

Local Action for Biodiversity (LAB): Wetlands SA Political Leader Workshop iLembe District Municipality

Date: 26th July 2017

Venue: Council Chambers, iLembe District Municipality, KwaDukuza

Workshop Report

SUMMARY:

On **26th July 2017**, iLembe District Municipality (IDM) and ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI Africa) co-hosted the “LAB: Wetlands SA: iLembe District Municipality Political Leader Workshop” at the Council Chambers of iLembe District Municipality in KwaDukuza as part of IDM’s involvement in the Local Action for Biodiversity: Wetlands South Africa (LAB: Wetlands SA) project.

The workshop aimed to improve key iLembe District Municipality political leaders’ understanding of the value of biodiversity and wetlands in particular. The workshop had three main objectives: (1) to raise awareness of what wetlands are as well as the services they provide; (2) to present the LAB: Wetlands SA project and highlight the key project outputs to date including the iLembe District Municipality Wetland Report, the iLembe Wetland Profile and to showcase the LAB: Wetlands SA video and (3) to encourage the iLembe District Municipality Mayor to sign the Durban Commitment to cement iLembe District Municipality’s commitment to protecting biodiversity and wetlands within the district.

The workshop entailed several presentations given by ICLEI Africa, Working for Wetlands and the KwaZulu Natal Wetland Forum (KZN Wetland Forum). Meaningful discussion occurred throughout the workshop. The Durban Commitment was signed at the end of the workshop by Mayor Gumede, the iLembe District Municipality Mayor.

Attendants at the workshop included the iLembe District Municipality Mayor, Councilors from iLembe District Municipality and members of the iLembe District Municipality EXCO Committee. Also in attendance were key technical staff from within the district and local municipalities as well as some representatives from DEA Local Government Support. Throughout the day, all discussions were facilitated by Kirsty Robinson from ICLEI Africa.



WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES:

Political Leader Workshops are one of the key outputs of the LAB: Wetlands SA project (for background, see **Annex 1**). These workshops are intended to build upon the 'Wetland Awareness Raising' Workshops held during 2015 and 2016 with the project municipalities; however these awareness raising workshops are aimed specifically at the political leaders.

Given the decision-making role of the political leaders, a lack of understanding and valuing of biodiversity, and why it is important in a municipal context, is hampering the ability of local governments to play a more proactive role in this area, and sees decisions being made that discount environmental considerations. The objective of the political leader workshops is to improve the key political leaders' knowledge and understanding of the value of biodiversity, and wetlands in particular, to facilitate better decision making around biodiversity and wetlands. The workshops are also intended to facilitate the signing of the Durban Commitment by the district municipality Mayor.

Based on previous discussions with IDM and the internal requirements of the municipality, the iLembe Political Leader Workshop was aimed at the iLembe District Municipal Mayor, key political leaders within the iLembe District Municipality (EXCO Members and Councilors) as well as key political representatives from the local municipalities within iLembe District Municipality. The key aims of the workshop were to:

1. To raise awareness of what wetlands are as well as the services they provide;
2. To present the LAB: Wetlands SA project and highlight the key outputs to date including the iLembe District Municipality Wetland Report, the iLembe Wetland Profile and to showcase the LAB: Wetlands SA video; and
3. To encourage that the iLembe District Municipality Mayor signs the Durban Commitment to cement iLembe District Municipality's commitment to protecting biodiversity within the district.

A copy of the workshop agenda is attached as **Annex 2**.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The workshop was included as an agenda item as part of a formal iLembe District Municipal Council meeting. Linda Mncube of iLembe District Municipality introduced ICLEI to the Mayor and Councilors and outlined the objectives of the workshop. This was followed by a short introductory speech from Kirsty Robinson, Professional Officer at ICLEI Africa.

All people present at the workshop were given copies of the Wetland Profile as well as a brochure on the LAB: Wetlands SA Project and a brochure on the Durban Commitment.

WHAT IS A WETLAND

Mbali Kubheka of Working for Wetlands gave the first presentation of the day with a detailed presentation around wetlands. The presentation highlighted what a wetland is, what wetland indicators are (e.g. soil and vegetation), what are wetland ecosystem services (e.g. flood attenuation etc.) and what are the key threats to wetlands. The presentation aimed to both raise

awareness of the value of wetlands within the district as well highlight the role of local governments in wetland management.



Figure 1: Mbali Kubheka presenting to the iLembe District Municipality Council.

INTRODUCING THE LAB: WETLANDS SA PROJECT

Following Ms. Kubheka's presentation, Kirsty Robinson of ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability introduced the LAB: Wetlands SA project to the group. As part of the presentation, Kirsty highlighted the aims and objectives of the project as well as the key deliverables to date noting particularly the 'Awareness Raising Workshop' held in February 2016, the Wetland Report and Wetland Profile which were both published in March 2017 and the Wetland Video which was finalised in April 2017.

The presentation was also used as a platform to introduce the iLembe District Municipality Wetland Strategy and Action Plan (WSAP), which is currently in the final stages of development, to the Councilors. The aims and objectives of the WSAP were explained to the Councilors as well as expected timeframes for the document to be presented to Council. There was general agreement amongst all present that the WSAP is something that is needed at this time.

"We now understand the issues at hand and through this Strategy, we are ready to do the work that needs to be done."

Mayor S. Gumede, iLembe District Municipality

In closing, the presentation highlighted deliverables still to be achieved as part of the project, namely the Implementation Project, Wetland Management Guidelines, the iLembe Case Study and attendance at the final National Wetlands Indaba. Thereafter, the Wetland Video was shown.

KZN WETLAND FORUM

Throughout the workshop, the value of partnerships and working together was emphasized. The KwaZulu Natal (KZN) Wetland Forum was invited to present at the workshop. Ms. Cherise Acker presented on behalf of the forum. The KZN Wetland Forum presentation highlighted the vision and mission of the forum and who currently attends the forum.

iLembe District Municipality was invited to participate in the forum to share knowledge around wetlands as well as utilise the forum for support in wetland related projects. It was highlighted that through collaboration and shared knowledge systems, wetland initiatives can be supported in both the public and private sectors.

DEMONSTRATING A COMMITMENT TO BIODIVERSITY: SIGNING THE DURBAN COMMITMENT

To introduce the Durban Commitment, Ms. Ulrike Irlich gave a short overview presentation on the Durban Commitment. Some background on the history of the Durban Commitment was given along with information on what the Durban Commitment actually is; namely a non-binding commitment and model made by local government, for local government and the communities they serve, to protect and enhance biodiversity at the local level. It was highlighted that the Durban Commitment was initially signed in 2008 and since then has been signed by over 50 local municipalities and/ or cities around the world.

Prior to extending the invitation to sign the Durban Commitment, the iLembe District Municipal Mayor, Mayor S. Gumede, was invited to say a few words to commemorate the occasion. Some of the key sentiments from the day are provided below:

"Through the presentations given today, we are now empowered. We can tackle these issues together, if we stand together. We want to stand up and commit to protecting our rivers and wetlands"

Mayor S Gumede, iLembe District Municipality

Following the statement given by the iLembe District Municipality Mayor, the Mayor was invited by ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability to sign the Durban Commitment.



Figure 2: iLembe demonstrates a commitment to protecting biodiversity through signing the Durban Commitment.

WRAPPING UP & WAY FORWARD

Following the signing of the Durban Commitment, Ms. Robinson reiterated the next step for iLembe District Municipality in the LAB Wetlands SA project and thanked the stakeholders for attending and for participating so actively in the workshop. The workshop was then brought to a close.

Annex 1: Project background

Wetlands are high-value ecological infrastructure, providing essential ecosystem services such as clean water, clean air, food, medicines, flood regulation, water storage and habitat for biodiversity. Wetlands also play a role in disaster risk reduction, and their effective governance could lessen the negative effects of climate change through, for example, flood risk reduction, temperature regulation and water and food security for communities.

However, wetlands are South Africa's most threatened ecosystems, with 48% of wetland ecosystems critically endangered, resulting in an urgent need to increase awareness of wetland importance; and to develop the capacity of local governments to incorporate natural wetland resource objectives into municipal governance mechanisms and Integrated Development Planning, as well as to implement and fund projects on the ground.

In South Africa, there is a wealth of national environmental policies, however, mechanisms for mainstreaming biodiversity through all spheres of government needs to be strengthened. Lack of staff capacity, budget constraints, absence of participatory governance, lack of political leadership and public awareness and support, as well as deficiencies in relevant guidance, tools and resources, make wetland biodiversity planning and management a neglected component of our country's municipal governance.

The Local Action for Biodiversity: Wetlands South Africa (LAB: Wetlands SA) programme's key goal is to protect priority natural wetland resources, thus enabling the supply of ecosystem services, and promoting resilient communities and sustainable local economies under a changing climate within South African local governments.

The key objectives of the LAB Wetlands SA programme are as follows:

1. To improve local government and citizen knowledge and understanding (at the individual, organisation and policy levels) of the value of biodiversity and wetlands.
2. To initiate the process of integrating ecosystem services and biodiversity into local government planning and decision-making in a coordinated, multi-sectoral, gender-sensitive and participatory way.
3. To implement and pilot on-the-ground wetland projects and promote the development of bankable project proposals.

The LAB: Wetlands SA programme is implemented by ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability – Africa Secretariat (ICLEI Africa), and funded by the USAID. This programme works in partnership with 9 District Municipalities and 2 Metropolitan Municipalities throughout South Africa. All project outputs, including the Municipality Wetland Report, Wetland Profile and Wetland Awareness Raising Short Film, can be downloaded from the project website:

<http://cbc.iclei.org/project/lab-wetlands-sa/>

Annex 2: Agenda

ILEMBE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY

POLITICAL LEADER WETLANDS AWARENESS RAISING WORKSHOP

AGENDA

Date: 26th July 2017
Venue: iLembe District Municipality Board Room

09:30 – 10.00	<i>Registration (Signing of the Attendance Register)</i>	
Opening of the Workshop		
10:00 – 10:15	Welcome by iLembe District Municipality	iLembe District Municipal Manager
10.15 – 10.30	Workshop Introductions & Expectations	ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability
Wetland Training for Political Leaders		
10.30- 10.50	What are Wetlands and why are they valuable?	Working for Wetlands
10.50- 11.15	Introducing the LAB: Wetlands South Africa Project	ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability
11.15- 11.30	The Value of Municipal Participation in the KZN Wetland Forum	KZN Wetlands Forum
Pledging Commitment to the Environment		
11.30- 11.45	Introducing the Durban Commitment	ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability
11.45 – 12.00	Key Note Address	iLembe District Municipal Mayor
12.00- 12.15	Signing the Durban Commitment	ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability
12.15- 12.30	Photo Opportunity & Workshop Closure	ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability and iLembe District Municipality
12:30 – 13:00	<i>Lunch</i>	



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