

# Stories from activists working for water justice

The South African Water Caucus

Gender, Water and Development Conference

5 November 2014



# South African Water Caucus (SAWC)

- Started in 2001
- Network of NGOs, CBOs, SAMWU (municipal workers), individual activists
- Governed by guiding principles
- Historically focus on 3 main campaigns – dams, catchment management, services & water cut-offs
- Also included: pricing & tariffs, WSSD, The Water Dialogues, climate change, plantations, water privatisation, institutional reform, etc.
- Caucuses in 8 Provinces + national
- Coordinating committee: 4 NGOs + provincial reps

# SAWC guiding principles

1. Access to water and sanitation are human rights. All people should have secure access to sufficient potable water to meet their basic human needs including water for productive use to sustain livelihoods.
2. Water management must be accountable to communities at a local level and communities must be provided with platforms to be involved in all decision-making. Information must be disseminated to ensure informed decisions are made.
3. The integrity of ecosystems is the basis for all life – both human and nature – and river ecosystems and groundwater resources must be maintained, rejuvenated and enhanced.
4. Large dams are destructive to humans and ecosystems. We therefore endorse a precautionary approach, with large dams being seen as a last resort to meeting water and energy needs. We call for the adoption and implementation of the World Commission on Dams guidelines into South African policy and legislation, including the right to prior and informed consent.
5. Water is a public necessity. The commodification and privatisation of water resources, water services and sanitation compromises the sustainability, equity and justice of access, and must be rejected.
6. Cost recovery should not be a barrier to people's access to water or water services.

# How SAWC plays its civil society role

- A value based identity
- Successful water policy & process interventions
- Pushing definitions of civil society and the right to be included
- Educator
- Responding to context
- National caucus with international links
- Self-reflecting

# Questions for CBO presenters

1. What are the main water related challenges facing your community?
2. How does it affect women, men and children particularly?
3. What have you tried to do in response?  
Success stories and Obstacles
4. One simple thing that would make a BIG difference