



ISIMANGALISO WETLAND PART AUTHORITY ON A DRIVE TO STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIP WITH INKOSI MTUBATUBA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

iSimangaliso hosted the Inkosi Mtubatuba Local Municipality from 7 to 9 June 2022 on a Park expedition. The purpose of the excursion was to address areas of co-existence between the park, the municipality, and its stakeholders. The aim of this visit to iSimangaliso was to engage with the Council to explore and have deeper insights into how both entities could work together and find ways to empower communities living in and adjacent to the park.

Interactive discussions were mainly around the alignment of programs and the positioning of the Municipal LED strategy to iSimangaliso Wetland Park. This was warmly welcomed by both entities. iSimangaliso hosted the entire Municipality Council including the Municipal Manager Mr Thamsanqa Xulu, Speaker of the Council Cllr Sbongile Shezi, Mayor Cllr. Mxollsi Mthethwa and Deputy Mayor Cllr Nothile Mthethwa, with this program, iSimangaliso aims to create a productive relationship with the municipality which could assist in fighting unemployment by creating job opportunities for Mtubatuba community through small business development initiatives.

The uMkhanyakude District demographics state that the population under age 15 years is 40.3%, population between age 15 and 64 years is 55.3% and population over age 65 years is 4.5%. The unemployment rate is at 42.8% and the youth unemployment rate is 51.2%. There is 25.3% of people who never attended any education facility, 25.4% of the population is doing matric and 4.9% is in higher education. iSimangaliso through its Socio-Economic Programs like the Rural Enterprise Program which was initiated in 2008, has supported 430 SMME's with business skills, mentoring and grant financing. The aim is to upscale this program and make a dent into these statistics. iSimangaliso Wetland Park is requesting uMtubatuba Municipality to assist SMME's with faster operating licensing and designated zones for formal business, to set up tourism recovery fund to support the

recovery of SMME's in the tourism sectors and request that the municipality partner with iSimangaliso to create business opportunities for SMME's.

iSimangaliso has assisted 220 bursary recipients from uMKhanyakude District with funding to access to higher education. iSimangaliso bursary recipients also receive psycho-social support to cope with their academic studies. This support includes laptops, data, and meal allowance to the tune of R10 000 per student in this financial year. This program started in 2008 solely to benefit land claimants but later was expanded to include residence of uMKhanyakude neighboring the park.



iSimangaliso's drive to partner the with the municipality is in line with Inter-Governmental Co-operative Governance Framework. This will result in collaboration around Local Economic Development (LED), and the Integrated Development Planning (IDP) alignment.

The uMtubatuba municipality has responded positive to this initiative by iSimangaliso to a point that they have already outlined areas of alignment and co-operation between iSimangaliso and municipality in Local Economic Development, EPWP and outreach programs. This plans auger well with the Status of Mtubatuba Local Municipality as being the Gateway town to the World Heritage Site. Other municipal initiatives include the Urban

Regeneration Framework and the Small-Town Rehabilitation Programme aimed at assisting struggling municipalities to facilitate sustainable urban and rural development.

The Municipality has started to support Mtubatuba Tourism Centre and SMME facility. The facility is aimed at supporting the local SMMEs in accessing markets and ease trading. The Eco- Tourism City initiative is aimed at aligning Mtubatuba and the tourism activities of iSimangaliso Wetlands Park. These initiatives are linked to the development of Charters Creek. Both entities are looking forward to maximising this partnership and make meaningful impact on the community. A commitment was made to developing an MoU that will guide this process and the implementation of integrated development programs. Lastly these developments will also be in line with the Provincial Growth and Development Strategy to ensure a sustained improvement of the communities and livelihoods.

End

Statement issued by iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority

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