

# Environmental management during construction, a balancing act

## The facts

- The Lesotho Environment Act (Act 10 of 2008) requires detailed Environmental and Social Impact Assessments and Environmental Management Plans for all infrastructure development projects
- Environmental management entails protecting the physical, biological, social and cultural environment
- Permission to proceed with construction is only granted when all environmental protection criteria are met
- Lesotho's Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture issued Records of Decision for the construction of the Polihali Western Access Corridor (PWAC) ESIA and the Polihali Reservoir and Associated Infrastructure (PRAI) ESIA that included the Polihali Transfer Tunnel and Major Bridges, in 2018.

“The Records of Decision cleared the way for construction to start. The LHDA Environmental and Social Action Plans are taking place in

parallel to the construction. Careful oversight of compliance helps to ensure the least possible environmental impact,” confirms LHDA's Phase II Divisional Manager, Ntsoli Maiketso. “This is entrenched in the LHWP Treaty and the Phase II Agreement.”

## Phase II - protecting the physical, social and cultural environment

### LHDA's Environmental Management plans address:

- Environmental Flow Requirement monitoring
- Wetlands management
- Integrated Catchment Management
- Biodiversity
- Social Development
- Public Health
- Resettlement

“Environmental impact management standards on the LHWP are very high. We conducted environmental compliance training with our employees to ensure compliance. Mitigating construction impacts on the environment and communities are critical at every site,” states Ms Rorisang Rantsane, the Polihali Investment Consultants (PIC) Advance Infrastructure consultant's, Environmental Manager.

Careful management of controlled blasting; of water consumption, waste disposal, dust and noise pollution and of the use and disposal of hazardous materials are some of the activities managed at every construction site, as is the rehabilitation of the environment on the completion of construction.

“Strict and auditable processes ensure that all waste is disposed of safely off site. Our oil waste, for example, is disposed of at approved designated hazardous waste disposal sites in South Africa,” states Mr Sebili Petlane, Environmental Manager at the MSKC Joint Venture, supervising the construction of the Polihali diversion tunnels.



*Dust control on the PWAR*



*Polihali Villaae access road – area rehabilitation*

Protecting the nation’s cultural heritage is similarly being carefully managed. This goes hand in hand with community consultation taking into consideration the concerns and interests of the people in the Project area. Mrs Felling Ramajake, Environmental Manager at AECOM, the consultant who is supervising the construction of the Polihali Western Access Road (PWAR) and the Rehabilitation of the Northern Access Road (NAR), says maintaining good community relations is key to the implementation of the road construction programmes. “We have consulted with traditional and spiritual healers to identify protective stones and sacred pools along the road servitude and adhere to strict protocols when working near these areas. We engage with communities to ensure that our activities are considerate of the cultural values and practices.”



*Spiritual healer at sacred pool*



*Protective Stone at Ha Tihakola*

Just as environmental management is a Phase II priority, occupational health and safety is also integrated into construction activities. Safety management at each construction site is closely monitored and is subject to audit by independent safety, health, and environment and quality (SHEQ) auditors.

Environmental management entails protecting the physical, biological, social and cultural environment while ensuring construction progresses.

**Environmental experts provide continuous construction oversight to ensure environmental quality control and assurance.**