

ESKOM EXPO FOR YOUNG SCIENTISTS ANNUAL REPORT 2015 STELLENBOSCH

Executive summary

2015 has been a successful year in the sense that we managed to increase our numbers of participating schools at regional level from 15 to 27! School and participant numbers dropped remarkably after the split-off of two regions from us in 2013 and 2014. This growth is a highlight and must ascribed to the fact that a concerted effort was made to personally invite more teachers in the region (not via their schools), and to send out applicable info regularly using email distribution lists. This increase was especially surprising since so few of the invited schools attended the workshops arranged in the beginning of the year.

2015 also held some disappointments, among which were the huge decrease in our ISF quota and the reduced funds received from the national office. The repercussions of the latter were particularly challenging: even though only a small portion of the necessary funds came from Eskom, the Eskom brand was (and is) tightly connected to Expo, making it almost impossible to get other corporate sponsors on board! This also remains the biggest challenge for Mada as the provincial coordinator, who has up to this point not managed to secure any funding for regional use.

The group of 15 learners chosen to represent the Stellenbosch region at ISF did us proud by obtaining two highly commended awards, three bronze, nine silvers and one gold medal. Awards also included one category winner, one special prize and two possible international participants!

Stellenbosch University again availed bursaries at ISF for senior category winners. 25 learners each received a bursary offer of R30 000. It was interesting (and of course good for Expo's standing!) to see that universities upped their bursary offers since 2014 when Stellenbosch came to the party with significant bursary offers!

Sponsorship and Financials

Funding is sort after on an annual base. Sponsors and donors who share our passion for science and the youth once again made it possible to run our exposition smoothly and on a good standard. Our sincere thanks goes to Eskom, Stellenbosch University and the other funders who cannot be disclosed - their contribution to this worthy cause is valued!

Workshops

Four workshops were conducted early in the year in districts where we wanted to increase participation. Some teachers brought learners along. In total 24 teachers, 62 learners and 5 curriculum advisors attended.

A workshop for inexperienced new judges was held on 27 August 2015, on the morning before the regional expo competition. About 20 people attended the workshop and applied their newly gained knowledge hours later when they judged for the first time at the regional competition. It was heartwarming to see younger people getting involved as judges, making a positive contribution to Expo.

For the first time a general, not individual, upgrading workshop was held for all 15 of the participants chosen to represent the region at ISF. This happened on 5 September 2015. Regional expo judges and regional expo committee members visited the exhibited projects to help with advice, refining and research expansion.

Regional Expo Stats

The regional competition was held in Stellenbosch on 27 and 28 August 2015. For the first time this happened at Rhenish Girls High School's activity hall and all went according to plan. 77 enthusiastic, knowledgeable judges spent their time voluntarily to judge the exhibited projects. Sixty five participants received bronze medals, 43 silver medals and 28 gold medals. A total of 40 special awards were made.

DESCRIPTION	NUMBER	COMMENTS
Projects	211	154 in 2014
Participants	300	208 in 2014
Females	196	120 in 2014
Males	104	88 in 2014
Primary participants	38	20 in 2014
Secondary participants	292	188 in 2014
TOTAL number of Schools	27	15 in 2014
Quintile 1	4	4 in 2015
Quintile 2		
Quintile 3		
Quintile 4	20	13 in 2014
Quintile 5		
Private	3	3 in 2014
TOTAL number of District expos	3	0 in 2014
Number of schools	15	
Number of learners	41	
Number of projects	28	

Highlights

- Growth in the number of schools that participated at the Stellenbosch expo
- Growth in the number of learners exhibiting at the regional expo
- Good collaboration with Mada as PC
- Using only email distribution lists to send out invitations and information to schools
- Getting an online entry form for regional participation up and running
- Enriching learners' lives with the unforgettable experience of Expo!
- Stellenbosch University staying committed to give bursaries as ISF

Lowlights

- The infighting, tension and frustration experienced between expo colleagues
- The formula that was used to calculate regional quotas and funds
- The cut in numbers allowed for ISF
- The cut in funds received from head office
- The PC not being able to secure extra funding

- The administrative burden on RSFDs getting heavier every year
- The quota system for ISF that is not applied throughout to all regions in the same way
- Getting more schools to buy into the expo way of doing research projects

International Science Fair (ISF)

Fifteen projects from 13 schools were chosen to represent Stellenbosch region. Individual projects were selected throughout. The learners were good ambassadors for our region: they consistently demonstrated good behavior and did proud by obtaining two highly commended awards, three bronze, nine silvers and one gold medal. The awards also included one category winner, one special prize and two possible international participants.

Marketing/Media

Emails were regularly sent out to school, not to only invite them to participate but to give timeous information for every term's activities. Early in the year WCED standard setting meetings were attended by Mada and I, where teachers were given info about expo and personal emails were gathered to incorporate in email distribution lists.

Articles were submitted to local newspapers prior to the regional expo competition, after the regional competition and ISF. For the local newspapers photos of learners of that specific town were submitted. A more general article was submitted to also inform the local communities more about Expo and hopefully encourage more learners to participate the next year.

Conclusion

On behalf of our organising committee I want to thank Priscilla and her team, as well as Parthy and the Eskom Expo board of directors for their efforts during a challenging 2015. It has always been and remains a privilege to be part of the Expo family!



Erika Hoffman

Regional science fair director, Stellenbosch

15 January 2016

Photos

Please turn over



Bronze medal winners at the Stellenbosch regional expo



Silver medal winners at Stellenbosch regional expo



Awarded with gold medals at the Stellenbosch expo



On the airport on our way to ISF! Most learners flew for the very first time!



Going for a trip on the Gautrain!



Experiencing Gauteng - on Nelson Mandela square in Sandton!



Picture perfect - the beautiful Birchwood Centre hosting Expo



One big happy group with lots of medals and awards!

