



Co-operation and Development Projects: An African Perspective

HA Mofutho Footbridge at Quasha's Nek, Lesotho

Gerrit Armoni Visser
Civil Engineer
Royal HaskoningDHV,
Pietermaritzburg, South Africa
gerrit.visser@rhdhv.com



Gerrit Visser, born 1968, received his Masters degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa. He has over 20 years bridge experience and has been involved in numerous bridge projects, ranging from pedestrian bridges to road interchange bridges. Gerrit has a passion for the design of bridges and this has led to many project awards where he has been actively involved as the design specialist.

Summary

The Kingdom of Lesotho is faced with high levels of unemployment and poverty, especially in the rural areas. The local community at HA Mofutho near Quasha's Nek (Lesotho, Africa) was separated from health clinics, markets and employment by the Senqu River. Royal HaskoningDHV was appointed by the Kingdom of Lesotho's Ministry of Public Works and Transport and tasked with the design, and construction supervision of a footbridge to improve the lives of approximately 2,000 people affected by the costs and risks of crossing the Senqu River [1].

Sustainability was to be considered a high priority during the design, construction and maintenance phases, with the emphasis on the people component. In close co-operation with the client the following sustainable development opportunities were identified and realised through this project:

- Construction management skills were transferred to the Roads Directorate's personnel,
- Road Directorate staff were trained in service on site supervision,
- Enterprise development: assisting the local contractor companies to improve their commercial and technical skill sets
- Employment and training of local labour.

The education, development and skills transfer that took place, together with co-operation and relationship-building with all major stakeholders will serve to equip the stakeholders and community to contribute significantly in future projects within the greater Lesotho area.

In recognition of this project's contribution to co-operation and development, this footbridge was awarded the Walter Barnett Trophy (Overall Winner) and the Infrastructural and Community Development Category winner at the South African Hot Dip Galvanizing Awards 2013.

Keywords: footbridge; co-operation; development; skills transfer; job creation; community empowerment; African perspective.

1. Introduction

In the past, the outcomes of a civil engineering project were measured mostly on a technical basis. Now in the 21st century, it has become just as important for engineers to apply a more holistic approach to engineering - taking into consideration outcomes such as social impact and sustainability impact of the project [2].

The Lesotho Ministry of Public Works and Transport unveiled its ten-year strategic plan in July 2010, highlighting the goal of an efficient, effective, safe and well-developed transport network that promotes investment and reduces poverty [3].