

Inkomati Flows

27th Edition

A weekly newsletter from the office of the CEO

Six months experience in the ICMA

This edition is based on a discussion with RT (Ruth Tsakane Maphophe) on her life experience in the ICMA. We will remember that the ICMA administration is built on a dictum that ‘working in the ICMA is an experience’. This interview sought to find out whether indeed it has been an “experience” so far.

R.S: What has been your experience working in the ICMA so far, is life okay here.

R.T: Sure! The reception, even my first day was very warm. There is a team spirit here and therefore it is easy to establish relations in the institution. The people are friendly and easy to approach and work with. The administrative hierarchy is not emphasized.

R.S: Are there any areas of improvement?

R.T: Yes, I think there is a need to improve formal communication lines and processes in order to ensure that all staff members are up to speed with developments in the ICMA. Also, proper or formal communication will save us from rumours and ‘from-the-grapevine’ type of messages that can destroy the prevailing team spirit.

R.S: What do we need to do more to get the experience we seek to achieve for our colleagues here?

R.T: Something like a family day where we can meet family members of our colleagues in a relaxed environment in order to ‘get-to-know-each-other’ better especially the background. More social events are critical. They get people to relax and de-stress.

R.S: The staff we have, how do you feel about them?

R.T: The staff of the ICMA is quite diverse, we have the young, the middle-aged and the old; black and white, as well as people who come from various provinces and areas which means that you get to speak almost all South African languages in a day! There is also diversity in terms of skills and experience acquired from previous employment. This amounts to a rich culture and expertise that we can tap on and further develop or shape to suit the ICMA. What is more interesting is that there is openness to learning amongst staff and they also share their views quite easy and make one feel at home. You cannot believe that I am six months in the institution however I can confide in colleagues and the same does happen from their side. It is quite unique to have that.

R.S: Any further things to do?

R.Tthings to do, one is to ensure that the quarter assessment is extended to all staff. This will assist to make every staff member see their contribution in working for the common goal. We also need to recognize good performance. Those that are hard working need encouragement. We need to work on that. One may need to put emphasis on Leadership and Management development. These two elements can take us far.

R.S: Are we sharing a common vision. What do you think?

R.T: I see a knowledge gap between management and the lower level staff. We need to find ways of filtering down the knowledge so that we can build confidence on the core business more especially to the staff at that level.

R.S: Do you have two things that can enhance our effectiveness?

R.T: Yes. The first one is the delegation of functions. We need DWAF to quickly finalise the process of delegations. Without the functions there is nowhere we will go. The second one is the mentoring and coaching. We have pockets of excellence and we have areas of concern. Coaching and mentoring can take us far. Yes, these are the two I think we need to attend to now. However, I am not hearing us talking about the Regional Land Claims Commission. Are we not supposed to be working more with them? May be we need to get that as a priority.

R.S: In terms of the core business, what do you need to know to get a fair view of the ICMA at this stage?

R.T: We need all to know our geographic area of operation, physically, where these rivers, streams, canals and dams are situated. We need to visit all these areas so that we can have a clear understanding of the resources that we are managing. We need also to know how much water is allocated to the users both emerging and commercial farmers. This will assist us to know how to deal with the issue of transformation of Irrigation Boards. We need to know the whole infrastructure in the water management area. Out of this, an infrastructure development plan can be drawn which will form part of the Catchment Management Strategy. In fact all staff members must know this because this is the core business of the ICMA.

R.S: That sounds interesting.

R.T: Sure. This will make us to have more meetings with the Water and Irrigation Boards. There is that need to get them involved in the business of the ICMA.

R.S:about the office of the CEO?

The first thing will be delegation of functions to Executive Managers. That will be an improvement. For me that is very important. Look at the issue of processing leave applications. This must be delegated to the immediate supervisors. This is just one example. This will allow you to focus on High level strategic issues. One of the benefits would be to fast-track decision making.

Secondly, the physical appearance of the office is also requiring some work. I do not know what stakeholders and other visitors think about the image but we need to build a good impression and image. It is critical.

Thirdly, Formulation of strategic messages and filtering to lower level is also critical. This is part of formal communication that requires improvement at this stage.

R.S: What is your view about our role in terms of stakeholders? Does it require improvement?

R.T: I am not sure whether I will give a fair view on this as it is not my area of operation. I only met the stakeholders at the business planning consultation session. My understating is that stakeholder must hold us accountable to the business plan. During that period of the business plan development I realized how critical and significant their inputs are. If we had not involved them, our business plan would be meaningless as we would have left out critical issues. In order to realize our Vision, Water for All in Inkomati, we need their input.

R.S: What do you think about DWAF?

R.T: Honestly I see DWAF as the most important strategic partner. This is in the sense that we are taking functions which were or are performed by DWAF for many years. This makes them a very critical player in our business. Also the fact that we are still dependent on them for funding almost binds us to them even more. I personally think communication in DWAF is fragmented. One issue has to go to many people before it can be resolved and this leads to processes being too slow. May be the Department is too big.

R.S: By the way you come from Vhembe. What is the difference between us?

R.T: Vhembe District Municipality (VDM) was established in 2000 and at this stage one can say it is well established in terms of Structure, Systems and processes as well as general administration. By last year the municipality had grown significantly as a result of new powers and functions devolved (Water Service Authority and Municipal Health Services) that led to VDM taking transfer of over 500 staff members from DWAF and the Department of Health in Limpopo. So the major difference is that the ICMA is at an establishment stage or phase and not yet fully capacitated in terms of systems, human capital and funding. This is however exciting for me to be part of the establishment as I see this as an opportunity to set trends and benchmarks for other CMAs to follow and learn from. We will appear in the History journal of CMAs as the first in the Country.

R.S:our international friends?

R.T: I am aware that we do have international friends but have not had an opportunity to interact with them on a one-to-one basis. I only interacted with Keimpe during the advertisement for the Netherlands Scholarship.

It is interesting to note that we have attracted a lot of attention from the Netherlands, Zambia, Mozambique and Swaziland. The fact that we are less than three years but we have got this attention gives us confidence that we are going in the right direction. It gives us an opportunity for growth and learning new approaches from entities outside our country.

R.S: The Board. How is your feel?

R.T: Yaa, the Board is diversified and representative, this is strength. I feel that this puts us at an advantage as we are able to get views from diverse backgrounds. We may need to look at how diversity can add more value. What is critical is to continue with current capacity building initiatives for the Governing Board. This will enable more discussions and inputs. It feels good when positive feedback on administration comes from the Board. However, constructive criticism is also welcome as it helps us to grow.

R.S: Yes RT. Thank you for your time. Remember it is the first time we run an Inkomati Flows in this form of an interview. Your openness is highly appreciated. It is a major contribution to the ICMA.

RT: The pleasure is mine, I actually feel privileged to be the first employee to be interviewed by the CEO for yet another edition of the Inkomati Flows. I am indeed happy to serve the ICMA and trust that all my colleagues feel the same way.
'Together, building and learning for work excellence'!

Thank you.