



**Reader for the
6th BIOTA para-ecologist training course
held at the Rooidakhuis
in Nieuwoudtville / South Africa**

(28th April to 14th May 2009)



Conducted by

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with a contribution by

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6th BIOTA para-ecologist training course

The main objective of the training course was to produce a documentary on the para-ecologist programme from the perspective of the para-ecologists. During the course of 17 days, the para-ecologists discussed the objectives, target groups, focus, actions, storyboard, structure and title of the film. They were introduced to the video camera and produced the footage for the film as well as decided on the format and editing of the film. The launch of a preliminary version of the film was celebrated on the 14 May 2009, the last day of the training course. The film will be finally edited by Martin Gruber, Anthropology & Film from Hamburg / Germany in accordance of the discussion so far. The final product will be ready to be distributed among local stakeholders, researchers, decision makers, schools etc. in southern Africa in September 2009.

The title of the film is “Bridging the Gap - Para-Ecologist in Action”.

Besides the documentary, the para-ecologists also compiled texts and photos for an exhibition on the para-ecologist programme to be shown at the Loki-Schmidt Haus at the Biocentre Klein Flottbek of the University of Hamburg / Germany. The opening of this show will be on the 17 June 2009.

Other topics of the training course were job applications and interviews, project planning and applications, repeat photography, repetition, taking of minutes, use of computers etc.

The following reader is based on the minutes of the discussions and training sessions taken by para-ecologists during the course.



Tuesday, 28th April 2009

Minutes by: Richard Isaacks

Photos by: Sebedeus Swartbooi

Welcome and agenda

Ute welcomed the participants to the sixth para-ecologist training. She gave a special welcome to Jeannete and Sebedeus the two new members who joined the crew in the meantime and Martin Gruber, who will produce the film on para-ecologists together with us.

Agenda:

- Donna's Feedback on Participatory video
- Discussion on Para-Ecologist Filming
- Watching of documentaries
- Wrap-up Session of the day

Donna participatory video

There was a film crew which was doing a documentary on Donna for the "rainbow nation" for 2010 soccer world cup. Also, Donna attended the participatory video course for eight days; the trainer (Chris) was from England. The aim was how to teach the community how to use the camera and to process the material in the end. Before they started the film shooting, Donna and her colleagues showed to the community how to use the camera. The film material that they produced was 1.5 hour long. For introduction and to warm up, games were played before the film shooting to make all participants of the filming activity feel comfortable.

What is a film and what makes a film special?

Martin explained what a film is, how and when films have been developed. We were talking about our favourite films and why we like them. The following aspects turned out to be important for a film to be special to somebody:

Identification with the character in the story

- information that concerns us,
- a good story that takes us along
- a message that touches us
- an entertaining story

Documentaries and how they are structured or done

We watched several examples of documentaries and discussed how documentaries are done.

Documentaries can comprise the following components:

- Interviews
- Action and observations (from inside the group, from outside)
- Commentary accompanied by images
- Voice over
- Play of activities that could have happened like this

Late afternoon sessions we watch old documentaries about the Bushmen (Kalahari family) about their lifestyle, hunting ways, and lastly we had a feedback session about the film, how it was done and what we liked and did not

like so much about the way the film was made. We discussed the techniques of the film.

Afterwards we were discussing the focus of the para-ecologist film. We talked about what needs to be covered in the film and the structure of the film. We worked in groups and present of cards what we want in the film.

Wednesday, 29/04/2009

Minute taker Robert

Photos by Wynand

Agenda

1. Biota after 2009
2. Watch documentaries examples
3. Revisit own planning of the film content to form
4. Introduction to camera (postponed)
5. Film exercise and interviews (postponed)

Biota after 2009

The BIOTA project will end on the 31/12/2009. All contracts will expire by that date. There various ideas and options how the biodiversity monitoring could continue after 2009:

- Maybe there will be some extension for some RSA/NAM colleagues to finish theses etc. but not for field work
- Perhaps the University of Hamburg will take over some of the monitoring activities for the first 1-3 years to guarantee the continuation of the monitoring
- A BMBF-funded project with the preliminary title Land-Ocean-Interaction might be launched and could cover some of the monitoring activities
- There are three project proposals in the frame of the call for proposal "Land management" by BMBF. For the following areas draft proposals have been submitted: Namaqualand, Savanna, Kavango. We expect some feed back from the BMBF by June

Additional information on Biota after 2009

R.I. asked a question to Dr Ute about the short courses in the field of para-ecologist work and whether BIOTA would support such courses.

Dr Ute. Yes Biota will fund it, provided they will make sense in the context of BIOTA

R.M. asked if it's possible to apply for jobs at other regions than those the para-ecologists are working in at the moment.

Dr Ute: Yes, you can apply if you think you are the right candidate for the job in that region

Introduction into documentaries

- Martin explained about documentaries and Donna explained about the film produced by the local people on rooibos tea at tea court
- Martin explained about the film to be shown in few minutes time

- Shortly after the film Martin asked the para-ecologists how they liked the film on drinking water in Rundu area and he also asked about the format of the film.



Photo: Stick exercise, a nice energizer in between the sessions.

Discussion on the message of our film

R.I.: To market ourselves

M.L.: To present aspects of job creation, skills gained and the future of para-ecologists

W.P.: To show that anyone from the local communities can build up skills and be part of a research project like BIOTA.

Ute: Para-ecologists form the link between scientist and communities. Para-ecologists programme is beneficial for all parties involved

The target groups of the film

- Communities to show outcome of the para-ecologist programme and to encourage communities
- Schools to encourage young people to make a career
- Ministries (e.g., Education and Research / Youth) and Members of Parliament as good examples for capacity development
- Advertise the para-ecologists to potential employers
- Promote para-ecologists as a final product
- BIOTA and other researchers
- BMBF as funder

Discussions on what we want on the movie

Ute divided us into three groups. Donna, Reginald and Sebedeus presented on behalf of their groups. The following aspects have been suggested by the groups to be presented in the film:

- Observatories and monitoring work
- Interview of farmers and livestock census
- Scorpion project
- PGIS (participative GIS)
- Medicinal plant book
- CREW Eco club
- Office work

Donna presented on PGIS/Participatory GIS. She explained to the Para-ecologists what PGIS is about. Reginald presented his own scorpion project.

How to write minutes in a meeting

It is essential that minutes are recorded accurately. This not only serves as a reminder of issues that need to be followed up but also prevents arguments about previous decisions. Minutes are also a guide for the secretary and chairperson when drawing up the agenda for the next meeting.

Minutes help the organisation to learn from its past failures and successes. This is done when the secretary reflects on the minutes of the past year when drawing up an annual report.

There are three aspects to taking good minutes:

1. Listening

This is a very important skill to develop. You must not only listen to what is being said but you have to ensure that you understand as well.

2. Taking notes

Write down only the main points and the decisions taken. It is impossible to write down everything that is being said.

- Always try to identify the main points

What is the main aim of the discussion?

What information is important?

Use your own words. If you do this you will find that your minutes are more accurate and complete than if you try to jot down everything a speaker says.

- Pay special attention to decisions. If necessary, ask for the decisions to be repeated.
- Ask for clarification. Do not hesitate to stop the meeting if you are not clear about any decisions or issues being discussed.

3. Writing the minutes

The following information should be included:

- Nature of meeting, date, time, venue
- Names of those present
- Names of visitors
- Apologies
- Summaries of decisions and discussions

This includes work to be followed up and who have taken responsibility for certain tasks. The minutes should be written neatly in a special minute book or file; avoid jotting down minutes on scraps of paper. The book or file should be kept safely and always available for consultation at any time.

Source: Community Organisers Toolkit – Education and Training Unit - <http://www.etu.org.za/toolbox/>

Friday, 1 May 2009

By: Donna Kotze
Photos: Reginald Christiaan

Agenda

1. Review material from yesterday
2. Organizational
3. Detailed Planning of storyboard
4. Interviews
5. Time for planning and research
6. Report back

1. Review material from yesterday

Ute started off to introduce the group to the program of the day. We will watch each interview individually and the group gives feedback.



Martin asked about the interviews:

- (a) Are you comfortable in the language that you are using?
- (b) Are you asking leading question – are you question getting “yes or now” I don’t know “answers.
- (c) Are you loading enough time for the person to answer?
- (d) How does it sound? It may be worth doing a sound check before recording too much. Playback the tape and listen with headphone. Is the microphone close enough or too close? Is there wind noise? Is there static from fiddling with the cable or microphone?
- (e) Is the microphone pointing to you when asking the question?

- (f) Do you look if as if you are interested in what the person is saying?
- (g) Does everyone know if they are enjoying the interview?
- (h) Do you look relaxed and are you keeping eye contact? (Check your body language).

2. Organizational

Ute discusses the program for the weekend. We decide from the group to going to Vredendal for shopping in the morning. In the afternoon we did the interviews with each para-ecologist individual. After the interviews Bettina invite the group for a sundowner at Vanrhyns Pass. We also discuss to go to the Hantam Botanical Garden on Sunday or Monday morning to setup the plot for the filming.

3. Detailed planning of storyboard



Martin explains the steps of the storyboard. What is needed and what should be done.

Make a story board about these topics:

- (a) Where should it took place?
- (b) Who will be filmed?
- (c) When and how long should it be?
- (d) What do you need?

4. Interviews



Decide on interview questions. The group had a discussion on what question is relevant. And afterwards they decided on the following questions:

1. Your name, age and workplace
2. What are you doing as a para-ecologist?
3. Describe you favourite activity as a para-ecologist.
4. Why do you like been a para-ecologist?
5. Phrase your own question.

5. Time for planning and research

We split in to groups to discuss our further steps for the three activities for the film.

6. Report back



All the different groups gave feedback and some discussions on how to improve ideas.

Thursday, 30 April 2009

Minute taker: Jeannete

Pictures taken by: Marianna

Agenda

1. Getting to know the video camera
2. Interviews
3. Viewing material
4. Continue with discussions on topics of film

Getting to know the camera

- We were shown how to hold the camera, how to start and pause, put in the tape and how to record
- Everyone got a chance to use the camera, and the first person showed to the next one. Assisting each other.
- We were shown how to use the camera tripod

- We interviewed each other
- The first person who did the interviews and filming assisted the next person

Additional information on framing

- You can cut away the forehead part but not the mouth
- Person that gets interviewed must be in the center
- For the person to be interviewed: look into the camera lens, the best way is to look at the person doing the filming

Summary of what must be in the film

We were divided into groups and we discussed what must be in the film e.g., the introduction, who will be in the film, where will it take place and why that

specific heading. The groups were on Observatory monitoring, interviews with farmers on livestock census, scorpion project and activities with school kids.

Highlights of the day:

Interviews went very well

Ready to work with the camera

Friday, 1 May 2009

Storyboards

We developed the storyboards for the activities to be filmed, i.d., Observatory monitoring at Hantam Botanical Garden, livestock census interview with farmers in the Knersvlakte and awareness raising activities with school children in Nieuwoudtville. That means we have to do detailed planning of each take of the film. Who does and says what, when and for how long and how should it be filmed. We draw in one line the picture to be seen, the action to be happening and in the last one what is to be heard.

Saturday, 2 May 2009

In the afternoon, we shot the interviews of the para-ecologists for the para-ecologist film. Each para-ecologist is interviewed about his/her name, age and where he / she is from. Then he/she talks about her tasks as a para-ecologist and the favourite activities.

Sunday, 3 May 2009

Repeat photography

Timm Hoffman arrived in the afternoon to give a presentation on repeat photography. In his talk he also gave some background about the early history of southern Africa and which different types of sources of information on the history they are (see printed overheads of the talk at the end of this reader).

Monday, 4 May 2009

Preparation of the shooting of activities

- One group went to the Knersvlakte to arrange with the farmer for the filming of the interviews
- Another group went to the Hantam Botanical Garden to select the site and put up the plot for the shooting of the plant monitoring
- The third group prepared the filming of the Eco-Club activity

In the afternoon we viewed the filmed interviews and made some time for the writing of the minutes of last week's sessions.

Tuesday 5 May 2009

Minutes: by Donna Kotze

Photos: by Reginald Christiaan

Agenda

1. Wynand, Marianna, Sebedeas, Snake, Martin to leave at 6:30h from the Rooidakhuis
2. Reginald, Bokkie, Robert, Donna and Richard stay and do the following two task:
Prepare para-ecologist exhibition and edit and check minutes
3. Feedback
4. Look at the film shot in the Knersvlakte about the livestock census

Viewing of minutes

The different groups offered feedback on the minutes they wrote. Everyone who was writing the minutes present it to the group. Editing was done with the input of the whole group. We decided that the minutes should be done at the end of the week. The minutes must be handed in to Ute when they are finished. Ute will do the last editing of the minutes.

Preparing para-ecologist exhibition

The exhibition is about a medicinal plant called devils claw. The plant is used for medicinal purposes and a way of income and for own use. A lot of studies have been done on the plant on the use and now the exhibition. The collages in Germany how study the plant want use to contribute to the exhibition. We decide to present BIOTA and the Para-ecologist program; we discussed many ways and come up with the idea of posters. The idea is to have one poster on every Para-ecologist the workplace, landscape whit a short text to every photo.

Title for the film

We discuss the name of the PE film and the group decides on these suggestions.

- Rush hour 3
- I am passionate about Biodiversity
- PE under Microscope
- Working for Nature
- PE (scientist in their own right)
- Pe´s for Biodiversity Conservation
- PE, Nature is my life
- People on the ground
- Biodiversity is my concern
- Biodiversity in our hands
- Our life in our hands

Report back on filming of livestock census interview

Wynand offered feedback about the fieldtrip to Rooiberg. The group feels that the whole excursion was a success. The group was relaxed and everything

was arranged when they arrived there. The group feels they achieve the goals for of the day. They decide to give the interviewer a copy of the film to say thank you. After the report back we watch the moving.

If you this again what would you like to be different?

Positive: actors were confident
shot of Marianna doing the counting

Negative: poor communication
Re – do things that didn't work out
Explanation to the camera

Afternoon – Programme

- Feedback
- Look at the film
- Interview
- Further layout of film (structure material)
- Interview Ute & Donna

Structure of film

We were looking at the image of the interviews and it was about Ute explaining about BIOTA and the para-ecologists. She had been interviewed by one of the para-ecologists.



Photos: Viewing our own film material.

Main aspects to be included into the film

Activities

- Livestock census
- Observatory
- Eco Club

There are some aspects still missing in the structure of the film, we did not decide yet how to do it.

- Final part in the film Interviews with the para-ecologists about the future.

Wednesday, 6 May 2009

The BIOTA Transect

In the morning we did some repetition of why BIOTA works along the transect, what the main goals of BIOTA are, the data that BIOTA researchers collect, some aspect regarding impact of climate change and land use. For details, see readers of previous training courses.

All of us started preparing texts and selecting photos for the posters on each para-ecologist at the “Devils Claw goes public” exhibition.

Thursday, 7 May 2009

Writing a Funding Proposal

What is in this guide?

This guide will look at fundraising from donors, business or government. It contains the following sections:

1. [Introduction](#)
2. [What goes in a proposal / plan?](#)
 - 2.1 Cover Page
 - 2.2 Executive Summary
 - 2.3 Organisational Overview
 - 2.4 Project details
 - 2.5 Appendices and supporting documentation
3. [Building a good relationships with funders](#)

1. Introduction

Most community organisations and projects depend on donor or government funding. In this section we look at a simple way of writing a proposal or business plan for an organisation that wants to apply for funds or for contracts to do certain work. All funding proposals or business plans should be based on an organisation or project’s strategic plan. Before you start you must be clear about the following:

1. Be clear about the goals and purpose of the organisation and the specific objectives of the project – funding proposal must be based on strategic plan.
2. What exact service you will provide – who is the target group/beneficiaries;

3. What activities do you need to implement and what resources do you need

A proposal is a written way of communicating. You may not have a chance to explain anything to the reader so you must be sure you are communicating well and clearly. Most decision-makers who read proposals see hundreds of similar documents. They will want a professional looking document that is easy and quick to read. Make sure the most important things are visible and do not send proposals that are 50 pages long. You can always rather put extra information in the supporting documents at the end of a proposal.

2. What goes in a proposal / plan?

There are three main things that must go into any proposal:

1. Description of organisation;
2. Management information and Constitution;
3. Overview of how the project will be implemented.

You should always write proposals on computer and save them so that you can re-use parts of them for other proposals. For example items 1 and 2 above will stay the same for all proposals for an organisation. Proposals and business plans must be organised in a logical way.

Here is a simple structure you can follow:

- Cover Page;
- Executive Summary;
- Organisational overview and management;
- Project details, implementation plan and budget;
- Appendices and supporting documentation.
- We will explain exactly what goes into each of these sections.

2.1 Cover Page

The cover page should contain the title, business name, date of the proposal, business address and contact details.

2.2 Executive Summary

This is the most important part of the proposal – it has to catch the attention of the donor. The summary is an overview of the entire plan and helps decision-makers to quickly get an overview of your proposal so they can see if they are interested. Therefore, although it is at the beginning of the document, it is usually written last to capture the essence of the plan. The summary stands alone and should not refer to other parts of your document. The executive summary should emphasise the purpose and objectives of the project.

2.3 Organisational Overview

Write an organisational or project profile, including the following:

- Indicate the legal form (close corporation, section 21 company, voluntary association, cooperative, etc)
- Information on the background of the organisation:
 - Goal, purpose and objectives of the organisation as a whole;
 - Services and products offered, target beneficiaries / communities etc
 - Achievements and track record (history);
 - Core funders, donors, other forms of income generation (if any);
 - Contactable references.
- Management and staff:
 - The management information and the management structure in the organisation - include a description of the skills and experience of managers and staff;
 - Attach an organisation chart showing the functions and responsibilities of management and staff.

2.4 Project details

Aims and objectives:

- **Overall goal** - Describe the overall goal or intended **outcomes** of the project (e.g. the project will contribute to poverty alleviation and the empowerment of women in the Ukahlamba informal settlement);
- **Project purpose** – State clearly what the project aims to achieve (E.g. The project will produce school uniforms at affordable prices for the parents of the Ukahlamba Primary School by providing employment for four women in a sewing cooperative);
- **Specific objectives** - List the specific things that have to be done to implement the project this year. Think of things that will cost money and make sure you list them. Do not go into detail but make a broad list (E.g.: establish a cooperative, set up and equip a workshop, recruit and train workers, develop and implement a marketing strategy. Describe how the project activities would promote developmental outcomes i.e. stakeholder involvement and empowerment, sustainability etc.

Implementation plan:

- **Work plan** - Write how you would run the project to achieve the specific objectives. Describe the steps you would take;

- **Risk assessment** – highlight critical risk factors which may impede the project and list ways of reducing these risks;
- **Organisations and Partnerships** - List of organisations which are stakeholders in the project. Describe the roles and responsibilities of each of these organisations in detail;
- **Project Communication Strategy** – describe what communication strategies will be employed to facilitate ongoing communication with all project stakeholders, e.g., project team meeting, quarterly steering committee meetings, reporting, newsletters publication, press releases etc
- **Evaluation** – describing how the projects' impact will be assessed;
- **Project Timelines** – an estimate of the project timelines;
- **Budget** – A budget estimate.

2.5 Appendices and supporting documentation

Remember to add in any relevant documents that will support your proposal. For example:

- Constitution of the Organisation;
- Copies of section 21 company or close corporation certificates and registration documents;
- Articles, testimonials or letters of recommendation;
- Publications, pamphlets or brochures about your work;
- Copies of your audited financial statements if needed;
- Tax clearance certificate if needed.

3. Building a good relationships with funders

It is very important for fundraisers to understand the programmes and projects of the organisation and the benefits that the community will get from these. Make sure that you know details about the project and success stories and that you have things such as photographs, videos and newspaper articles to share with funders. It is vital to be enthusiastic and positive about your work if you want to inspire funders to support you. Most funders want to know that the money that they give will be well-used and accounted for. It is very important to build a good relationship with the individual funders and to make them feel confidence in you and your organisational structures.



Photo: Role play. Making contact with your potential donor.

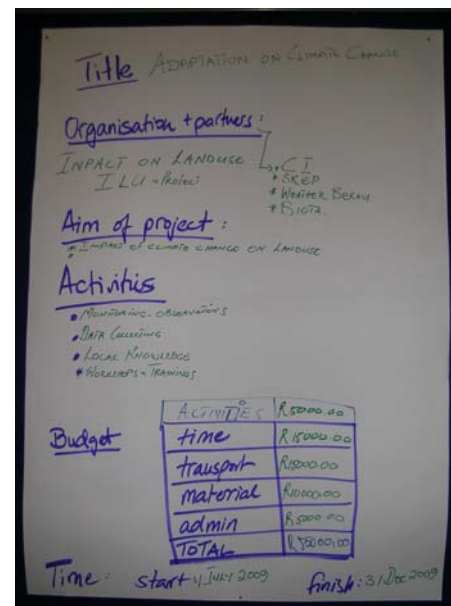
There are a number of small things that you can do to make sure that your relationship with funders stays good:

- Remember to always thank funders when contracts, funds or agreement letters arrive.
- Invite them to come and visit the project and show them what their money has achieved.
- Ask funders for advice since they are often experts in that field of development and most of them enjoy getting closer to projects.
- Always send in reports and financial statements before the deadlines. The project officer who deals with your projects has their own deadlines and pressures and you should try to make their lives easy.
- If anything should change within your project, in terms of what you want to spend your money on, let the funders know immediately and if possible consult them before making final decisions – otherwise you may have to send their money back.
- Always be as honest as possible with funders. Do not hide the problems you are experiencing and rather ask for help and support if you need it. If your project is evaluated or your reports are inadequate, the funders will find out that things have gone wrong. It is better to ask them to be part of the solution, by sharing your problems with them.
- Make sure that your report answers all the questions and is according to the format that the funder has asked for.

Source: Community Organisers Toolkit – Education and Training Unit - <http://www.etu.org.za/toolbox/>



Photos: Learning to design projects



Our own job advertisements for our projects

Vacancy! Vacancy!

Job Title: Community Facilitator

Duration: Six months

Place of work: Namibia and South Africa

Job description: Initiate project and carry it out. Arrange meetings with community

Minimum requirements (must have)

1. Grade 10
2. He/she must have a valid passport
3. He/she must have a flexible travelling

Bonus requirements (nice to have)

If he/she have the following it will be better

1. Grade 12
2. Computer literate
3. English, Damara, Nama and Afrikaans
4. Drivers License Code 8
5. Good communication skills
6. Good understanding about environment issues

Salary: Depending on qualification

APPLICATIONS DUE BY: 14 May 2009

SUBMIT MOTIVATION + CV TO UTE

Job advertisement!!! Job advertisement!!!

Job Title: Extension officer
Duration: Six Months
Place of work: Bitterfontein

Job description: Facilitating workshops and training courses
Update and type diaries of senior colleagues
Write reports

Minimum Requirements: Grade 10

Experience of six years in community work
Fluent in reading and writing in English
Good communication skills
Should be willing to work overtime
Computer literate

Bonus requirements: Grade 12
Valid drivers license (code 8)

Submit application before 14th May 2009

To Dr. Ute Schmiedel

**White House Building, Floor7, Office Nr 5,
Maak die Goed Deurmekaar-Street.**

Vacancy! Vacancy!
Cape Nature & Indigo
Job title: Fire Technician
Duration: 10 days

Place of work: Nieuwoudtville (Melkkraal)

Job description: Attend workshops, offer training courses and facilitate workshops

Min Requirements:
5 years practical experience in fire fighting
Drivers licensed Code EB
At least grade 10
Must have own vehicle

Bonus Requirements:
Experience of working with communities

Salary: Negotiable

Application due by 14 May 2009
Submit Motivation +CV
to Dr. Ute, Neethlingstreet 1, Nieuwoudtville 8180

Monday, 11 May 2009

[How to write a job application](#)

(for further information also check www.jobs.co.za)

A job application comprises two parts: the CV (curriculum vitae) and the cover letter or letter of motivation.

[The cover letter / letter of motivation](#)

The cover letter is your important key to the job interview. The better the cover letter is the better your chances to be invited to a job interview.

There are some basic rules for a cover letter:

- Not longer than 1 page, be accurate, concise and comprehensive
- The letter should be neat, tidy, not playful (regarding layout and fonts)
- Always make sure your letter has been proof read by an experienced person (who might even have an insight into the type of job you are applying for) regarding content and spelling

Your cover letter should convey messages on the following aspects:

- Your formal and soft skills
- Your experiences and achievements in the field of the job (be specific and give examples where possible)
- Your professionalism
- Your interest in this specific post and motivation for this (according to the ad)

- Your insight in the type of company / project you would like to work for (do your own research on their web site or ask people that know)
- Your confidence and positive approach
- Your honesty (do not exaggerate)

If you have any question regarding the job, the job advertisement or the interview, do not hesitate to call the contact person to find out. However, prepare yourself, by thinking what exactly your question is. You can also use this opportunity to introduce yourself and your background to the responsible person. It sometimes helps if the person heard your name before.

Format and structure of your cover letter:

Hansi van Waarook
PO Box 76543
Bitterfontein
Cell: 082-420 1458
10 May 2009

Dr Ute Schmiedel
Kirstenbosch Botanic Garden
PO Box 12345
Claremeont
7709
South Africa

Dear Dr Ute Schmiedel

.....

[How to structure your cover letter](#)

1. Refer to the position you are applying to and where you found the advertisement (1 sentence)
2. State what makes your application relevant / what make you the right person for the job (1 sentence).
3. In the main part of the application, write about your skills (as far as relevant to the job) and your other achievements and how they will be useful for this job. Be specific and give examples.

Example: "During the last four years, I was working as a botanist, responsibly annually monitoring vegetation in the Succulent and Savannah biome of southern Africa. In the course of this work, I was also in charge for the identification of all herbarium specimens in the southern African Herbariums where I worked for more than a month every year. Beyond the monitoring my tasks also included the data typing, cleaning and processing of the monitoring data as well as published three scientific publications on this topic in collaboration with colleagues from South Africa and Namibia (see CV for details)."

Instead of: "I monitored plants (WHAT TYPES OF PLANTS?), identified them (WHERE, HOW?). Also wrote articles about this (WHAT TYPE OF ARTICLES?)." (WHAT EXACTLY WAS YOUR ROLE: ASSISTANT, RESPONSIBLE PERSON, SUPERVISOR?)

4. Summarise your understanding of the project / organisation for which you want to work and make clear where you think you fit in. With this, also show them that you have a good understanding what they are doing and
5. Summarise statement detailing what makes you special compared to all the others.
6. Thank the recipient for his / her time and respectfully close with your regards and your name.

[How to prepare for a job interview](#)

- **Know the organisation / project that interviews you**

(Search on their website and / or ask somebody who knows the company and the position you are applying for).

- **Know where the interview is**

(Don't be late or come last minute. Allow yourself enough time to arrive in time without rushing or getting nervous)

- **Dress adequately**

Neatly and how you feel comfortable. Rather overdress but don't over do it (if you apply for a field worker's post and you give the impression you would not be prepared to dig a soil profile with your fingernails they might feel you are not the right person). However, do not have to come in your overall to the interview.

- **Practice your interview**

Prepare yourself for the common interview questions (e.g. "Could you please introduce yourself?" "Why did you apply for this job?" "What makes you think that you are the qualified for this job?", "Where do you see yourself in 5 years?", "What are your expectations regarding your salary?", "When will you be available?") But also some common but difficult questions like "What are your weaknesses?" "What are your strong points?" Prepare for your self a short speech (30 seconds) why they should specifically hire you and what sets you aside from all the others.

Also prepare some questions ask for the interviewer regarding the role which you are being interviewed for or further information on the organisation / project. This shows your strong interest and that you prepared yourself for this interview.

- **Prepare references**

Compile a list of about three people you can name as reference for your previous professional or personal performance (previous employees, senior researchers you were working with. Make sure you have their correct contact details and that they are prepared to be reference for you. Also think carefully whether you can be sure that they will give a positive feedback on your performance.

- **Watch your body language**

Smile, be friendly, have eye contact, be enthusiastic, look after your energy level when going to the interview. Don't sleep late or drink the night before. Avoid personal stress and try to feel good, energetic, enthusiastic about your work etc.

- **Be relaxed and take it as an opportunity to learn about the new job**

Be aware that during a job interview it is not only for them to find out about you but it is also your opportunity to get a feeling for the advertised job (the boss, supervisors, some of the colleagues, working place etc., and whether you really want to do it or not. Even if they later offer the job, you can still decide not to take it. The decision is open for both sides.