

WRC Dialogues Series launch successful

The South African government is currently deploying many efforts towards employment creation through massive infrastructure development projects. Employment creation also figures high in water programmes, such as the Working for Water and the River Health programme. However, these programmes are all rather top-down and very specialised. There is a growing realisation that there should be more community-driven projects in collaboration with local government. These challenges and possible solutions were highly debated during the launch of the WRC's *Water Currents Policy Series* on 14 August, at Leriba Lodge, Centurion. The launch which attracted over 150 delegates provided a unique

opportunity to bridge the gap between scientists, water users, policy makers, senior programme managers and implementers, particularly on one of the most pertinent topics of today, namely job creation. Presenting the opening address WRC CEO, Dhesigen Naidoo said: "We intend the dialogues to be a solution-oriented discussion to address our challenges. We have a rich repository of smart people in our science and technology system, who need to be tapped into to apply their research capability beyond the laboratory." According to Kate Phillip, a leading expert on inequality and economic marginalisation in Trade & Industrial Policy Strategies (TIPS), a policy research NGO, the time has come for

South Africa to use public employment to respond to water-related challenges at community level; raise awareness of the scope and opportunity to do so while also building partnerships. "The opportunity exists in South Africa to use labour to address social challenges at the local level. However, this requires a participatory process," she maintains. In summary, the dialogue revealed that much could be achieved through cross-sectoral collaboration and joint resource mobilisation for implementation and action research. It also indicated that public employment is not the silver bullet despite the advantages of employment guarantees – there is a desperate need to address the structural (social and economic) issues at play.

(All photographs by Hlengiwe Cele)



Dialogues participant, Vusi Montsho, CEO of Bantsho Management and Marketing Strategies.



The event attracted over 150 delegates who had a chance to browse through some of the WRC's community upliftment research projects.



Speaker, Dr Kate Phillip, of policy organisation TIPS.



Panelist, Arthur Ndlovu, Programme Manager for the Seriti Institute in the Community Work Programme.



Dr Kate Philip, Shilp Verma of the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) in India; and Dr Barbara van Koppen of the Southern African Regional Programme of IWMI were among the panelists.