

Inkomati Flows

Twentieth Edition

A weekly newsletter from the office of the CEO

Developing Engineers in rural areas

The triangle is complete. As it can be remembered, the Inkomati Governing Board and Administration visited Holland in May 2007 as part of the exchange programme initiated by the Institutional Oversight Chief Directorate of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry. The agreement between Water Affairs and the Groot Salland Waterschap in Holland creates a learning platform for the two institutions to share knowledge and experience on integrated water resource management.

Part of what we have learnt in Holland was the triangle where a high school, a university and a water resource institution cooperate to create a clear career path for High school kids. This link of a high school, a university and implementing institution creates both certainties for students and funding in an engineering career.

Sinqobile High School

In our annual report we have indicated that we have established a relationship with Wits University and we were left with a high school to complete the triangle. On Tuesday this past week, we paid a visit to Sinqobile High School in the Nkomazi Municipality. We chose this High School because it really needs assistance. The school is situated about an hour and half drive to the east of Nelspruit.

Unlike the many schools we have in the area, the school is situated deep in the village called Block C Sibayeni. A drive into the school requires a snake winding in a 4X4 wheel drive. The path is so small you cannot believe that it leads to a high school where over 1100 students shape their future. Unfortunately, do not look for a sign board indicating where the school is. The villagers will gladly show the will into the heart of the village where the school is. In this school, we have about 150 students doing their matric this year.

The school, unfortunately, in terms of last year matric results, received about 41% pass rate. This show how serious the situation is when compared with schools like Mbili High School in Limpopo Province. The 37 teachers of the school are charged with the responsibility of improving this situation. Amongst these learners, there are students whose parents came from Mozambique during the war. It is estimated that 80% of the parents are not working which puts strain in the capacity of the school to buy equipments, etc.

The school does not have a laboratory for their science experiments. The few types of equipments they have were borrowed from the neighbouring schools. However, there are two classrooms of about 40 students each which are dedicated to mathematics and science. In these conditions, we expect our future engineers to come through.

The School Governing Body has only one person who has a matric certificate. The rest have no better than elementary education.

The Deputy Principal of the school further indicated that a number of students are orphaned due to HIV and AIDS. This presents a serious challenge to the students as they have to act as parents whilst they are still minors themselves.

One of the challenges that the school is facing in the teaching side is to develop the requisite capacity to the staff. A strong appeal has been made by the management of the school to assist in this regard. Though this is not our core function, we will need to do something to get this matter attended to.

The role of the ICMA at Sinqobile

We have decided to offer bursaries to the school focusing on engineering, financial management and IT. This will be a full bursary for the whole period at university. Of course this will be for the deserving students who have passed matric and got university admission. We will bring Wits University, our other partner, to assist with the preparation of the students to get into their university as a university of first choice. However, we will not limit the students to this university.

We will further find ways of exposing the students to the workings of parastatals of government during the school vacations. The whole intention is to employ them after their successful period of study. As we will have about 19 CMAs in the country, the job opportunities in water resource management will be enough to guarantee employment. Anyway, our areas of focus are in the rear skills which the economy urgently needs.

Nkomazi Municipality goes Dutch with Managers

The Corridor, on its publication of Thursday January 24, reported that:

“Nkomazi municipality stands to share in 700 years of experience of international standard if it accepts the proposal of Waterschap Groot Salland.

The two representatives of this Dutch company, Mr. Sinnema (Manager of international Affairs) and Ms Godelieve Wijffels (board member) were introduced to Nkomazi mayor, Cllr Johan Mavuso and municipal manager Mr. Sabelo Shabangu by Mr. Sizile Ndlovu (CEO of Inkomati Catchment Management Agency) on Tuesday. “We have had a twinning agreement with the ICMA for the past three years and realized that the local municipalities could also benefit,” explained Godelieve. The idea was to

conduct employee exchange programmes in order to share the knowledge this Dutch company has built up over this 700 years.

Ndlovu explained that although that the ICMA offices are in Nelspruit, it decided to use Nkomazi municipality for the project. “Since it is uniquely situated, bordering both Mozambique and Swaziland, it stands to benefit more than both areas, there is a clear need for a programme of this nature here.”

In the very May of 2007, we made a commitment to twin our local government municipality with one in Holland. The ball has started rolling. An introduction has been done to Nkomazi Municipality and, the Mayor and his colleagues welcomed this. Interestingly, the Mayor had cherished a dream to visit Holland for a long time. As things are penning out, he is likely to be aboard a plain to Holland in June.

After this day, we paid a visit to some of our critical water users in the Nkomazi area. Amongst others we visited was the TSB. This big industry in the province has a turnover of R6 billion annually. This sugar manufacturing factory has been operating relying on the water of the catchment since around 1967. It is a major contributor to the economy of this province. Note has to be taken that 60% of the jobs in the province are in the agricultural sector.

Going forward

Our water Act obliges us to involve our stakeholders in water resource management. This year we hope to consult our draft business plan with the stakeholders in the presence of our Honorable Minister. This will happen in about three weeks time from now. All the activities of the ICMA are intended to position the institution to be an agent of change. We have to work hard to improve the lot of the poor and the vulnerable.