

Water and Sanitation in the News

SA engineers condemn hiring of Cubans for water projects

The employment of 34 Cuban engineers by the Department of Water Affairs and Sanitation has caused an uproar in local engineering circles. In February, Water Affairs and Sanitation Minister Nomvula Mokonyane welcomed the Cubans to SA to work on a number of projects to refurbish crumbling water infrastructure.

However, the South African Institute of Civil Engineers has slammed the recruitment of the Cubans, saying local engineers would have applied for the jobs if they had been offered the same incentives as the Cubans in rural communities, national and provincial infrastructure departments and local authorities. The estimated cost of employing the Cuban engineers, who arrived in SA on February 17, is about R50m a year. "The money spent on establishing and accommodating these engineers in SA could possibly be better spent relooking at current salaries and working environments in these areas to the benefit of civil engineering professionals, a number of whom are unemployed, thereby creating sustainable jobs within SA," the institute said.

Consulting Engineers SA (Cesa) president Abe Thela said his association was appalled by the Department of Water and Sanitation's action. The Cubans' arrival follows a bilateral agreement that SA and Cuba concluded last year for co-operation in water resources management and supply. Mr Thela warned that the recruitment was worrying since Cuban engineering skills were not recognised by the Engineering Council of SA, because Cuba was not a party to the Washington Accord, which governs international engineering qualifications. "Our member firms are currently only being 60% utilised and have 40% spare capacity, while they are waiting for the government to bring projects on stream," Mr Thela said.

On Wednesday, the civil rights organisation AfriForum submitted 54 CVs to the Department of Water and Sanitation in Pretoria today, saying that South Africa is rich in qualified and experienced water engineers and specialists who want to work in the country and help solve the water crisis.

Source: *Business Day*, 02 March 2015 & *Politicsweb*, 03 March 2015

The availability of skills are certainly critical to solving South Africa's water challenges, which makes *training* one of the most important aspects of the **Municipal Assistant™** system. Learning and utilising the system, the skills of staff at water and wastewater facilities of local municipalities and industrial plants are developed, which improves the management and maintenance levels of water treatment facilities and associated infrastructure. The primary focus is to empower municipal users to access their assets, staff details and the status of their water quality, also keeping Blue and Green Drop assessments in mind. Users are equipped with those essential knowledge and skills that will enhance the capacities of municipalities in meeting their responsibilities of supplying good quality drinking water.

In addition to skills development, the keeping of detailed records of staff and their skills is one of the key features of the Municipal Assistant™ system. A series of short video clips on various modules of the MA System are presented on its website - explaining how things work. The first in the series is *Staff and Skills*.



Follow this link to view the video clip or click on image for [Municipal Assistant - Staff and Skills](#)

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