



**THE SHELL ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AWARD:
ASSUMING RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR ENVIRONMENT**



The Shell Environmental Management Award was sponsored by Shell Namibia Limited from 1991 to 1998, as an incentive for project teams to incorporate the diversion of resources, such as land, capital, and manpower, towards conserving biological resources, and to facilitate the participation of certain groups or agents in work which will benefit these resources. The Engineering Professions Association of Namibia is proud to have been associated with this award in the role of facilitators.

The award, in rewarding excellence in environmental engineering practice in Namibia, had an additional important objective in encouraging the further development and growth of the Namibian engineering industry. Namibia is well-supplied with its own engineering expertise, including dealing with multi-disciplinary projects, in collaboration with international expertise when that is

necessary. It is a form of affirmative action to ensure that, whenever possible, Namibian engineering firms should be involved in Namibian projects.

About two-thirds of Namibia's population is living in absolute poverty. Whatever living they manage to eke out is directly dependent on the natural resources to which they have access. This means that for the majority of Namibia's population there is a direct and inseparable link between their own well-being and that of their natural environment. A progressive deterioration of the natural resource base makes it increasingly difficult for the majority of Namibia's people to provide for even the most basic necessities of life, such as adequate food, shelter and safe drinking water. There is no better case in point than the currently persisting drought situation, the seriousness of which requires no further elaboration to any Namibian.

All this means that the long term economic and social development of Namibia requires the effective management and most efficient use of Namibia's natural resources to achieve the Government's aims of poverty alleviation and the development of Namibia's people. The development process becomes easily frustrated when the natural resource base is degraded by factors such as soil erosion, deforestation, desertification, overgrazing, demographic pressure and the pollution of land, water and air. Pressed by poverty, people are compelled to exploit the natural resources in their immediate environment unsustainably or to migrate to urban areas where they cause a further strain on already highly strained public services. To compound Namibia's already pressing situation of poverty, at the present rate of population growth Namibia's population will have doubled by the year 2020. It is easy to see that, without sound environmental and population management strategies, Namibia will be caught up in a vicious cycle of decreasing natural resources and increasing poverty.

The future development of Namibia requires a concerted effort from its entire people to respond to the environmental challenges and to counteract unsustainable economic development. Such efforts must include managing demographic pressures, implementing sustainable methods of agricultural production, restoring degraded lands, developing alternatives to fuel wood and managing water resources efficiently. Considering the cross-sectoral nature of environmental issues, an integrated approach to environmental management is necessary, incorporating environmental considerations at an early stage in development programmes and projects. Such an integrated approach to environmental management would entail consideration of all the diverse elements of the environment — biophysical, social, economic and aesthetic — in all stages of the project development to arrive optimal, sustainable solutions.

In this, the engineering professions have a leading role to play. Engineers are involved in construction, in the production of energy and in manufacturing processes - the design and construction of hydro-power and irrigation dams, the development of communication systems including modern high-speed railways, road, air and water transportation, telecommunications, buildings including residential houses, offices, medical and recreational facilities, clean water supply and sewage disposal. Without the modern computer-engineering technology, automation and the information age that is rapidly combining all nations of the earth into a global village, would not have developed. Engineers contribute to the design and development of processes which create a wide variety of products and materials that enhance the quality of life. The engineering professions aim to prevent many diseases before they occur, by providing clean water, proper waste and sewage disposal and by developing agricultural engineering - the "green revolution" - for growing, harvesting, processing, storing and distributing food supplies to the point where they will be adequate for the whole population. Last, but not least, the engineer's services are also crucial in improving safety and in protecting the environment, as well as in helping to mitigate and recover the effects of natural and man-made disasters and calamities.

Namibia's "Green Plan" states that: "Namibia's goal is to secure for present and future generations a safe and healthy environment, and a sound and prosperous economy." Among others, the Plan proposes this to be achieved by developing "an environmentally literate society in which citizens have the knowledge, skills and values necessary for appropriate action." The "Green Plan's" final conclusion is that the "achievement of sustainable development will be a challenge for Namibia - and through commitment, partnership and consultation, that challenge can be met."

The Engineering Professions Association, as a voluntary association of engineers, technicians and other professionals active in engineering related fields, with the broad aims to promote the engineering professions and to ensure high levels of professional competence and integrity of work, has taken up the challenge on behalf of the Namibian engineering fraternity.

With the Right Honourable Prime Minister assuming the patronship of the Shell Environmental Management Award, the Government of Namibia has visibly joined developers and industry in a tri-partite partnership, which proudly presented the Shell Environmental Management Award as an incentive to decision-makers, financiers and developers to marry environmental care and economic objectives, thereby supporting the achievement of Namibia's "Green Plan" goals.

The basis of adjudication for the Award has been taken from "Caring for the Earth", the 1991 Strategy for Sustainable Living promoted by WCV, UNEP and WWFN. Entries are rated according to their compliance with the following criteria:

- (i) Improvement of the quality of human life
- (ii) Use of technologies that enhance the Earth's carrying capacity
- (iii) Providing a framework for integrating development and conservation
- (iv) Respect and care for the community of Life
- (v) Conservation of the Earth's vitality and diversity
- (vi) Keeping within the Earth's carrying capacity
- (vii) Changing personal attitudes and practices
- (viii) Enabling communities to care for their own environment
- (ix) Minimizing the depletion of non-renewable resources.