

PART 3: INTRODUCTION AND PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

ABOUT GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATIONS (GCIS)

GCIS was established on 18 May 1998, informed by the work of the Task Group on Government Communication (Comtask), appointed by government in 1995, to investigate government communication.

In striving to provide leadership in government communication and ensure that the public is informed of government's implementation of its mandate, GCIS has become an integral part of government. Ground-breaking projects and initiatives, such as the Multi-Purpose Community Centres (MPCCs) and izimbizo, help to bring government's message to millions, encouraging them to build a South Africa that truly belongs to all.

SPREADING THE MESSAGE

GCIS activities are part of government's Programme of Action as set out in the President's annual State of the Nation Address. Government's messages to the nation are communicated in a variety of ways, through print products, community radio stations, and big screens, to name but a few. Braille products reach the blind. The use of new platforms to expand dissemination of information remains a constant challenge. This year's Programme of Action was captured in a five-part photo story which appeared in newspapers and which were translated in all official languages for distribution in magazine format.

EXPLORING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Another new initiative was a mass publication on economic opportunities produced on behalf of the Economic Cluster of the Forum of South African Directors-General (FOSAD). This campaign, using all the country's official languages, enabled communities to access information on economic and financial support, especially targeting those in the Second Economy. The first phase of this programme involved over 90 workshops in all provinces and the dissemination of 800 000 copies of the booklet. The positive reception of this effort informed a decision by the Cluster to expand the campaign in the next few years.

BRINGING GOVERNMENT CLOSER TO THE PEOPLE

MPCCs are bringing government closer to the people by providing access to information they can use to improve their lives, facilities, resources, training, and services matching community needs. Based at MPCCs alongside government are community-based organisations, non-governmental organisations, state-owned enterprises and business services such as telecentres with fax machines, computers and the Internet. The MPCC programme will be expanded from the current 66 to 284 by 2014, with each municipality having an MPCC.

The new Community Radio Satellite Network, set up in partnership with the Department of Communications, will make it possible for communities to get more information about the workings of parliament, government information and services as well as news about other communities and public affairs in general.

SHARING IDEAS AND BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

Government's izimbizo programme provides an opportunity for communities to build practical partnerships with government in the quest for a better life. It brings all three spheres of government closer to the people through direct interaction with communities. Through izimbizo, government takes its Programme of Action to the public to share ideas on working together to speed up implementation. During izimbizo, challenges are identified and solutions found to improve service delivery and the lives of all South Africans.

PROVIDING INFORMATION

The GCIS Information Service provides a central point where government and government-related information can be obtained. Information is provided from internal databases and external sources, or the client is referred to contact persons at relevant departments or bodies.

The GCIS facilitated the redesign of the national Coat of Arms and National Orders. These symbols are now representative of South African culture and history and have become deeply entrenched in our society.

The *South Africa Yearbook*, the only comprehensive official source of reference on the country, is published annually by the GCIS. Described by one reader as 'the poor man's laptop', the *Yearbook* continues to grow in credibility and popularity. It has led to two by-products, namely the *Pocket Guide to South Africa* and an interactive CD-ROM.

CO-ORDINATION ACROSS GOVERNMENT

Much of our work is done in interdepartmental project teams drawn from various line and support functions.

In total, 36 interdepartmental projects were co-ordinated by the GCIS Project Desk. Below are examples of some of the projects undertaken during 2004/05:

10 Years of Freedom – The Campaign popularised the *Ten Year Review* developed by The Presidency, helping to create a sense of perspective regarding the challenges facing South Africa in the next decade of freedom. It culminated in the Tenth Anniversary Celebrations and the President's inauguration on Freedom Day, 27 April 2004.

Youth Month 2004 – This Campaign, led by the National Youth Commission, urged young people to seize economic opportunities brought about by democracy.

Women's Month – The Campaign popularised government services and information that can assist South African women in improving their lives. To this end, a woman's mobile truck with officials from such departments as Trade and Industry, Health and Social Development criss-crossed the country to inform women about the opportunities arising from government's programmes.

National Orders award ceremonies – GCIS assisted The Presidency in planning and staging the award ceremonies during which National Orders were bestowed on individuals and foreign nationals who had performed extraordinary deeds in their areas of work. This included the production of promotional material.

Batho Pele Gateway was launched in August 2004, with a focus on nine MPCCs where General Service Counters had been established, as a pilot project, to assist citizens to access government services, among others through the Batho Pele Gateway. The communication campaign created public understanding about Batho Pele Gateway and the benefits it offers.

Human Settlement Programme – GCIS assisted the Department of Housing to develop a communication strategy for the Human Settlement Programme, to popularise the Programme and the objectives it seeks to achieve in line with the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

16 Days of Activism – This Campaign creates public awareness around matters related to gender-based and child-directed violence. Led by the Deputy Minister of Correctional Services and GCIS,

the Campaign has created wider awareness among the public about the need to unite against women and child abuse. It has also succeeded in building partnerships with civil society, faith-based organisations, the private sector, state-owned enterprises and the media.

BEHIND IT ALL

Since its formation in 1998, GCIS has changed dramatically to a dynamic and creative team committed to promoting an informed citizenry who are active agents in shaping their own lives and the future of the nation together.

