during December 1999. As preparation for this approach, the GCIS, in consultation with the Presidency, the departments of Trade and Industry, Foreign Affairs, Environmental Affairs and Tourism, and Investment South Africa awarded Simeka TWS a tender to conduct baseline research into perceptions of South Africa with target audiences in eight key countries. The countries targeted in this seed research project were the United States of America, United Kingdom, Germany, Sweden, Japan, France, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates. More segmented market research needs to be done, as well as research into emerging markets. Together with the results of a survey into government departments' spending on international marketing, this resulted in the presentation and subsequent adoption by the Cabinet in December of an International Communication Strategy.

The key objective of the strategy is to provide a framework for a country marketing campaign for South Africa. During 2000 a dedicated project management team will be set up within the Government, comprising representatives from the departments of Foreign Affairs; Trade and Industry; Finance; Arts, Culture, Science and Technology; Sport and Recreation; Home Affairs, and Environmental Affairs and Tourism, the Presidency and the GCIS to design and manage a communication programme to implement the strategy.



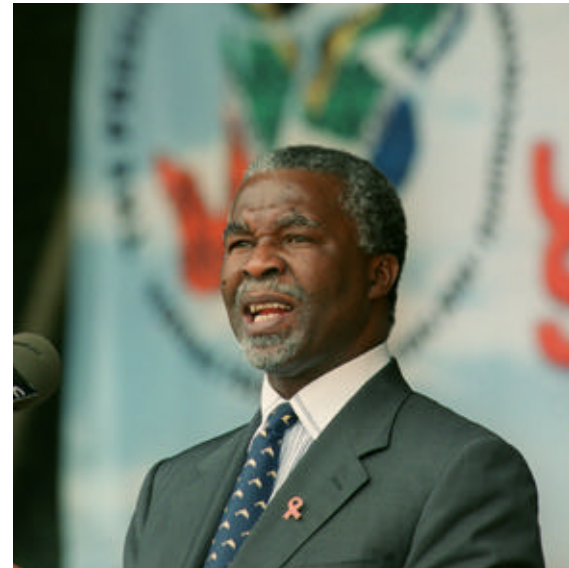
*GCIS seconded staff to assist the Department of Foreign Affairs with media liaison at CHOGM: Charl Manning and Farhana Paruk.*



*The Communication Centre at the GCIS.*



*The GCIS was actively involved in organising and planning of the inauguration of President Thabo Mbeki.*



*President Thabo Mbeki addressing thousands of people who braved the wet weather at the Jobs Summit Commemoration.*