

Inspiring true leadership

Inspiring passionate leadership so that those in top positions in local government embrace their work with a new and fresh commitment was the motivation of the Governance Summer School (GSS), held in Somerset West in March 2008.

Before the event, Western Cape Head of Department for Local Government and Housing, Shanaaz Majiet, said she wanted those municipal leaders attending the GSS to leave with a strong feeling of commitment to serve ordinary people with passion.

If the comments and enthusiasm of delegates was anything to go by, this aim was certainly achieved during the five day summer school. Feedback was all positive, with people using words like “informative”, “energising” and “thought-provoking” to describe the conference.

“Great leadership relies on deep self awareness and emotional maturity,” Majiet said, “the Summer School aims to build on this by encouraging reflection and an understanding of the responsibilities of being in a managerial position in local government.”

The GSS is an initiative of Western Cape MEC for Local Government and Housing, Qubudile Richard Dyantyi and, for the first time ever, involves traditional authorities and local government leaders from three provinces, the Northern, Eastern and Western Cape.

As Dyantyi commented at the opening function for the GSS, local government leaders should “look to each other to find solutions to common problems.

The first inter-provincial Governance Summer School was an ideal platform for sharing ideas, heralding a new era of inter-governmental relations, he said.

Toko Xasa, Eastern Cape MEC for local government, housing and tribal authorities agreed. She said inter-provincial co-operation would open invisible borders enabling local government leaders to learn from and share solutions with each other on common issues.

The strong leadership needed to deal with these

kinds of issues did not always exist, she said.

JF “Boeboe” van Wyk, from the Northern Cape said local government needed “strong, seasoned leaders” to facilitate development.

“We need to develop expertise and, in the case of the Northern Cape, we need to retain these expertise.

Tutu Ralane, chair of Parliament’s select committee on finance, kept the the GSS delegates firmly rooted in reality when he said there must be dialogue between departments within a province before too much was made of inter-provincial initiatives or else service delivery could be compromised.

Ralane’s speech, the last in a line of dignitaries, tempered the ebullience of the pioneer inter-provincial Governance Summer School, reminding local government leaders that there are real challenges facing service delivery in South Africa.

Nevertheless, the three MEC’s all voiced their enthusiasm for the initiative. In coming years, they said, it is hoped the conversations started at the Governance Summer School will see a sharing of skills and ideas as provinces grapple with issues relating to service delivery.

Lechesa Tsenoli, chair of the portfolio committee on local government said the inter-provincial effort was an “historical” moment in that is crossed both political and administrative boundaries.

The GSS programme focused on leadership development, looking at areas of best practise as well as giving delegates a chance to grapple with problems in a series of workshops.

Documentary films added to the learning process, while on-the-

couch discussions with leaders such as Mac Maharaj and Western Cape Premier Ebrahim Rasool provided food for thought.

“Our mission with the GSS is to encourage great thinking and ingenuity among our leaders,” says Majiet, “I am looking forward to seeing how participants engage with the process and embrace key new lessons into their leadership practice.”

Majiet confirmed that the summer school will be an annual event.

“This is a major learning and networking time for municipal leadership structures in the three provinces. There is so much wisdom across these areas and it is time to capitalise on this through workshops, dialogue and presentations.”





Anthony Ewerts

Defining municipal challenges

Sipho Sebusho, from the Kgalagadi District Municipality in the Northern Cape, said the biggest challenge facing his local government was the backlog in housing and infrastructure.

“Our local government is in former Bophuthatswana,” he says, “poverty and unemployment are major factors.”

Sebusho said there was a need to clarify the roles of local government leaders who often became “too involved” when they needed to spend more time looking at the “bigger picture”. Nomonde Dyani from the Great Kei Municipality in the Eastern Cape, said the communities her local government served were being held up by poor infrastructure.

“We live in a beautiful part of South Africa that has great tourism potential but the roads are terrible and water and sanitation infrastructure are insufficient.”

Poverty alleviation would come with infrastructure development as the areas around Komga, Chintsa, Hagga Hagga and Kei Mouth attracted growing volumes of tourists.

Anthony Ewerts from the Kannaland Municipality in the Western Cape, were keen to use the GSS as an opportunity to meet government leaders who can explain why worthwhile job creation projects are often stonewalled by red tape.

“We have good ideas that never get off the ground because people are worried about “vetplante” and “klippies” (fossils),” said Ewerts. He went on to say that a municipality like Kannaland needed “big development” to boost earnings of local residents enabling them to pay rates. “This way we won’t have to go to government, cap in hand, asking for money,” he said.

Praise from the Minister

Government, local, provincial and national, will act audaciously and unusually in striving to improve and accelerate service delivery through improved leadership and management.

These were the words of Minister of Public Service Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, speaking via live video link from her offices in Tshwane, was pleased with progress made so far in the national government’s plans to improve service delivery across the country, but was the first to admit that plenty still needs to be done and that strong leadership and competent management were key to meeting their objectives.

“Our goal is to improve access to government services for all our citizens, no matter where they are,” she said. “We’re focusing on a people-centred approach and for it to work we need strong and capable professionals in leadership positions to drive this policy.”

She applauded the efforts of the Western Cape, Eastern Cape and Northern Cape provincial governments for having the foresight in organising to get together at the GSS in an attempt to improve inter-provincial working relationships, adding that she hopes all the other provinces follow suit.

“It is vitally important that our provinces – and even our local municipalities – learn to work together to solve problems,” she said, “especially in light of the proposed

Single Public Service (SPS) legislation that we hope will be passed by parliament as early as November this year.”

Announced during President Thabo Mbeki’s State of the Nation address in 2007, the SPS legislation seeks to centralise the public service sector so as to better respond to the public’s demand for various government services. Service delivery, says Fraser-Moleketi, is key to the SPS.

“What we want to achieve is government being able to present a single-face to its citizens,” she explained, “and being able to guarantee all of its citizens experience the same-level of service delivery across all three spheres of government – local, provincial and national.”

It is the level of service delivery, however, that many claim needs to be improved and Fraser-Moleketi agrees wholeheartedly, saying that improving this area of government was the main reason behind the proposed SPS legislation.

“Our public service works under the motto “we belong, we serve, we care” which is wonderful in theory but in practice our public service remains generally unfriendly towards South African citizens.

“A lot of the time public servants continue to act as if they are doing the public a favour and that is a mindset we have to change.

“Whether one is an elected official or an appointed official, it is our job to serve.”

Co-operation in action

In an example of co-operation in action, the Western and Eastern Cape provincial governments used the forum of the GSS to announce their intention to give a once-off cash-injection from their budgets to the Northern Cape to help end its housing backlog.

Western Cape MEC for Local Government and Housing, Qubudile Richard Dyantyi, made the announcement in his opening presentation.

“We are looking at enough funds for between 15 000 to 20 000 houses,” he said in an interview afterwards.

“We will not take money away from housing in the Western Cape,” Dyantyi explained, “this will be money allocated from our provincial budget to the Northern Cape towards its housing backlog.”

He said that too often housing backlogs were approached in a “bietjie-bietjie” manner with no inroads made into the backlog.

Eastern Cape MEC for Local Government, Housing and Traditional Affairs, Toko Xasa, has also agreed to the initiative which has yet to be approved by the national Department of Finance.

Dyantyi said the idea had been discussed among Western Cape MECs who understood that the housing backlog in the Northern Cape could be wiped out with an extra push from that province’s two neighbours.

“For the first time in our country one province will be able to say they do not have a housing problem,” Dyantyi said.

Dyantyi said other projects could be identified in future where the three provinces could help each other.

Northern Cape Local Government and Housing MEC JF “Boeboe” van Wyk said the cash injection meant there was a good chance that



the Northern Cape would be able to would meet the national target of eradicating informal settlements by 2014.

And this was not the only time at the conference that the Northern Cape was the centre of attention.

On Day 3 of the conference, Harry Dugmore, from the South African Presidency’s Policy Co-ordination and Advisory Services, told delegates that the Northern Cape could compare with the safest countries in the world.

“Spain has the lowest crime level in

the European Union,” he said, “and the Northern Cape’s are lower.”

His statement was met with cheers and clapping from Northern Cape local government leaders.

Renita Soodeyal, executive manager for housing with the Northern Cape’s Department of Housing and Local Government, said the province should be held up as an example of “best practise” to the rest of the country.

“It’s hats off the South African Police Services,” she said, “they are vigilant and visible in the Northern Cape and this is paying off.”

Kagisho Ositang, from the Gamagara Local Municipality near Kuruman, said Dugmore’s statistics “reinforce the idea that our province is a tranquil and spiritual place where people live more balanced lives”.

Clement Itumeleng, also from Gamagara Local Municipality, said Dugmore’s statement proved that although people were poor they did not automatically resort to crime.

“It immediately made me think of a community like Pixley ka Sema (near Colesburg) where strong leadership and good co-ordination means social problems like housing are being dealt with properly.”

Ositang also pointed out that Northern Cape people were not people who stood waiting for government hand-outs but were proactively finding ways to earn their livings.

The formula for good governance

We have the skills, we have the knowledge, and we have the framework to make the public service work, all that is lacking is the spark and that spark is leadership.

Using the analogy of an ironmonger who has all the tools but lacks that first spark to light the fire, facilitator David Schmidt laid out the basic tenets of what constitutes good leadership Schmidt got down to the nuts-and-bolts nitty-gritty of what makes a good leader and how to improve leadership skills, all the while reinforcing a constant theme that leadership is key to getting things done.

This theme was carried through in the daily workshop sessions, where delegates were divided into four groups, each with a real-life municipal management challenge to tackle.

“Whether things happen or not is almost always down to the presence – or lack of strong leadership,” Schmidt said.

“Some people are born with natural leadership ability but everyone can learn to be a better leader. And all of us

will, at some stage or another, be called upon to take on some sort of leadership responsibilities.”

Distilling reams of research and thought on the matter, Schmidt spoke about the attributes of a good leader and how to improve one’s leadership skills by focusing on those areas where one is weakest and by being open to new ideas.

Unsurprisingly the outstanding leadership of former President Nelson Mandela was often referred to, especially in the all-important but oft-overlooked area of counter-intuitive wisdom.

“Good leaders, like former president Mandela, have the counter-intuitive wisdom to recognise that the obvious or popular answer is often not an answer at all,” explained Schmidt.

“They recognise that change is often about changing the way people think. The good leader is able to inspire the people with their vision; they are able to get the people to see that change is necessary even though most people do not like change.

“A good leader not only implements change, but inspires the people to focus on the problems most would rather ignore.”

Edgar Pieterse, Director of the African Centre for Cities at the University of Cape Town, agreed, pointing out that local government leaders needed to have confidence in their abilities and emotional maturity if they were to successfully drive the teams charged with delivering services to South Africa’s people.

“The formula for good leadership is to ensure you have the competencies around you to get the job done, an ability to build integrity within your organisation and innovation which enables you to navigate through difficult problems.”

Pieterse said local government leaders attending the conference workshops had tended towards a “technocratic response” and needed to make more of “adaptive challenges”

like making deals and building coalitions when dealing with problems.

Facilitator Sindisile Maclean emphasised the importance “collective leadership” and developing trust between political leaders and administrators.

“If you treat each other as colleagues instead of friends the relationship works much more successfully,” he said.

Referring to the case study, which involved an enthusiastic but complacent municipal manager he emphasised the importance of consultation in decision-making processes.

“You must have buy in from stake-holders or else the process cannot go forward,” he said.

Sinazo Sibisi from the Development Bank of South Africa said she was impressed by the listening skills and interactive abilities of municipal leaders attending the workshops.

“People began to struggle when they had to get to the heart of the problem. The approach needed to be more systematic with a critical analysis (that is the cause and effect) of each issue.”

She said the tendency was to look for external influences with an emphasis on legislation and process rather than on the role of the individual in the process.

It was at this stage in the workshops that some delegates stopped attending the discussions.

“What we need to understand about leadership is that you can’t give up, you are in it for the long haul.”

Each group had an opportunity to present an analysis of the problem they had tackled during the week and to explain how they, as local government leaders, would resolve the issue.

Group 1’s example entitled “The Pressure Cooker” looked at issues relating to mistrust between politicians and administrators and a municipal manager who could not handle conflict. The emphasis of their response was on building strong leadership and teams that could deliver while improving communication.

Group 2 had a municipal manager and mayor at loggerheads coupled with deteriorating staff morale and a corrupt official. The response of this group was to help the mayor understand her leadership style and to rebuild relationships at the top level. They also advised her to take a hard line with individuals who misused trust.

Group 3 outlined the challenges facing rural municipalities with complexities like difficult traditional leaders and the pressure for economic development pitted against issues of sustainability.

This group favoured asking the provincial government structures for help, improving training and asking the Development Bank of SA to assist with skills development for the financial manager.

The final example was of a complacent but enthusiastic municipal manager who over-focused on long-term strategies while assuming all was well back at the office. When auditors informed her that fraud was on the increase the team advised her to get back to the office and pay attention to basics.

Western Cape Department of Local Government and Housing HoD, Shanaaz Majiet summed up the workshops saying how wonderful it would be to have the combined wisdom of all those who worked through the workshop problems to help solve day-today problems in local governments.

“Maybe then being the leader would not always have to be so lonely.”



Charles Ntomi

Projects, backlogs and hope

Pumelelo Kate of the Makana Municipality in the Eastern Cape believes that the biggest problem facing the municipality is the provision of housing and in a broader sense, service delivery.

“We are experiencing a backlog in housing delivery,” he said.

“We need the support of provincial and local government to overcome these challenges and to ensure allocations for housing are provided timeously.”

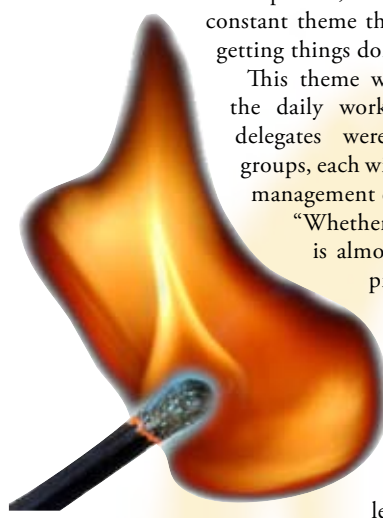
Charles Ntomi of Breede Valley Municipality identified the current issue with load shedding as a major concern. “We recently purchased a farm in the Rawsonville area,” he said, illustrating one case in point.

“But now Eskom has told us to stop development there, so that project is at a standstill.”

“We have huge infrastructural backlogs and issues with money, but we have lobbied to the provincial government to assist us,” he continued.

Professor of Law at the University of the Western Cape, Jaap de Visser is optimistic about the GSS conference.

“I think it’s an excellent event,” he said.



Emulating the moral choices of true leaders

Those fabulously colourful shirts and that famous soft-shoe shuffle may be nowhere in sight but the legacy of Madiba still looms large. As it should, with former President Nelson Mandela embodying all the characteristics of great leadership, characteristics learners at the GSS are striving to emulate as they seek to improve their own ability to deliver to the people.

In seeking to tap in to the skills and knowledge of past leaders, many former struggle and government stalwarts were invited to speak of their experiences of leadership – and almost without fail they end up either quoting the great man or speaking of his ability to resolve what seemed to be the most intractable problems.

Mac Maharaj, the first Minister of Transport in the new democratic South Africa, was no exception, capturing the imagination of even the most fatigued learner with his tales of life behind bars on Robben Island with Madiba and other legendary leaders such as Albert Sisulu.

In attempting to explain why Madiba is such a great leader, Maharaj quoted an axiom his old friend learnt from the chief of his Xhosa tribe; an axiom Madiba often quoted himself when explaining what makes someone a good leader:

“A leader is like a shepherd; he stays behind the flock, allowing the nimble sheep to leap ahead thinking they are leading the flock while all the while they are being

directed from behind.”

However, Maharaj was quick to point out that great leaders have the ability to sum up the situation and go against accepted beliefs if it is called for.

“Remember that Madiba went ahead with negotiations with the apartheid government without consulting any of his colleagues,” explained Maharaj. “

He believed that if he did inform them of his intentions that they would veto him. In this instance he was the nimble sheep leaping ahead of the flock because that is what the situation demanded.

“He also realised that as a leader you sometimes have to take actions that are unpopular or actions whose results will only be known years later.

And Madiba always was ready to accept the responsibility of those actions.”

While much of the discussion was taken up with anecdotes both touching and hilarious, Maharaj perhaps inspired learners most out of all the speakers today, ending his talk by admitting that while “there are no more Mandelas or Sisulus, there is a Mandela, there is a Sisulu in each one of you.”

The theme of the good within each person was continued by Iqbal Survé, CEO and Chairman of the Sekunjalo Investment Group and South Africa’s 2007 Businessman of the Year when he addressed delegates.

Every person is essentially good but life is complex and one’s value system can be compromised by a multitude of different factors, he said.

In his

presentation entitled “Leadership and ethics – Lessons from the business sector”, Survé used the true story of a group of American businessmen, who spent a great deal of money and prepared long and hard to make an ascent of Mount Everest, but who were faced with a difficult moral dilemma when they were halfway.

“On their way to the top they met a Tibetan holy man who was clearly in distress and would die if they did not help him,” Survé told a captivated audience.

“They had to make a moral decision, do they leave him there and carry on, after all they had spent so much money and prepared for this for so long, or do they take him down.”

After much discussion the businessmen decided to leave the holy man they reasoned that anyone on the mountain should know the risk. They made it to the top of Everest and on the descent looked for the holy man but he was gone.

“The question is, did they do the right thing? And, what would you do in a similar situation?” he asked delegates. After some mumbling from the audience Survé delivered his curve ball. “The leader of that expedition regretted his decision to walk away from that holy man.

“The businessmen were all good men but, when they were faced with one of the big moral decisions of their lives, did they do the right thing?”

The point was, he said, that leadership often produced numerous dilemmas that needed a multi-dimensional response. His advice to his audience: “when faced with difficult decisions stay close to your moral centre.”

In his presentation Survé talked about the conflicts created by a free-market economy especially in a country like South Africa where “the poor were getting poorer and the rich richer.”

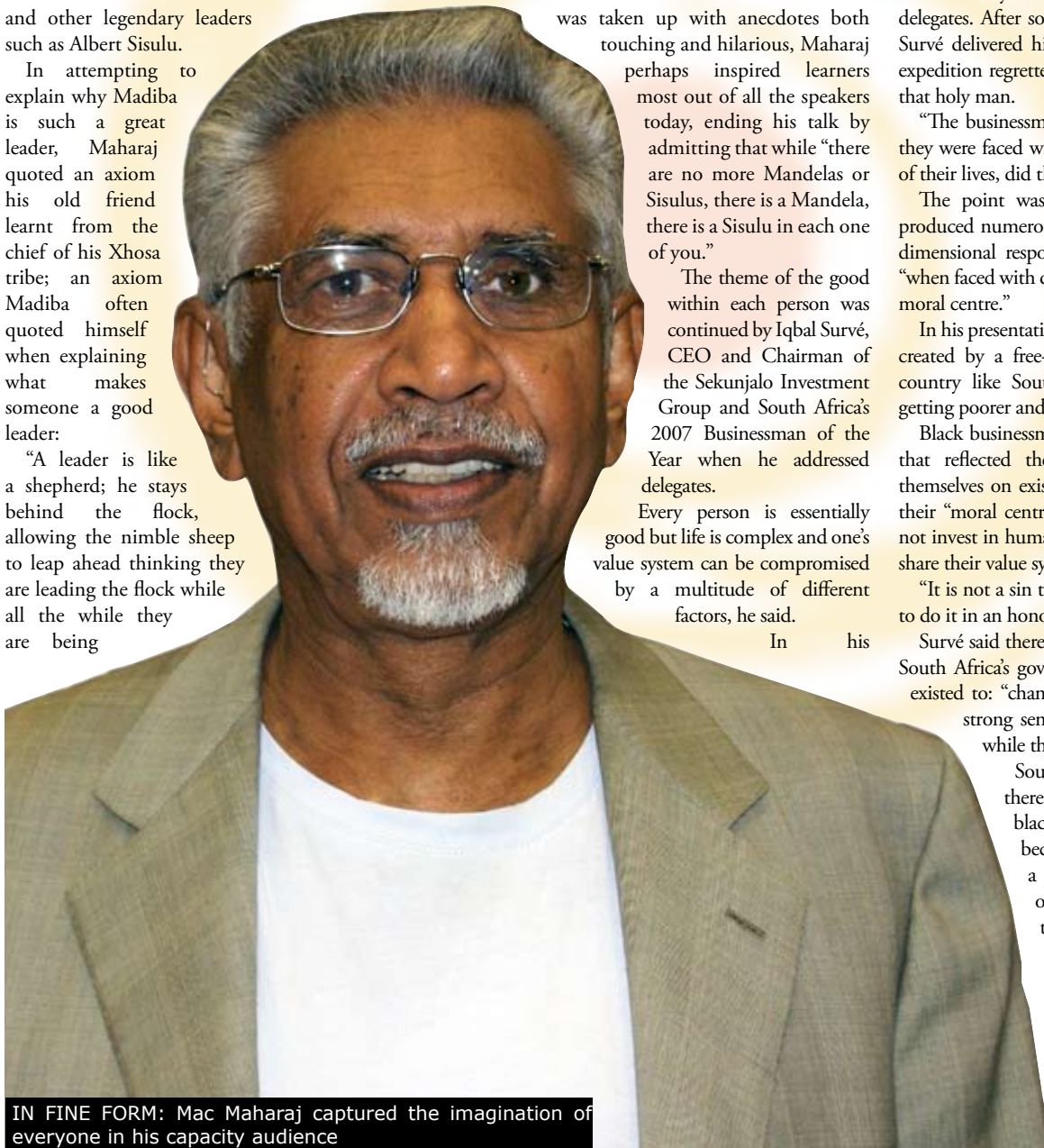
Black businessmen need to find new role models that reflected their history, he said. To model themselves on existing business was to lose sight of their “moral centre” as apartheid-era businesses did not invest in human capital and did not, necessarily, share their value system.

“It is not a sin to make money but it is important to do it in an honourable way.”

Survé said there would always be tension between South Africa’s government and business as the one existed to: “change society, help the needy with a strong sense of commitment and sacrifice,” while the other was there to make money.

South Africa was exceptional in that there was a strong friendship between black business and government because of their shared experience and a joint desire to redress imbalances of the past and change the legacy of the country.

Survé said he was guided by a simple philosophy; “Do good and do well; use shared experience that recognises common objectives and, whatever method of delivery you use, ensure that the ordinary people do well.”



IN FINE FORM: Mac Maharaj captured the imagination of everyone in his capacity audience

A glimpse into the future of SA

South Africa's policy makers need to take heed of future-based research to plan for different scenarios and avoid costly catastrophes like the country's current power crisis.

Harry Dugmore, from the South African Presidency's Policy Co-ordination and Advisory Services, said too often research was ignored and no plans put in place for inevitable scenarios.

Dugmore introduced delegates to the Presidency's "Scenario Planning for 2025" which is to be released in July this year.

He drew attention to the current electricity crisis saying it would have been easy to predict when placed alongside the country's economic growth.

"Sooner or later the lines were going to cross," he said.

Dugmore said current scenario planning was showing that there would be a "seismic shift" in the world economic power in coming years with China and India rapidly coming up behind the United States of America in terms of growth.

On the oil crisis, he said, the current high prices had surprised even scenario planners, and looked set to worsen.

"There is no oil to sell. Do you not think that, at these prices, Saudi Arabia would not be pumping more oil if it could? The truth is there is nothing to pump, supplies are dwindling."

Dugmore introduced the delegates to the concept of "peak oil", which was when the world's finite oil supply was half gone. He said scientists predicted

this would happen in 2015 but others said the halfway mark had already been passed.

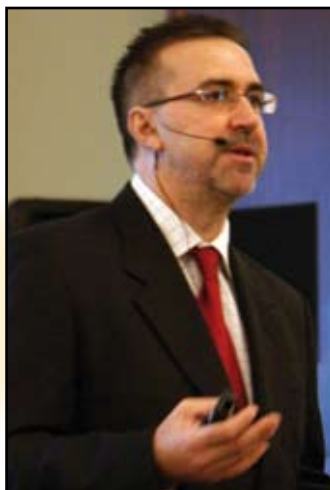
Very worrying for South Africa was the growing income inequality between rich and poor countries with a large part of the world's wealth concentrated among a handful of rich people in the US.

"The top 10% of the US population own as much as 43% of the rest of the world."

Even in South Africa the wealth gap was widening – not between race groups but between the middle class and the poor.

"Poverty is a huge factor for our country with 45% of our people living on less than R3000 a year." Social welfare grants had alleviated suffering for many but did not include the unemployed.

Dugmore also drew attention to South Africa's low literacy levels saying that if more was done for primary education, high school and university education would



WARNING: Harry Dugmore

take care of themselves.

In a follow-up presentation Edgar Pieterse, Director of the African Centre for Cities at the University of Cape Town, said South Africa was walking a fine line between growth, redistribution, equity and sustainability.

Government leaders had to make "hard choices" in the types of interventions they wanted to make in communities so that they would have maximum impact.

"Our leaders need to do their homework on issues they feel unsure about and identify points of energy among business and communities."



INSPIRED: Fundiswa Gxabuza

Municipal collaboration is essential

Most municipalities in the three partner departments of the Western, Northern and Eastern Cape face similar challenges. These include a backlog in housing, a lack of funding and poor infrastructure and service delivery. Most were unanimous in agreeing that more support from central government is needed, along with support from other institutions to provide financial aid.

It is for these reasons that Dean O'Neill from Matzikama Municipality believes that the GSS is "essential."

"It's a great platform for local government from different provinces to share best practice," he said. "We may be based in different provinces, but we face the same problems and it will be interesting to see how each of us will address these problems."

Furthermore, O'Neill said that politics in the Western Cape was the biggest challenge the municipality faces. "In the Western Cape we have a coalition government of the ID, DA and an independent councillor, but the ANC has the most seats," he explained. "So, you're not just doing your work in the municipality, but also managing politics."

Additionally, he reinforced that funding is a huge problem, especially with housing and services from central government. "You try to do what you can," he said, "but there is a backlog."

Bongani Salman from Elundini Municipality in the Eastern Cape believes the GSS is a "good initiative and informative."

"The critical issue now," he declared, "is how we will assist the Western Cape, to which a lot of people are migrating. There is also a lot of unemployment in the area, but we are working on solutions together."

Cornelius Ovies from the West Coast District Municipality says that with so many strategies and policies in place, it is often difficult for municipal leaders to do what they want to do. "Even though municipalities may have some good ideas," he clarified, "Legislation and politicians often keep these ideas from being implemented."

Fundiswa Gxabuza from the Department of Local Government and Housing in the Western Cape enjoyed the studies on leadership presented by Professor Brian O'Connell on the first day. "It taught us all what a bad leader is about," she said. "It will be interesting to come to the next Summer School to see how far we've come."

Inspiration on the big screen

The documentary films shown to GSS delegates were more than just good entertainment. Chosen for their demonstration of how solutions to seemingly intractable problems can be found, the two films showed very different examples of good leadership.

A Convenient Truth: Urban Solutions from Curitiba, Brazil was a heartening documentary focusing on the innovative, even radical, urban environmental solutions from a bustling city in Brazil.

Most environmental documentaries run along the lines of, "you thought the world was bad? Well, actually it's far worse..."

Not so with this documentary - how refreshing that a film offers practical solutions from a real-life, large-scale example rather than just showing the problems.

Curitiba in Brazil needed solutions to the usual major problems facing a large city. A limited budget forced innovative and also environmentally friendly solutions.

What emerged was an effective bus system that rivals underground trains for efficiency, a pioneering recycling scheme that also cleaned up the city by paying people for collecting trash, ample housing and jobs for people on low incomes and a solution to flooding that also created beautiful park areas.

It may all sound too good to be true but those who put their faith in their city leaders were handsomely rewarded.

The other documentary showed a significant yet largely unknown part of South Africa's past: the history of football on Robben Island.

A special preview of the film "More

Than Just a Game", from producer Anant Singh and featuring, among others, actor Presley Chweneyagae from the award-winning drama "Tsotsi", was a hit with delegates who showed their appreciation with a standing ovation as the end credits rolled.

It was an ovation richly deserved: although lacking the slick technical prowess of Hollywood documentary productions, it was a film that touched both the heart and the funny bone in surprising ways.

Using a combination of documentary interviews, dramatic re-enactment and historical footage, the film tells the story of five prisoners who formed the Makana Football Association, and how playing the game helped them "escape" from the hellish conditions in which they were incarcerated.

It's all about harnessing the powers of others

A fascinating look at how the Indian city of Mumbai tackled its low-income housing crisis through vibrant and equal partnerships with the communities directly affected was the focus of yesterday afternoon's session of the Governance Summer School (GSS) for local government leaders, underway in Somerset West.

Over the past week learners have all heard how to better their leadership skills and among the many recurring themes has been one of direct community involvement, not just as direct beneficiaries of policies and interventions, but as partners in the policy and intervention design process.

It was a theme reiterated by Joel Bolnick of the non-governmental organisation Shack Dwellers International as he expounded on lessons to be learnt from the Indian experience, focusing on two cities that boast some of the highest population densities on earth, severe poverty issues and a massive informal settlement population.

"It's all about harnessing the powers of others," he said. "Data collection is vital – you have to know the problem and understand the problem before you can solve it – and who better to collect that data than those who are directly affected by the problem."

Mumbai's local authorities, faced with a massive low-income relocation and housing crisis, turned to community organisation National Slum Dweller's Association (NSDA) for help, engaging the association on a number of issues and co-opting them in to both the data collection and policy design process.

The city faced the problem of ever-expanding slum-dwelling areas, many of which sprung up around railway line transport hubs and grew so fast and to such an extent that they began encroaching on the railway lines, a danger to both railway commuters and the slum-dwellers.

But such was the success of the partnership that disaster was averted – in Mumbai, with the NSDA driving the process, authorities managed to relocate over 30 000 slum dwellers to new housing, and with a further 70 000 relocations planned in the near future.

"They managed to transform the city to the benefit of all residents,



HIGH DENSITY: Slums in Mumbai

from the richest of the rich to the poorest of the poor," explained Bolnick. "And they did so by using the community as real players in the process. It's a perfect example of the importance of getting communities properly involved in a hands-on way in decision-making that directly affects them.

"If you don't involve the community, if you simply present them with the solution, that leads to a sense of entitlement and an unfortunate dependence on the state to solve everything. By giving away their problems, communities give away the solutions to those problems too."

One of the main obstacles to getting the community involved, explained Bolnick, is government's mistrust of those communities, a belief that communities cannot manage themselves. It's a belief, he said, based on a lack of knowledge.

"Governments can tend to think that way because they don't know the communities they serve. You have to engage with communities to understand who they are. You must ask the question 'who are you?'"

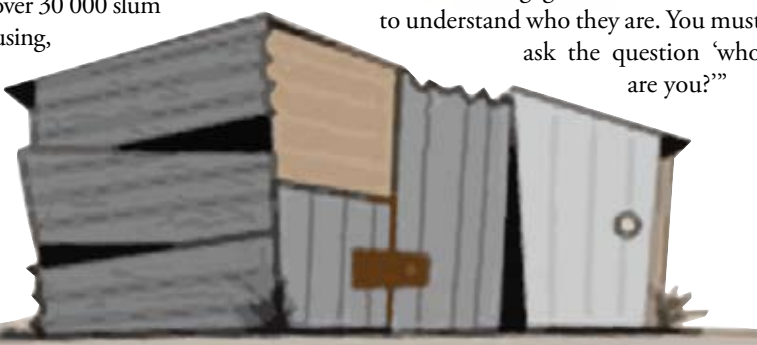
Bolnick also urged patience from all – "there will be disappointments and successes and it will not happen overnight" – saying that the Mumbai slum dwellers were involved in the process for 21 years before they got new housing.

"The funny thing is that the people who can put up with the long delays are usually the poor, because they have little or nothing" he said. "Those with resources tend to be a lot more impatient."

And he concluded with yet another oft-repeated statement: "as leaders you have to be able to convince the people to go the distance."



INSPIRED: Joel Bolnick



The time has come to face challenges head on

Leadership challenges in creating sustainable human settlements and services came under the spotlight with a focus on Isidima, the Western Cape's settlement and housing policy. Learners heard how pro-active, innovative and, most importantly, fearless leadership would be needed to create and steer solutions to highly complex problems.

Professor Mark Swilling, from the Stellenbosch University's School of Public Management and Planning's Sustainability Institute, spoke about the various obstacles and complications faced by those tasked with creating sustainable human settlements in an urban environment and pointed out some solutions that have made a difference in the Western Cape.

Swilling was building on a theme developed earlier by Professor Brian O'Connell, rector of the University of the Western Cape (UWC). In a provocative presentation, O'Connell declared that South Africa's leaders have made promises they cannot deliver on and the time has come for them to be honest with themselves and with the people they serve.

"A leader's role is to deal with the truth, face challenges, lead by example and provide alarming perspectives," he said, "this means a leader is not always popular and pushes the boundaries (of a society's) comfort zone."

O'Connell said local leaders failed dismally when it came to implementation of their policies because they had not thought through the practical implementation or long term consequences of their ideas.

Swilling gave an example of this thinking in his presentation.

"Looking specifically at Cape Town," he explained, "we see that the city has for years been sprawling outward in an unsustainable way. When a city sprawls outward, the strain on infrastructure becomes immense and the cost of transport will increase for those further out from the centre. And it's an unfortunate fact that it is the poor that bear the brunt of this as they usually live furthest out from the business centres. It's a problem all cities face but with Cape Town surrounded by mountains on one side and the sea on the other, it's a problem that is even more difficult to tackle."

Using examples based on his experiences as the former Head of Education in the Western Cape, O'Connell said there had been insufficient long term planning in the introduction of many changes in national education which had left schools in chaos.

"What our government should have explained to its people was exactly what resources were available and how they would be distributed," he said. Instead the majority of people expected much more than they were given and could not understand why their aspirations were left unmet.

O'Connell said it was fear of political unpopularity, especially in the Western Cape, that encouraged leaders to avoid the truth.

"When I told schools the truth the majority accepted what I had to say but others were angry and in one instances 300 protesters surrounded my home because they didn't like what they heard," he said.

He used the example of the change of curriculum in schools which was, he said, "a radical response to apartheid education" to highlight the importance of long term planning and thinking through consequences.

"I phoned Thami Mseleku, (then DG of Education), and asked him if the national education department was going to provide us with the R40 million needed for new textbooks for the new grades one, two and three curriculum," he said.

It was clear (from Mseleku's response) that there had been no thought of new textbooks.

Swilling highlighted the important impact made by a major shift in housing and settlement policy in the Western Cape that has allowed local government to address a lack of resources and the problems caused by poor planning.

"We have moved away from the one size fits all philosophy, recognising that different communities have different needs and we need to take cognisance of that if we are to succeed in creating sustainable settlements," he said.

"We also decided to take the optimistic approach to see sustainability as well as financial challenges as an opportunity to allow for innovation in planning and management rather than as an obstacle to settlement creation.

"Most important was the decision to actively and constructively engage with the city's residents and communities. To successfully create sustainable

development you have to tap in to the wealth of knowledge available in those very communities you are developing."

In his presentation, O'Connell said it was crucial that a leader inspired hope by outlining a future for his followers and working out a practical path to achieve goals.

On the issue of providing "alarming perspectives" O'Connell used a map of the world, which he adjusted to scale, to highlight which countries were doing the most to provide tertiary education, promote science and mathematics education, develop new products and encourage manufacturing. He also showed how Africa lumbered under the weight of disease while other developing countries had taken proactive steps to deal with problems like malaria, Aids and TB.

It was time for South Africa's leaders to "make some difficult choices", realise "they couldn't do it all" and "give their people a story" which would define who they were and what their priorities would be in the future, he said.

"At UWC we have a motto 'From hope to action through knowledge' which sums up the challenge facing all leaders in our country now," he explained.

"Having the right knowledge before taking action was crucial if a society's hopes were ever going to be met, he said.

Echoing O'Connell's sentiments Swilling pointed out that in certain areas municipal leaders would have to be fearless and willing to take a hard-line in pushing unpopular solutions.

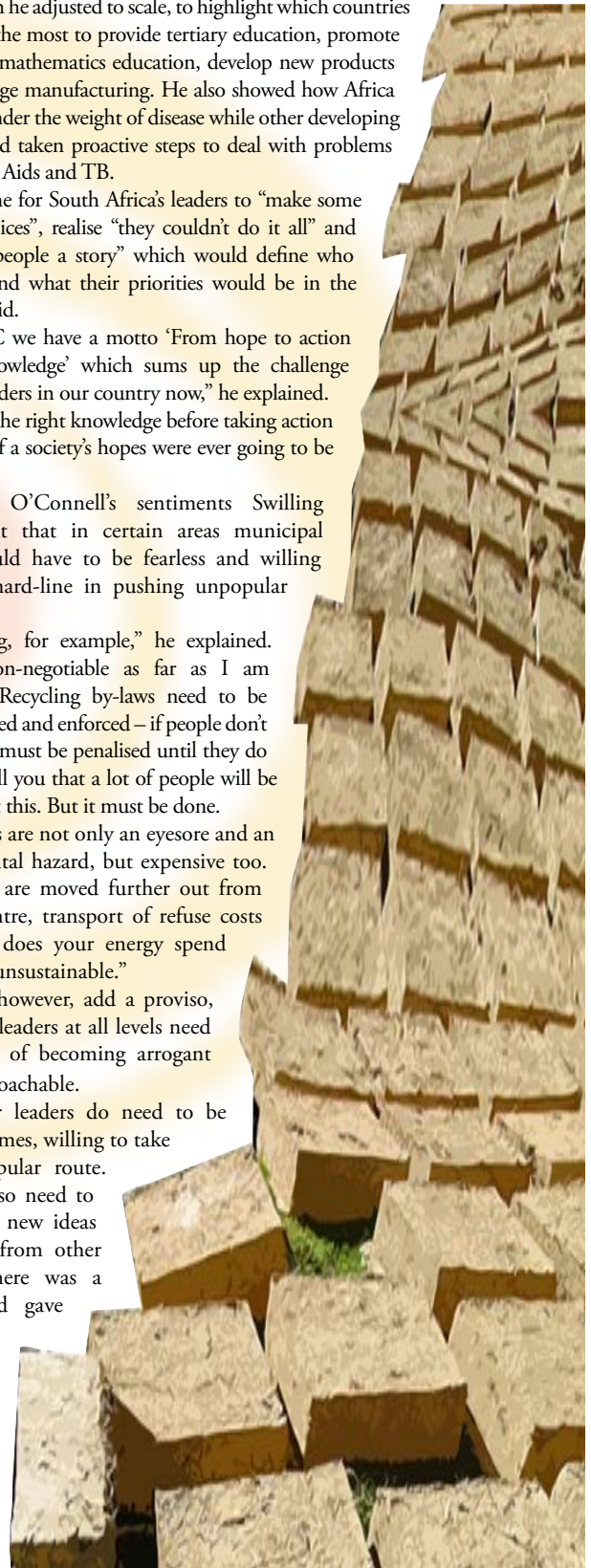
"Recycling, for example," he explained. "This is non-negotiable as far as I am concerned. Recycling by-laws need to be created, passed and enforced – if people don't recycle they must be penalised until they do and I can tell you that a lot of people will be very upset at this. But it must be done.

"Landfills are not only an eyesore and an environmental hazard, but expensive too. As landfills are moved further out from the city centre, transport of refuse costs increase as does your energy spend and that is unsustainable."

He did, however, add a proviso, saying that leaders at all levels need to be wary of becoming arrogant and unapproachable.

"Yes, our leaders do need to be fearless at times, willing to take the less-popular route. But they also need to be open to new ideas and input from other sources. There was a reason God gave

us two ears and only one mouth... so we can listen twice as much as we talk."



Working together is the key to success

One of South Africa's most embattled local municipalities, the Mquma Local Council, in the Eastern Cape has pulled its socks up and, at last, has structures in place to begin providing services to its people.

In his presentation, Fundile Feketshane, officer manager for the Mquma Municipal Council, described how political infighting and incompetence by officials had led to the complete collapse of the Eastern Cape's fifth largest local municipality.

"There was abuse of municipal assets, political interference in the administration, a high staff turnover and a total disregard for policies and processes," he said.

But now the Mquma Local Municipality is an example of a South African success story.

Feketshane described how, through political will and firm leadership by the provincial government and the Amathole District Municipality, Mquma was able to elect a new mayor, speaker and chief whip and craft, from scratch, a new local authority.

"Most important, our new leadership had to instil discipline in council and introduce internal controls," he said.

One way of instilling discipline and commitment from councillors was to deduct money from their allowances if they did not attend meetings. Auditors were brought in to help sort out financial controls and stop the rampant thieving and misuse of council assets. Team building workshops consolidated rifts between staff while higher level discussions helped towards resolving leadership tensions.

Over the last year the new council and its administration have worked hard to build partnerships with the nearby Walter Sisulu University, big business, other municipalities and economic development agencies. Political instability in the area meant factories had closed and jobs lost but efforts are now being made to resuscitate the local economy.

"The change was stimulated through political will and an understanding, by local leaders, that they had a responsibility to their people," said Feketshane.

In a presentation for the Eden District Municipality, Kelvin Vollenhoven, described how the local authority has had to cope with an unprecedented series of natural disasters over the last few years culminating in killer floods last November.

Damage to infrastructure and loss of services had been widespread in the area under the jurisdiction of the district municipality which serves Knysna, George, Plettenberg Bay, Calitzdorp, Ladismith,



DETERMINED: Phila Xusa and Graeme Reid

Mossel Bay, Uniondale, Haarlem, Riversdale, Heidelberg and Oudtshoorn. In response to these natural catastrophes a District Disaster Management Centre is being built and is expected to be completed later this year. More consideration also needed to be given to spatial development planning with the district municipality enforcing respect for estuaries and high-risk areas.

Hendry Christians, manager of infrastructure for the Department of Local Government and Housing in the Northern Cape, spoke about the importance of maintaining infrastructure.

He described how in, one workshop, delegates donned blue overalls and went out into communities to see how their decisions worked in practise.

"Anybody who actually has to carry a 25 litre drum filled with water for 200 metres will have new insight into the impact of the decisions we take on behalf of our communities."

The potency of partnerships and the consequence of consultation in fulfilling leadership responsibilities was clear in other presentations as well, as learners were reminded again and again about the importance of strong and focused leadership. An example was in the way that strong municipal leadership enabled two very different development agencies to fulfil their mandates with as little fuss as possible.

Speaking on behalf of the Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA), the first development agency created in South Africa, in 2001, former CEO Graeme Reid paid tribute to the municipal leadership that drove the JDA's work in restoring a declining Johannesburg to its former glory.

"When the JDA was created, Johannesburg was, quite frankly, a mess," he said. "The inner city was in tatters and there was a serious lack of investment across the board, a direct consequence of the failure of local authority decision making. It was a failure of the municipal leadership of the time.

"However, since the JDA was established we

have had some notable success in rehabilitating the city. And we managed to do all this because there was a focus on leadership from the top down. Our projects had mayoral priority and, very significantly, local government led the process of regeneration."

Key to the JDA's success, Reid explained, was the building of strong partnerships between the agency, local government and key stakeholders, such as inner city business as well as the informal business sector.

"For example, we got the taxi industry and informal traders involved in the plan to build more and better taxi ranks and open-air markets. Not just through consultation but by actually

getting them to work on the design projects. It was a simple, but at the same time, radical change to our approach and it worked superbly.

"By getting those stakeholders involved not only did we build the best ranks and markets, but we did so with the minimum of fuss."

While the JDA is an urban-based agency, the Amathole Economic Development Agency (AEDA) is a largely rural organisation, focused on stimulating and regenerating the small town economies in the area of the Eastern Cape centred around East London and Port Elizabeth.

But the challenges – and the solutions – facing the two agencies are remarkably similar. Though, at 30 months, much younger than the JDA, the AEDA has already had notable success and spokesperson Phila Xusa says it's all down to smart leadership and powerful and successful partnerships.

"The AEDA focuses on those towns usually forgotten and because we work across a number of municipalities," she explained. "It is imperative that we not only have strong leadership from within the agency – which we are blessed with – but from those above us and we got it in the form of excellent political and financial support."

From a miniscule starting budget of R800 000 in 2005, the AEDA now works with a budget of R300 million, and from a stuttering start, the agency is now in full swing creating and managing a multitude of projects across the province.

"Strong leadership aside," said Xusa, "a major factor in our growing success has been the good communication between all stakeholders. We place a priority on mobilising people and keeping them informed.

"It's been said often but we must always remember that we are servants of the people and you cannot serve people without keeping them properly informed.

"Debate is vital," she concluded. "Talk to each other!"

Navigating through the muddy waters of power

Local government in South Africa was being held up by an attitude of “if it’s broke, don’t fix it” with a tendency to construct a new structure every time local government came up against a problem. In practise this meant talk-shops were standing in the way of real action.

Sinazo Sibisi, from the Development Bank of South Africa, worked hard to drive home this message to municipal leaders.

“Too often the response to a problem is to set up a parallel structure rather than working through a process to resolve the issue,” Sibisi said, “Aren’t we simply extending our lack of capacity to another institution?”

This was one of the major leadership challenges facing the country along with increasing centralization of governance because of lack of capacity on the ground. This was made worse by a lack of co-ordination within

government departments.

The way forward for local government was to identify key individuals who could navigate their way through “the muddy waters” and use fiscal resources to reward appropriate behaviours and outcomes.

“We have to harness people power and build relationships,” she said, “the long view is critical as there is no quick fix (to local government problems). We have to find comfort in complexity.”

It was crucial for local government leaders to identify the links between their different priorities.

They also had to confront hard choices and build the political will to make trade-offs.

Sibisi reiterated what University of the Western Cape rector Brian o’Connell said earlier in the week; “We have to say to people – this is what is possible, even if they desire

something far bigger.”

Following on this she said hard choices were made easier when leaders stayed close to their moral centre.

Sibisi talked about the importance of local economic development and how local government needed to work out its responsibilities in terms of stimulating economies in the areas they served.

The history of the country and the transition of political but not economic power meant that the majority of people were still looking to the government to create the platform for their economic success.

“The question for us is how do we give people alternatives?” she said.

Her view was the local governments needed to focus on creating enabling environments for economic growth, which would shift the locus of control from the state to the individual.

Rasool calls for humility and honesty

A great leader must act with enough confidence to leave a legacy but, at the same time, always remain humble remembering his position is uncertain and that he could be replaced at any time.

Western Cape premier Ebrahim Rasool made these remarks during his ‘On the Couch’ interview with E-TV news reporter Lukhanyo Calato.

“Never treat a leadership position as permanent,” Rasool told a captivated audience, “always retain humility and understand that someone came before you and someone will come after you.”

The premier, who lives with his family on the luxurious Leeuwenhof Estate in the centre of Cape Town, said he regularly drove past his “real” home and constantly reminded his children that the “black car belongs to the government and the red car is ours.”

“If you want the freedom to be who you are and to be honest in politics then you have to adjust your lifestyle so that you don’t have too much to lose,” he explained.

He said he had arrived at this conclusion at a time in his life when his political future seemed insecure and he was concerned of the impact this could have on his family.

“I am not sure I have resolved the dilemma,” he said, “but I am grappling with it.”

When asked who inspired him, Rasool said he had been fortunate enough to study English literature at university and it was the heroes of Shakespeare’s great tragedies who had taught him the most valuable leadership lessons of his life.

“I sometimes wonder if I am too much like Hamlet. Too much caution can lead to indecisiveness. Remember his speech... To be or not to be?”

“One doesn’t want to fall like King Lear,” said Rasool, who explained how Lear was taken in by his daughters who flattered him but who ignored the one who told him she loved him “as meat loves salt.” “In

the end it was she who was the most honest.”

Then there is Othello who eventually became totally paranoid because of all the stories people put in his head, said Rasool.

“If I was to become paranoid based on all the stories people told me I would be fighting some huge battles in the Western Cape.”

Rasool said he was also deeply inspired by the old liberation leaders like Oliver Tambo who kept alive a vision of a free South Africa that “superseded the contests going on below him. He never forgot that the struggle was bigger than any one individual.”

When asked what his goal was for the Western Cape, Rasool said it was to unite the province’s people.

“There are fault lines in the Western

Cape where the demographics and differences are played on by opportunists with the intention of creating deep divisions.”

The talk drove home the message that it was “an enormous honour” to be a leader in South Africa and that it was a role that should be conducted with discretion and grace.



SOMERSET WEST DECLARATION

We, the delegates of municipalities and provincial government in the Western, Eastern and Northern Cape gathered here in Somerset West from 24-28 March 2008, as both elected representatives and appointed public officials, acknowledge the sacred trust that has been placed in us by the people of our locality and our country and commit ourselves to serving the public good with integrity, responsibility, transparency, enthusiasm and selflessness.

In acknowledging the advances and achievements made in improving the lives of people, we note that our society remains marked by the intolerable scars of separate and uneven development, economic exclusion and social divisions and that it is incumbent upon us as leaders within government to use this privilege to accelerate delivery and development to the best of our ability.

We acknowledge that the ability of any society to address such challenges in a sustainable manner is strongly influenced by the quality and commitment of its leadership. We further note the sterling and inspiring examples of leadership which led us out of apartheid into democracy and who continue to serve as role models for us.

We therefore commit ourselves to build our individual and collective leadership capabilities and the capability of those with whom we work. To this end, we undertake:

- To be role models for an inspirational and visionary leadership based on ethical principles;
- To take on our roles and responsibilities with resilience, courage and sensitivity;
- To identify and prioritise the key challenges facing us and to fearlessly tackle them collaboratively in order for them to make the greatest impact on enhancing the life of current and future generations;
- To behave in a manner that is responsive and accountable to our peers, our organisations and our communities;
- To work with our colleagues and our staff in a manner that builds their capacity and enables them to execute their responsibilities effectively and with commitment; and
- To pursue ongoing learning, reflection and exchange of best practice with the aim of improving our leadership qualities and abilities.

