

# KZN Enviro Project Wins Strategic CSI Award

By **Sponsored Press** - December 17, 2018



An innovative partnership between a JSE-listed chemicals group and rural communities in KwaZulu-Natal, focusing on keeping a river clean and free of alien vegetation, has been acknowledged with a major award.

The AECI Wise Wayz Water Care (WWWC) programme is a joint winner of the 2018 Trialogue Strategic CSI Award, sharing the prize with Merchants Group's youth development programme. Both winners were announced at the launch of the 21<sup>st</sup> edition of the annual *Triologue Business in Society Handbook* in Johannesburg.

AECI Human Capital executive Khosi Matshitse said that WWWW was set up in 2016 and currently has 122 people taking part, from the Folweni and Eximbokodweni communities in eThekweni, near Durban. They keep a 30 km stretch of the eZimbokodweni River catchment area clear and have helped rehabilitate a wetland that stretches over nearly a kilometre.



Triologue MD Nick Rockey said: "We began this annual award in 2014 to encourage CSI practitioners to think more strategically when planning and implementing their initiatives. For CSI to be strategic, it must have a positive developmental impact that is aligned with and contributes to the priorities of the business.

"In the case of WWWW, social benefits are skills development, increased employment opportunities, environmental education and safety. Business benefits are employee engagement, competitive edge and an improved B-BBEE rating."

Ms Matshitse said over 1 830 households have received environmental education. "The project has built up community pride while promoting a healthier natural environment, with more recycling and less waste being disposed of illegally."



More than 440 people have acquired skills ranging from water safety testing to vegetable production. Based on their knowledge, the eThekweni municipality has employed 16 WWWC participants. There are also plans to establish vegetable farming and poultry agri-businesses.

AECI, which has invested R7,5 million in the project, can in turn abstract cleaner water for the Umbogintwini Industrial Complex, a multi-user site which is managed by the company's property division and where a number of its chemicals manufacturing businesses operate. Savings on processing costs are the result. AECI has also set up a small business for clearing invasive alien plants in support of its B-BBEE rating and compliance with applicable environmental legislation.

Ms Matshitse said: "We are delighted with this award, which acknowledges the dedication of the community members, as well as AECI's commitment to environmental sustainability and strengthening its relationships where it operates. This is a model that can be replicated by other businesses too. We hope it will inspire other companies to get involved and make a difference."

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