

## SARPA Technical Advisor Executive Report 2012

The year 2012 will go down in history as a very important year for SARPA and Revenue Protection practices in Africa, with the decision to change the name to the Southern African Revenue Protection Association. This definitely signals the start of a new era for SARPA and its members.

The proposal for the name change was made by the newly established Namibian SARPA Branch and accepted by the members present at the SARPA Convention in July 2012 in Drakenstein.

Talking about the Convention, I think personally the event was a huge success and one of the reasons for that was the excellent idea by the Executive to involve the well-known Economist Mr. Chris Hart, as it surely drew more people. This was a new angle for SARPA to invite someone other than a politician for the keynote speech and I think in the future it should become the norm.

Our usual international speaker Mr Itzick Michaeli from Israel Electric once again updated us on international experiences. In my opinion more efforts should be made for next years event to draw in more international speakers and I think the very positive interactions we had this year with Revenue Protection professionals in the Americas and Asia will certainly pave the way for this.

Several speakers highlighted the “lessons learned” worldwide with regard to smart metering and how technology can assist us to minimize revenue losses in the future. We once again learned that Revenue Protection would still be playing a vital role in minimizing losses and that smart metering systems would not replace Revenue Protection operators, but rather ensure that they become smarter themselves. So it is once again clear that training should form a vital part of future revenue protection processes. What is standing out for me above everything is the issue of “Cyber security” as it becoming vital to protect the Consumer and the Utility alike. Therefore, I have embarked on behalf of SARPA on a project to gather as much information possible about this threat and will be presenting my first paper on this at the metering conference in Bogotá, Columbia on the 19 November 2012.

What also came out at the conference is the fact that several new gadgets are been designed to assist with the meter auditing processes, tamper detection, effective data management and the combating of copper theft. We have been constantly hunting the manufacturers that have solutions and they are then motivated to first join SARPA and then present and supply sponsorship at Branch level.

A section of this years Conference program was also dedicated to water loss reduction processes. The Department of Water Affairs played a big role in these sessions and also at Branch level, where their Regional Coordinators attend the meetings. The effort to get “water officials” from the respective Municipalities to attend Branch meeting is still ongoing and it seems that in the New Year this will be easier, as DWA are putting pressures on them to perform better.

Overall the Convention could be seen as a big success and everyone learned from the experience. With the high standard set by Michael and his people, it will be a hard one to do better next year, but I think the President will be up to the task. As was mentioned before, the aim should be to draw international participation and what nicer venue than Mosselbay to do just that!

When our President identified some Strategic issues for the year 2012, I was very glad as it gave me some guidance regarding what issues to focus on. I would therefore like to look at how we fared with the different projects.

### Marketing

I think we really outdone ourselves this year with regard to marketing the SARPA brand with all the events we participated in and the enhanced role we played in each of these events. I like to call it from "Zero to Hero" Through the year we managed to be invited to all kinds of events and chaired most of it. It is in Non ferrous theft combating circles and the international Revenue Protection fraternity that we made most significant inroads. We can with ease say that we made "our mark" during this year and the glory should go to the President and the Executive to steer us in that direction. We also wrote articles in prominent magazines in the field of electricity, metering, water, telecom and in the IURPA bulletins.

### Training

The second most significant gain on SARPA's part would be the fact that we are now internationally acknowledged as the only Association that can effectively conduct Revenue Protection training and in Africa we are also seen as the preferred entity to present courses and workshops on the "Combating of copper theft". We have also staked off our claim in Africa by having all our courses been chosen to form part of the curriculum at the Kafue Gorge Regional Training Center in Zambia. Courses and workshops were also presented at Conferences in South Africa, Asia and Southern America. Several SAPS units and individuals were trained during the year and the successes that followed indicated the effectiveness of these efforts.

### Revenue Recovery project

The pilot part of this project was concluded early in the year with presentations to the Management of the Utilities where these exercises were held. These Utilities reported significant changes that they were able to make, due to what they learned from the project and this type of feedback strengthened the belief we had in the fact that the project could indeed be very valuable to "ailing Municipalities". The Executive has decided to put a hold on further projects and to first see if we could development "The Revenue Recovery Management Tool" further, as to allow Utilities to use it themselves, if they desire to do it in that way. This process is currently underway to make it look more professional and to align it with the webpage. We are also adding a measuring part to the tool, in order for Utilities to measure their own effectiveness towards minimizing losses.

## Non-Ferrous Theft

In this project we have also really excelled this year as mentioned before, with regard to providing assistance, training and establishing ourselves on all the relevant forums. It is actually impossible to list all the achievements in this report. We managed to establish a NFCCC Forum in Polokwane (after BAC gave up after several years) and our President even chaired the meeting for some time. We were asked regularly to chair other meetings and conferences, facilitate workshops and do presentations at SAPS conferences and Executive meetings. After the launching of the New Act we presented at the Information Forums of SAPS in all the Provinces in the country. At all the forums I attended our presentation was hailed as the most informative. We also assisted in several Municipalities with sensitizing sessions, internal investigations, intelligence sharing and guidance to municipal officials, law enforcement officials and the Community Policing Forums. We have also made our training material available to SAPS and we currently form part of a selected group who are developing a course on combating of non-ferrous thefts at the SAPS training college. We are the only non-police organization involved in the process.

## Branch development

This is the only area where we have fallen short this year. We kicked off the year in full force by organizing meetings in all the branches in the country and assisted the Chairpersons to find speakers, sponsors and venues. It was however later decided for me not to attend all the meetings, but rather to focus on the ones that were struggling, in order to save on traveling costs. What we however found was that branches were not only struggling with the dynamics of the meetings, but were not even able to organize a meeting at all! Some meetings were cancelled at the last moment (which infuriated affiliate members), whilst others which should really have been cancelled, ended up with only a few people attending. The Executive needs to urgently discuss the driving force behind the branches and how we can enhance it to be more effective. The new edition of the Namibian Branch and requests by Utilities in other countries for registration forms, is of course a highlight. The enthusiasm of the Cape of Good Hope Branch and all its activities need to be mentioned on a positive note as well.

## Conclusion

However, the achievement that excites me the most is the fact that we are assisting the Revenue Protection fraternity in Asia to establish the Asian Revenue Protection Association with the blessing of IURPA. Whilst been in Malaysia recently, we held a forming meeting and set the wheels in motion to hold the inaugural meeting and a Conference in April 2012 in the Philippines. We already have several Utilities and manufacturers on board as well as two event organizers that would like to assist.

I end off by thanking the President, Executive members and the Secretariat for the faith they have shown in me to keep this "boat afloat" and I look forward to more outstanding achievements next year. Happy Christmas and a Happy New Year.