



Environmental Impact Assessment (DEA Reference: Dam Construction: 14/12/16/3/3/2/677, Electricity generation: 14/12/16/3/3/2/678, and Road infrastructure: 14/12/16/3/3/1/1169) for the infrastructure components of the Department of Water Affairs

Mzimvubu Water Project

BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT (BID)

Invitation to register and comment, 23 April 2014 - First Document for comment

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

The purpose of this document is to afford stakeholders the opportunity to register as interested and affected parties (I&APs) in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and to obtain their initial comments on, and contributions to the proposed Mzimvubu Water Project located in the Tsitsa River Catchment, Eastern Cape Province.

I&APs can register by completing the registration form attached, write a letter, call, fax or e-mail ILISO and request to be added to the database. All documents will be made available for review at a local location or can be downloaded from the website (at <http://www.dwaf.gov.za/projects.aspx>) Stakeholders will be notified when and where documents will be available for comment.

Public Participation Team

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PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Mzimvubu River is the largest undeveloped water resource in South Africa and the benefits to be derived from the use of this river are potentially of national importance.

The Mzimvubu River catchment in the Eastern Cape of South Africa is within one of the poorest and least developed regions of the country. Development of the area to accelerate the social and economic upliftment of the people was therefore identified as one of the priority initiatives of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government.

Harnessing the water resources of the Mzimvubu River, the only major river in the country which is still largely unutilised, is considered by Government as offering one of the best opportunities in the Province to achieve such development. The Department of Water Affairs (DWA) has therefore commissioned the Mzimvubu Water Project with the aim of developing a water resource scheme comprising two multi-purpose dams in order to provide benefits to the surrounding communities and to provide a stimulus for the regional economy, in terms of domestic water supply, irrigation, and hydropower generation amongst others.

A preliminary study was done and, in August 2013 the Ntabelanga site on the Tsitsa River was confirmed to be the best in terms of domestic and irrigation water supply, and regional development potential. This study also indicated that the viability of the project was greatly enhanced when developed in conjunction with a hydropower scheme, which has the potential to improve the economic viability of the project. A dam at the Laleni site, which had previously been identified by Eskom, also on the Tsitsa River, upstream of the Tsitsa Falls, was considered to be viable for hydropower generation.

Detailed planning investigations for the Ntabelanga and Laleni sites (**Figure 1**) have been completed besides optimization for hydropower generation that is still ongoing. The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process was recently initiated and is expected to be completed by early 2015. Environmental Authorisation will be required for various infrastructure components of this project, including dams, weirs, road realignments and upgrading, domestic water supply pipelines and reservoirs, raw water pipelines, pumping stations, hydropower generation plant, a Water Treatment Works (WTW), a Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW) and power lines.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT AREA

The Tsitsa River Catchment is situated in the Eastern Cape (EC) Province of South Africa.

The project footprint spreads over three District Municipalities (DM), namely the Joe Gqabi DM to the north west, the OR Tambo DM to the south west and the Alfred Nzo DM to the east and north east. The Ntabelanga Dam is proposed to supply potable water to approximately 539 000 people, rising to 726 000 people by year 2050. A significant portion of the potable water supply schemes in this area will fall under the OR Tambo and Joe Gqabi DMs, with smaller portions falling under Alfred Nzo DM.

Additionally, the feasibility study has identified 2 868 ha of high potential land suitable for irrigated agriculture (**Figure 1**). About 2 450 ha of the land lie in the Tsolo area and the rest near the dam and along the river. Agricultural land will be supplied with raw water pumped from Ntabelanga Dam and in some places water will be pumped through pipelines from the nearest river abstraction point on the Tsitsa River, downstream of the dam.



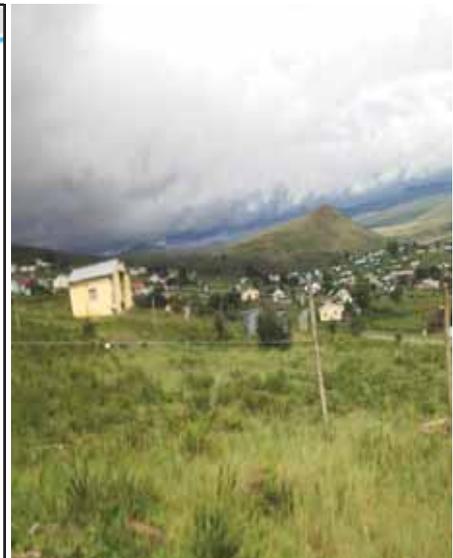
Figure 2– photographs taken of the proposed sites during March 2014 where a) Proposed Ntabelanga Dam basin site; b) Proposed Laleni Dam wall location; and c) Tsitsa Falls.

AIM OF THE PROJECT

The Mzimvubu Water Project is a Strategic Integrated Project (SIP3 project). The main aim of the Project is the socio-economic upliftment of the largely undeveloped and impoverished communities within the Mzimvubu River catchment area.

Socio-economic upliftment is expected to be achieved through:

- Supply schemes for domestic and industrial water requirements;
- Supply schemes for irrigated agriculture;
- Hydropower generation;
- The creation of temporary and permanent jobs; and
- Spin-off benefits.



HYDROPOWER GENERATION

Both the Ntabelanga and Laleni Dams will have hydropower components. A larger hydropower generation scheme will be built at the Laleni Dam. The power generated by these schemes will be fed into the national grid.



What is an EIA?

An EIA is a good planning and decision-making tool. It identifies the potential negative and positive consequences of a proposed project or development at an early stage, and recommends ways to enhance positive impacts and to avoid, reduce or mitigate negative impacts. The EIA findings will also inform further technical and financial investigations and decisions. The EIA is undertaken in terms of section 24C of the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA), Act No 107 of 1998.

Public participation is an important aspect of any EIA, with the objective to assist stakeholders to table issues of concern, suggestions for enhanced benefits and to comment on the findings of the EIA. The Public Participation Process (PPP) is designed to provide sufficient and accessible information to Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs) in an objective manner, in order to assist them to:

- Raise issues of concern and make suggestions for alternatives and enhanced benefits;
- Contribute local knowledge;
- Verify that issues have been captured correctly and considered by the technical investigations; and
- Comment on the findings of the EIA.

Additionally, the EIA Regulations require that an Environmental Management Programme (EMP) be developed in order to explain how to operate and implement environmental protection recommendations from the EIA for the construction and operational phases. The provisions of the EMP will become legally binding to the DWA and its Contractors.

The EIA Process. What does it involve?

The DWA, Provincial Government, various other authorities, environmental and technical specialists and stakeholders will work together in the EIA process. The EIA consists of two phases, the Scoping Phase and the EIA Phase. These phases will include:

- Early consultation with a broad range of stakeholders, landowners and communities in the vicinity of the dam sites and bulk water distribution infrastructure;
- Technical consultation with local experts and specialists;
- Consultation with provincial, local and traditional authorities on integrated planning and development strategies;
- Assessments by several specialists through the Impact Assessment Phase to assess the potential impacts of the project;
- Authority and stakeholder comment at each phase during the EIA process; and
- Authority decision-making.

Two reports will be produced through this process, the Scoping Report and the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) accompanied by the EMP. These reports will be made available to I&APs for review and comment.

BORROW AREAS

In terms of the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Amendment Act, 2008 (Act No. 49 of 2008) (MRPDA) and its associated Regulations, R527 of 23 April 2004, the Department of Water Affairs (DWA) as an organ of state holds a general mining licence and does not require a specific mining licence per site for borrow areas. However, DWA is required to compile EMPs for approval in terms of the provisions of section 39 (5) of the MRPDA.

WATER USE LICENCE APPLICATION (WULA)

Running concurrently with the EIA investigations is the process of obtaining a WUL. The project triggers activities in section 21 of the National Water Act (NWA) Act No 36 of 1998; (a) taking water from a watercourse; (b) storing water; (c) impeding or diverting the flow of water in a watercourse; (i) altering the bed, banks, course or characteristics of a watercourse. The proposed water treatment plant will also trigger (f) discharging waste or water containing waste into a water resource through a pipe, canal, sewer, sea outfall or other conduit.

THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

The public participation process will be conducted by ILISO Consulting (Pty) Ltd in accordance with Chapter 6 of the EIA Regulations, 2010, as amended.

In order to ensure that your concerns are considered during the EIA process you are invited to register as an Interested and Affected Party (I&AP) by completing the attached registration form and submitting it to Ms Kim Dalhuijsen (details provided below) within 14 days of receipt of this Background Information Document (BID). Notification of meetings and documents available for comment will be sent to all registered I&APs.

As part of the two phase EIA process, a draft Scoping Report will be compiled and made available to the I&APs for a public comment period. All issues and comments received during the public participation process will be captured in an Issues and Response Report (IRR) and will be incorporated into the final Scoping Report. The IRR will form an appendix to the final Scoping Report that will be submitted to the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) for approval and made available for a further public comment period.

Once approval for the Scoping Phase has been acquired, the EIA phase will commence. A draft EIR will be made available to all stakeholders who have registered as I&APs for a public comment period. All comments received will be added to the Scoping Phase IRR. The amended and updated IRR will form an appendix to the final EIR that will be submitted to DEA for approval and the activities authorised. The final EIR will be made available for a further public comment period.

CONTACT DETAILS



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APPLICATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AUTHORISATION FOR THE INFRASTRUCTURE COMPONENTS OF THE PROPOSED MZIMVUBU WATER PROJECT

BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT

**DEA Reference: Dam Construction: 14/12/16/3/3/2/677, Electricity generation:
14/12/16/3/3/2/678, and Road infrastructure: 14/12/16/3/3/1/1169**

Please complete and return to Kim Dalhuijsen or Joseph Masilela at ILISO Consulting (Pty) Ltd

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Title		First Name	
Initials		Surname	
Organisation			
Postal Address		Postal Code	
Street Address			
Tel Number		Fax Number	
Cell Number			
E-mail			

Comments: (You may use a separate sheet if necessary)

Please state your interest in this project (i.e. Affected landowner, Contractor seeking work opportunity etc.)

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The following issues must be considered during this EIA.

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Please add the following individual(s) to your mailing list.

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We thank you for your participation!