



## CORPORATE SERVICES

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Corporate Services (CS) provides support to the ten HSRC research programmes and to the corporate functions, for example, the business planning and budgeting cycles. The support comprises human resources, building and facilities (operations), information technology, information services and project finance.

CS has striven to achieve continuous improvement in all its activities through the implementation of various projects mainly focused on staff professional development, virtual research information management, more effective research management systems, and upgrading of technical infrastructure. The full senior management team of CS is now in place with the recruitment of the Director: Operations in January 2004.

### Current and recently completed projects

As part of a continued focus on developing staff competence and capacity, the Human Resources (HR) Directorate developed and adopted a **Professional Development Framework** during the year under review. The Framework was one of the key areas identified in both the Institutional Review and the HSRC planning *Jekgotla*. It aims to develop staff competence across the organisation in a focused and continuous process that will allow the organisation to deliver on its key performance areas in a sustainable manner.

Aligned to the Framework was the finalisation and adoption of a **new sabbatical policy for the HSRC**. The staff association was consulted, and the sabbatical policy will form part of the revised Conditions of Employment, implemented in March 2003. The policy specifically aims to ensure that the HSRC researchers

sustain their scholastic development, which is a key aspect of retaining our status as a reputable research institute.

For HR the highlight of the year was the implementation and roll-out of the **HSRC Direct AIDS Intervention**, an HIV/AIDS management policy and programme for staff and their immediate families. Both the staff union and internal expertise from SAHA were consulted, and Alexander Forbes contributed towards a policy framework. The programme itself is outsourced and managed by Alexander Forbes and utilises various expert service providers. It covers the important aspects of awareness and education, voluntary counselling and testing, wellness maintenance, provision of treatment and supplements, monitoring of the development of the disease and, importantly, counselling and support for both infected and affected staff.

The Information Services (IS) Directorate continues to play a significant role in advancing social science research through the provision of a **proactive desk research and library service**.

During the year under review, the focus has been on the **enhancement of the collection development policy** to reflect the needs of the research programmes, as outlined in the HSRC business plan. To this end, the book collection was weeded, the journal collection was extended and new books were procured.

A **virtual library** has been developed that provides access to millions of full text social science information as well as over 30 000 full text journal titles via the intranet, which has become the preferred medium for the delivery and sharing of operational and business-related information. A database was developed for the **storage and archiving of HSRC research publications and reports**. Information Services also facilitates a "virtual com-

munity of interest" portal for the Gender Network team.

The **South African National Research Information Consortium** (SANRIC) was established in June 2004 at a meeting of IS representatives attached to the eight science councils. Its key strategic objectives are to promote co-operation and collaboration and to explore sources of finance for the enhancement of information delivery for the science councils.

In terms of Section 32 of the Promotion to Access to Information Act 2 of 2000, a **manual containing the HSRC's policies, procedures and records** was compiled. The HSRC did not receive any requests for information in this regard.

The year has been an exciting one for the Project Finance (PF) Directorate. In consultation with the research programmes, PF made substantial **improvements to the existing financial system** to translate results supporting research management processes and decisions.

The primary focus during this year was the **further definition of the research management processes** together with research leaders to provide more effective management reporting. The result is a more accessible, user-friendly system that enables research leaders to have easy access to project-related information.

During the year under review, PF also conducted a **series of workshops to streamline business processes** and to define a user-friendly framework for new HSRC policies and procedures. Similar workshops were conducted in other CS departments. This exercise is critical to facilitate the delivery of corporate services in a rapidly evolving organisation in a decentralised environment.

The Information Technology (IT) Directorate **consolidated and outsourced its helpdesk and end-user support services** to CS Holdings. This provided the HSRC with a centralised helpdesk, call register and out-of-hours support. The management of the wide-area network was also outsourced to Telkom's Customer Network Centre to improve service levels and bandwidth management. The Tertiary Education Network (TENET) continues to provide the HSRC with Internet access.

The **physical network infrastructure was upgraded and expanded** in all HSRC offices by replacing obsolete switching equipment and recabling the offices with higher-specification network cables.

The systems development team and the IS department **redeveloped the Internet and intranet using open-source software and an open-source web server**, consequently making significant savings in licensing costs. IT also ran a pilot document-management project to assess the functionality and process changes needed to implement an electronic document-

management system to manage intellectual property.

The Operations Directorate carried out several **refurbishment projects**, commencing with the expansion of the 12th floor of Pleinpark Building in Cape Town, to accommodate staff from three new research programmes.

The HSRC also completed the refurbishment of five floors in the Pretoria office to create a more enabling and collaborative working environment. Two of the five floors have been occupied and the final move commenced at the end of April 2004. Security doors were installed on each floor order to enhance security.

### Future developments

The HR department recently conducted an employment equity workshop with executive directors. An employment equity programme is in the process of being developed and implementation will be phased in during the course of 2004.

Following the termination of a tender process for the acquisition of a new Enterprise System, CS conducted a workshop in June 2003 to develop a proposal to research leaders on a suitable alternative. This led to the conceptual definition of an in-house system and the initiation of the Insight Engine project. This project achieves a more affordable up-grade of existing HSRC systems (finance, HR, time-recording, research outputs and an outreach database of funders, collaborators and experts) and integration with a project-management system. New processes, policies and procedures will be defined and mapped with the support of workflow software to provide system access to users in various research programmes across multiple locations.

In addition, relevant hardware to provide a more reliable technical infrastructure will be acquired and configured to support integrated system architecture. The system will also have an information portal to provide front-end information access to all users of key organisational information. As part of the technical upgrade, a tender has been awarded for the supply and installation of a new telephone system.

The 2003 HSRC Review recommended that CS further strengthen support services. These recommendations will be taken forward during the 2004/05 financial year with Project Insight and the CS capacity plan.

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