

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

Date: 6th June 2017
Venue: Carousel Hotel, Hamanskraal, North West Province

Workshop Report

SUMMARY

On **6th June 2017**, Bojanala Platinum District Municipality (BPDM) hosted a Health and Environmental Services Department workshop and portfolio committee meeting. BPDM invited ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI Africa) to present on the LAB: Wetlands SA Project and Bojanala Platinum District Municipalities involvement in the project.

The workshop was aimed to bring together councilors and portfolio committees to learn more about the roles, responsibilities and challenges of the Environmental Health and Services Department in BPDM. Furthermore, the workshop aimed to improve the political leaders' understanding of the value of the environment, including biodiversity and wetlands.

The component given by LAB: Wetlands SA 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 Bojanala Platinum District Municipality Wetland Report, the Bojanala Platinum Wetland Profile and to showcase the LAB: Wetlands SA video, and (3) to pave the way forward for the project and get councilor buy in in preparation for the completed WSAP to be adopted by Council and incorporated into the IDP.

Attendants included several councilors of the Bojanala Platinum District Municipality representing all local municipalities, as well as several technical staff from the three units within the Health and Environmental Services Department.



WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of the workshop was for Bojanala Platinum District Municipality's Health and Environmental Services Department to showcase their roles and responsibilities, as well as challenges, to relevant councilors and portfolio committee members, as well as improve communication between the three units falling under the Department. Furthermore, the aim was to instill a better sense of ownership and collaboration and equip everyone with the knowledge they require to make the correct decisions down the line.

Due to the presence of numerous key decision makers (Councilors and Portfolio Committee members) Bojanala Platinum District Municipality invited ICLEI to present to the attendees of the workshop and be part of the programme. This workshop served as the political leader workshop for the municipality, 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 and decision makers.

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 this session was 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.

Based on previous discussions with PBDM and the internal requirements of the municipality, the Bojanala Platinum Political Leader session aims were:

1. To raise awareness of what wetlands are as well as the services they provide; and
2. To present the LAB: Wetlands SA project and highlight the key outputs to date including the Bojanala Platinum District Municipality Wetland Report, the Bojanala Platinum Wetland Profile and to showcase the LAB: Wetlands SA video.
3. To pave the way forward for the project and get councilor buy in in preparation for the completed WSAP to be adopted by Council and incorporated into the IDP.

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

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Programme Director Ms. A. Budu from Bojanala Platinum District Municipality opened the workshop with a short speech to welcome all councilors, portfolio committee members, technical staff and ICLEI guest. Following the welcome a prayer and the lighting of the candle opened the workshop. All attendees introduced themselves and the MMC Cllr Maluleke gave the welcoming address with the key message being that everyone should learn from each other and encourage working together. A total of 26 people attended the workshop, which included 7 Councilors (9 men and 17 women).

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT WORKSHOP AND PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE MEETING

Following the opening of the workshop, each Unit within the Health and Environmental Services Department was given an opportunity to present on their roles and responsibilities. After each presentation, the councilors and other attendees were given an opportunity to ask strategic questions and discussions were held on appropriate topics.

As part of the Biodiversity and Waste Unit, Ulrike Irlich from ICLEI gave a presentation on the LAB Wetlands SA project. The presentation aimed to both raise awareness of the value of wetlands within the district as well as profile ICLEI and the benefits municipalities reap when joining the organization. The presentation gave explanations on what wetlands are and why they are important as well as the threats they face. The presentation then continued to showcase some of the outcomes the project has achieved to date and the benefits Bojanala Platinum District Municipality has obtained as being part of the project. Furthermore, the presentation highlighted the way forward and the process to be followed with the Strategy and Action Plan, to make councilors aware of the importance of the project and obtain their buy in in advance.

The Bojanala Platinum District Municipality Wetland Report and Profile were officially launched at the workshop and copies of the profile were handed out and attendees were informed of where they could download the report. The Wetland Video was shown to the group.

The presentation was well received by the group and very positive feedback was received.



Figure 1: Bojanala Platinum District Municipality Political leaders, portfolio committee members and technical staff attending the Health and Environmental Services Department workshop.

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) programmes 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



