

DISASTER SYMPOSIUM 2019

HELD IN CAPE TOWN



The Disaster Symposium 2019 provided an integrated platform for various stakeholders to discuss not only recent disasters faced but also mitigation of future disasters with the emphasis on building resilience

The Disaster Management Institute of Southern Africa's (DMISA) Western Cape Branch together with the City of Cape Town Disaster Management Centre and Santam held a symposium focusing on disaster management at Sanlam's head office in Bellville, Cape Town on 12 March 2019. The Disaster Symposium 2019 was themed 'Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience' and provided an integrated platform for various stakeholders to discuss not only recent disasters faced but also mitigation of future disasters with the emphasis on building resilience.

Dr Johan Minnie of DMISA set the scene with a brief overview of recent disasters followed by John Lomberg of Santam who reiterated the importance of businesses partnering with Government to strengthen service delivery and build resilience. Lomberg reinforced Santam's commitment in preventing disasters, mentioning recent major international and local disasters. 'We are actively involved with the National Disaster Management Centre to increase service capacity in municipalities', said Lomberg.

The keynote address delivered by Alderman JP Smith of the City of Cape Town highlighted that the City of Cape Town has worked hard to build disaster resilience especially in informal

settlements in order to reduce the loss of life during incidents such as fires and floods. He added that the City of Cape Town made international news headlines because of the recent drought and was lauded for their achievement of the 50 percent reduction in water usage within just a few months. This was only possible with the partnerships created between all stakeholders including provincial and local Government, businesses and the community. "Cape Town is now a case study for water scarcity internationally", said Alderman Smith.

The symposium was divided into three sessions. The first session focussed on tourism and investment and was facilitated by Julien Rumblof of the Western Cape Environmental Affairs and Planning.

Helen Davies of Western Cape Government spoke about strengthening economic resilience, highlighting the economic impacts of a water crisis, the role businesses to reduce their own and collective risk, tools of engagement, communications, engagements and other support tools. She also highlighted the importance of energy ▶



Dr Johan Minnie of DMISA, John Lomberg of Santam and Alderman JP Smith, City of Cape Town



Disaster Symposium 2019 speakers

► efficiency in Government buildings. “Water and energy security will increasingly be a challenge”, said Davies.

Cornelis van der Waal of Wesgro provided insight into the essential timeline of the major water crises events, saying that the Western Cape water crises highlighted how irresponsible we have been using water. Van der Waal discussed the major role of tourism in Cape Town and the Western Cape and added the importance of partnerships and collaborations. “The collective plays a very important role”, he said.

Sarah Rushmere of the City of Cape Town provided information on Cape Town’s draft water strategy, the reliability of Cape Town’s water supply and the types and use of alternative water installations, amongst others, saying that level of cooperation and stakeholder engagement was of an unprecedented level. She added that the silver lining of dealing with Day Zero was learning how to work together as a whole society.

The second session focussed on Government and the business sector and was facilitated by head of disaster medicine at Western Cape Department of Health, Dr Wayne Smith, who provided insight into the challenges experienced at Tygerberg Hospital and other private hospitals. Dr Smith added, the three S’ are of the utmost importance, which are staff, stuff and systems.

Advocate Gavin Kode, deputy director general of the Western Cape Government, discussed water resilience strategies for critical infrastructure and provided an overview of the province’s recent journey to resilience, citing their strategies in building resilience for now and for the future.

Gareth Morgan, director, resilience of the City of Cape Town, looked at what the building blocks are for resilience for

Cape Town, providing lessons learnt from the drought such as the investment in partnerships beyond the city, sharing information to build public trust, increase redundancies in the system, embrace the realities of climate risk and strengthening adaptive leadership capabilities.

Dr Arthur Linke of the University of Stellenbosch presented on risk maturity, citing the Institute of Risk Management South Africa (IRMSA) Risk Maturity Initiative to improve the effectiveness of risk management, quoting ISO 31 000:2018 and ISO 22301:2012 standards and updates. Dr Linke also discussed the critical success factors of risk maturity models linked to business continuity management and disaster planning/resilience.

The last session featured media and communications facilitated by Murray Williams, special advisor to the Premier, who provided an overview of the strategic leadership process to mobilise, organise and communicate the Day Zero message to all communities, businesses and organisations and on all levels. “The

message was not about water but about families, neighbourhoods, communities, partners and leaders”, said Williams.

James-Brent Styan, spokesperson for MEC Anton Bredell, shared how to communicate in a crisis. He debated the pros and cons of modern communications such as social media and provided some communication strategies for use during a disaster/crisis and also proactively outside of disaster periods and longer term. “Have a simple message that hits home”, said Styan, adding that communications during disasters should be fast, accurate, continuously and that you should be very responsive and available all the time. He highlighted the benefits of building support structures including a chain of command for communication matters.

Priya Reddy, director of communications, City of Cape Town, discussed the key players and communication channels, external engagement and work streams and stakeholder engagement strategies used during the drought.

Andrew Borraine of the Western Cape Economic Development Partnership (EDP) shared valuable communication techniques looking at how to improve the relationship between the top-down authorising environment and bottom-up mobilising environment. He discussed ways of mobilising citizens for collective action relating across all sectors. “It is important to understand human behaviour. People fight, flight or freeze. Communication and its message cannot have a one size fits all approach. Relationships are at the epicentre of survival”, concluded Borraine.

Dr Minnie summarised the presentations and discussions of the day highlighting the strong take home message of the importance of continuous communication strategies during both short- and long term disasters. 🇷🇺



DMISA’s Dr Johan Minnie and Dr Wayne Smith of the Western Cape Department of Health

