

Working for Water

Invasive species are causing billions of rands of damage to South Africa's economy every year, and are the single biggest threat to the country's biological biodiversity. Equally worrying is the fact that these species undermine ecological integrity – and, when the land's ability to produce is compromised, social issues like poverty and unemployment inevitably follow. **Working for Water**, has been recognised internationally as one of the most effective programmes to address the problem of Invasive Alien Plants (IAPs), combining environmental issues with social development objectives.

Since its inception, *Working for Water* has invested more than R2 500 - million to clear invasive alien vegetation and establish programmes in over 300 areas. Roughly 20 000 short - term jobs have been created on an annual basis, providing employment opportunities for local community members, with a special focus on securing opportunities for the marginalised, such as women, youth and the disabled. By participating in the programme, workers are not only given the opportunity to develop new skills, but they also have access to HIV and Aids projects, childcare facilities and primary healthcare initiatives.

The programme is administered through the Department of Water and Forestry and works in partnership with local communities, to whom it provides jobs, and also with Government departments including the Departments of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Agriculture, Trade and Industry, provincial departments of agriculture, conservation and environment, research foundations and private companies.

The core business of the *Working for Water* programme is to contribute to the sustainable prevention and control of invasive alien plants, thereby optimising conservation and the use of natural resources. In doing so, it will address poverty relief, and promote economic empowerment and transformation within a public works framework.

Campaigns such as WeedBuster Week provide the opportunity for Working for Water to raise awareness of its activities, and bring the importance of invasive alien species control to the public's attention. While WeedBuster week specifically highlights the problem within South Africa, it is linked bilaterally to Australia and New Zealand and through multilateral agreements, to the broader Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP).

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water & forestry

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