

Inkomati Flows

Stockholm briefing

### **MDGS, the nexus of the world's developmental agenda**

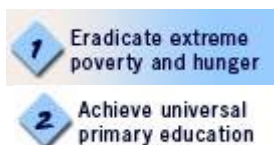
It is indeed a great honour and a privilege to communicate the issues that relate to the World Water Week that took place from the 12-18 August 2007. This www is an annual event where water experts across the globe meet to look at water and sanitation issues affecting the peoples of the world. The attendance to the www was part of the training programme run by Ramboll International, a Swedish company contracted by SIDA to train water resource managers on emerging issues in the water sector like IWRM. This Inkomati Flows will not deal with the training, however, is dedicated specifically to the www as the acme of the training. Though, some issues will be covered scantily.

About 2500 participants from 140 countries of the world gathered in Stockholm Central Conference Centre under the theme "Progress and Prospects on Water: Striving for Sustainability in a Changing World." This annual conference took place exactly half way towards meeting the MDGS as agreed by the UN 7 years ago. This august occasion was officially opened by Dr Anna Tibajuka, a Kenyan and the Under Secretary of the UN-Habitat division of the United Nations.

From the South African side, a delegation of over 40 members was led by the Honorable Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, Ms L.B Hendricks. At a breakfast held on the 13<sup>th</sup> August 2007 at Grand Hotel, accompanied by the S.A ambassador to Sweden, she gathered all the South African delegates to create a platform where all the delegates can meet and know each other. It became apparent that most S.A presenters were going to talk about the IWRM. **The Minister requested a discussion about the future of IWRM in S.A. After some inputs, she requested the ICMA to prepare to input on the matter come the National Water Week 2008, where a conference will be dedicated to the topic.**

This is connoting a serious task to the ICMA. As the first CMA in the country ( stated on numerous accessions) we have to provide a full proof that the ICMA will add value to the transformation agenda of the democratic state. The task is here with us. We have to think hard.

Back to the conference once more. Necessarily, this was an opportunity to reflect on whether the world is half way progressing towards meeting the MDGS. Exposed through the discussions, it became apparent that most countries are behind in seeking to achieve the MDGS indicated below:



-  Promote gender equality and empower women
-  Reduce child mortality
-  Improve maternal health
-  Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
-  Ensure environmental sustainability
-  Develop a global partnership for development

Bothersome, those that are behind in this programme are the poor countries of the world. Reasons attached range from lack of political will to lack of resources. Unfortunately, climate change will worsen the situation as droughts and floods will become more frequent and food may become scarce

Quite impressive, S.A is far ahead in meeting the MDGS. However, coping with climate change is a different issue. Good enough, the ICMA has taken a decision to put climate change on the agenda of all its Board meetings. Just to discuss cannot be enough, we need to take steps like moving from blue water to green water. We need to find creative ways of aquifer recharge and take advantage of virtually water trading. Our comparative advantages in the Region, SADEC, make implementation of these strategies practicable.

### **Lessons learnt**

- Accountable, effective and efficient governments and institutions, critically determine investment from the world funding institutions and private sector.
- Poor countries' focus on capacity building within has to increase to create areas of competitive advantage to cope with the plethora of problems faced.
- Need to acknowledge the complex nature of the challenges presented by the various negative impacts on the resource mainly by economic activities.
- More dialogue anchored on knowledge sharing within countries and world wide provides possibilities for finding solutions to local challenges.
- Poor countries may not adequately adapt to climate change and this increases their vulnerability to accompanying extremes.

The ability of an institution to continue glued to developments in the world through knowledge partnerships, will determine its relevance to the world. Through the NWA, the country has already set the scene. Throughout the conference, every input we made was highly appreciated as an example of how our country is leading in IWRM. These accolades are good, but we all know the backlog on implementation. The ICMA, considering the fact that we are the first in country, should lead in ensuring that more

examples of programme implementation come out. In seeking to achieve this, in the centre of everything, will be the type of human capital we acquire. Failure in this regard will result in failure in all our aspirations.

### **Sin qua non for funding**

The conference dealt with a number of issues through out the week which are very critically to the world's institutions. Amongst others, the issue of corruption in the water sector especially in developing countries also received attention. On the sidelines, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the private sector funders attended one commission where they were asked questions around their willingness to fund programmes and projects aimed at improving the lot of the poor people in the developing countries. Unfortunately, they indicate unwillingness to make funds available to corrupt governments and institutions. Worse, it seems, if you come from these developing countries, before you can request for funding, you need to prove that you are not part of the corrupt club. This criterion for funding seems to be spreading all over including S.A private sector. Just three weeks ago, one local bank demanded our audited financial to see whether we practice good corporate governance for it to assist us with mere petrol cards. So, getting an unqualified audit opinion is becoming a sin qua non for doing business. Failing to do so, accompanied by a poor credit rating, can certainly force an institution to close shop. The statement that the 21st century is a century of governance is becoming clear now.

### **Conclusion**

All things considered, the www was a resounding success. We will continue to focus on the developments from here henceforth. The ICMA committed itself to build elements within it which will make it one of the best institutions in the world. We will always pride ourselves with best practices from which the world can learn from. There is an institution in south Stockholm (about 500 km) which visited South Africa a year ago. After studying the National Water Act, went home to change its functions to those of a CMA as defined in our Act. They did not only change the functions but also change their name from Eman River Union to Eman River CMA. The ICMA must continue along this critical path.

