

## Beyond Day Zero: Distilling the lessons from the Cape Town water crisis

The launch of the Cape Town Drought Response Learning Initiative and Film Library on 26 March 2019 is a world first – a transdisciplinary project that is helping Cape Town reflect on, document, and learn from how it responded to the recent severe drought

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Cape Town, 26 March 2019

One year on from the height of the 2017-2018 Cape Town water crisis, a collective of academics and practitioners have launched a unique new initiative to document and capture key learnings from the water shortage that came close to being a catastrophe for the City of Cape Town.

In November 2017, with dam levels at just 38,4%, the City of Cape Town officially adopted the concept of Day Zero – the day when the taps would run dry and citizens would be rationed to collecting 25 litres of water per person per day. In January 2018 Day Zero was pegged as the 22nd April that year.

“Fortunately, we know how the story ends,” says Peter Willis from Conversations that Count and one of the prime movers behind the Cape Town Drought Response Learning Initiative (CTDRLI) and Film Library launching today in Cape Town at the Nedbank Auditorium. “Thanks to a huge range of efforts – including a dramatic response from citizens to save water – the prospect of Day Zero was averted, at least for now.

“The complexity of the response to this crisis was striking,” continues Willis. “The city as a whole responded in a lot of really intelligent ways, but often with limited awareness of how the rest of the system was responding. In the end what we collectively achieved was remarkable, and many around the world see it as such. Since the story of what actually happened is tremendously rich and vivid, we wanted to make sure some of these perspectives were preserved, allowing us all to learn from what happened.”

The CTDRLI is a collaboration between the UCT African Climate & Development Initiative (ACDI), Conversations that Count, and CineSouth Studios and enjoys active support from the City of Cape Town’s Director of Resilience. Initial sponsors of the project are Nedbank, Woolworths, Arup, Old Mutual, Aurecon, PwC and 100 Resilient Cities.

The Film Library is the first phase of the Initiative. An online resource, the Library will eventually feature 45 high-quality, in-depth interviews with a range of key societal actors across a number of sectors who were intimately involved in the drought response. Each video is summarised and indexed for easy searching.

“With this initiative,” says Victor van Aswegen from CineSouth Studios, “we are applying the tools of filmmaking to document the lessons learned by key individuals involved in the drought response. We then apply analytical and intellectual tools to this substantial volume of material, amounting to close to fifty hours of footage, to distil the essential learnings that came out of the crisis. These lessons are not limited to water, but relate to urban resilience shocks and stresses broadly, and are applicable to cities around the world.”

Professor Mark New from the ACIDI at UCT, says that the CTDRLI is an exemplar of a transdisciplinary approach that sees researchers working with societal actors to understand and find solutions to complex problems.

“The initiative brings together those with research backgrounds and those who were in the thick of the drought response – in terms of city managers, businesses on the ground and other individuals with a range of capabilities and skills. The aim is to create situations where we can have challenging conversations out of which important insights can emerge. The Film Library alone will be an invaluable historical archive and a resource for a whole range of analysis for many years to come,” he says.

Dana Omran, Managing Director for Africa at 100 Resilient Cities, says the initiative to capture and enable learning out of a city-wide shock event such as Day Zero is novel and relevant to other cities focusing on resource governance as part of their larger urban resilience efforts.

“Cities are at the frontline of our world’s greatest challenges, and water – either too little, too much, or of poor quality – is central to these challenges. Cape Town deterred a major crisis last year, though our new climate reality dictates that similarly extreme droughts may be expected in the years ahead. By learning from the experience, we can put systems in place so that Cape Town and cities worldwide can build a water resilient future.”

“It is common knowledge that South Africa is one of the driest countries in the world and has one of the lowest average rainfall levels,” agrees Redeem Ngadze, Senior Client Coverage: Banker, Nedbank CIB. “Against this backdrop, it’s clear that water security cannot be the sole responsibility of local, provincial and national government. This initiative is the clarion call for all stakeholders and the citizenry at large, to collaborate on integrated measures to ensure a water-resilient future.”

Phase Two of the CTDRLI will see a synthesis of the many learnings from the material in the Film Library that will trigger a series of workshops where the learnings will be shared and discussed with different sectors in order to build resilience more broadly. A feature-length documentary titled *Day Zero* will constitute phase three.

ENDS

*Issued by Rothko on behalf of the Cape Town Drought Response Learning Initiative  
For more information please contact Alethea Patterson-Cordiglia on 021 448 9457*

## **ADDITIONAL QUOTES AND DETAILS OF PROJECT SPONSORS AND PARTICIPANTS**

### **About Nedbank**

Nedbank Group is a bank holding company listed on JSE Limited, with a market capitalisation of R137 billion as at 31 December 2018. Nedbank is one of Africa's largest banking groups, with operations in Namibia, Swaziland, Malawi, Mozambique, Lesotho and Zimbabwe, and offshore in the Isle of Man, Guernsey and Jersey. It also has representative offices in other Southern Africa countries, including Angola and Kenya, and has key global financial centres to provide international banking services for SA-based multinational and high-net-worth clients in countries such as London, Toronto and Dubai. Nedbank is a diversified financial services provider, offering a wide range of wholesale and retail banking services, as well as insurance, asset management and wealth management solutions.

“This initiative (CTDRLI) will help us to begin to attribute the right value to water as an imperative for life, human dignity, stability and sustainable economic development. Nedbank is committed to focussing on the need for water and resources have been allocated to ensure that the bank applies its financial expertise and thought leadership to do good in this sector. This partnership is set to have far-reaching positive consequences across the country.”

– Redeem Ngadze, Senior Client Coverage: Banker Nedbank CIB, is available for interviews

### **About Old Mutual**

Old Mutual was established in Cape Town in 1845 as South Africa's first mutual life insurance company. Responsible business is at the heart of its strategy and embedded in its operations, underpinned by its belief that, over the longer term, creating value for society is the most sustainable way to create value.

“As a Responsible Business, Old Mutual continues to positively impact the socio-economic and environmental development of the continent and its people. An initiative like this, which shares research and learnings, drives better preparation for similar challenges in the future. Ensuring a sustainable future is a win-win for all.” - Iain Williamson, Chief Operating Officer, Old Mutual Limited

– Khiyam Fredericks, Technical Manager, Old Mutual Limited available for interviews

### **About Aurecon**

Aurecon is an engineering and infrastructure advisory company that has “re-imagined engineering”. Driven by its clients' ideas and aspirations, it works alongside them to co-create clever, innovative solutions to some of the world's most complex challenges, adding value across the project lifecycle through deep technical and advisory expertise. Aurecon serves its clients across a range of markets, in locations worldwide.

“Cape Town won't be the last global city to face the potential for a 'Day Zero' scenario, and for many citizens of the developing world, 'Day Zero' is an every-day risk. At Aurecon we are committed to finding solutions to some of the most complex development challenges, of which water security is regularly rated in the top ten global economic risks. Hence learning the lessons from the Cape Town water supply crisis is critical and relevant to all cities facing the increasing challenge of growing populations and declining water resource availability. For this reason, we are proud to be supportive of the Cape Town Drought Learning initiative and will also be contributing in terms of our own experience in supporting the City of Cape Town.

We are keen to implement these lessons in other cities in Africa as well as in Australia and Asia where we see similar challenges requiring innovative solutions.”

– Geoff du Toit, Professional Engineer at Aurecon is available for interviews

### **About Arup**

Arup helps the world manage its water – from the supply of clean drinking water to understanding flood risks, from drainage to sanitation. The successful design, development and maintenance of our water infrastructure requires the integration of many disciplines. Arup’s water team has wide-ranging skills spanning advisory and specialist technical services.

### **About 100 Resilient Cities**

100 Resilient Cities – Pioneered by The Rockefeller Foundation (100RC) helps cities around the world become more resilient to social, economic, and physical challenges that are a growing part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. 100RC provides this assistance through: funding for a Chief Resilience Officer in each of our cities who will lead the resilience efforts; resources for drafting a resilience strategy; access to private sector, public sector, academic, and NGO resilience tools; and membership in a global network of peer cities to share best practices and challenges.

– Dana Omran, Managing Director for Africa at 100 Resilient Cities, is available for interviews

### **About Woolworths**

Woolworths South Africa, part of the Woolworths Holdings Limited Group, is a leading retailer operating in South Africa and 11 Sub Saharan African countries. It is passionate about offering a unique blend of quality food, fashion, beauty, homeware and financial services, with a focus on sustainability, innovation and value. It employs over 34 000 people in SA and in total over 43 000 people across the Group in SA, Africa and Australasia. Water conservation is a key focus for Woolworths’ Good Business Journey and over the years Woolworths has supported and invested in a number of water conservation initiatives across its own business, suppliers and schools.

“Responsible water use is a core focus of our Good Business Journey so we have supported and invested in a number of water conservation initiatives across our own business, suppliers and schools, within the Western Cape and the rest of the county. Our children are our future so we have made water conservation and water education a priority in our school communities and recently invested R1.5m in water harvesting facilities to make our schools water secure.”

– Feroz Koor, Group Head of Sustainability for Woolworths Holdings, is available for interviews

Watch excerpt of interview with Feroz Koor in the Film Library here:

[www.vimeo.com/cinesouth/DRFL-interview-Feroz-Koor](http://www.vimeo.com/cinesouth/DRFL-interview-Feroz-Koor)

### **About Conversations that Count**

Conversations that Count is an initiative started by Peter Willis that facilitates dialogue for problem solving, strategy and system change.

“Those of us who lived through the drought now know we were privileged to live through a dress rehearsal for what could have been a pretty grim drama on a large scale. I suspect every one of us at some point was afraid of what running out of water as a city might mean for us personally. We were taken to the edge and became collectively galvanised into action. Not many cities have this happen outside of wartime and to have escaped the worst outcome means we have a lot that is worth sharing. The Cape Town Drought Response Learning Initiative seeks to distil the city’s collective response to the drought and offer it as a contribution to humanity’s quest for resilience in the face of increasing natural disturbance. This way we, and those living in other water-challenged cities around the world, can be better prepared in future; because of course we are just witnessing the beginning of profound climate disturbance.”

– Peter Willis, *Conversations that Count*, is available for interviews

### **About the ACDI**

The African Climate and Development Initiative (ACDI) is a university-wide initiative at the University of Cape Town which supports collaborative research and training in climate change and development.

Watch short interviews with Professors Mark New and Gina Ziervogel of the ACDI here:  
[www.vimeo.com/cinesouth/mark-promo](http://www.vimeo.com/cinesouth/mark-promo)  
[www.vimeo.com/cinesouth/gina-promo-1](http://www.vimeo.com/cinesouth/gina-promo-1)

– Professors Mark New and Gina Ziervogel from ACDI, are available for interviews

### **About CineSouth Studios**

Founded by filmmaker Victor van Aswegen, Cape Town-based CineSouth Studios makes powerful films engaging the great themes of the age. Principal photography on “Day Zero”, a feature-length documentary for international release on the recent Cape Town water crisis, commenced in September 2018, and the film is scheduled for release in the second half of 2020.

“This project is underpinned and animated by a view of knowledge accumulation during crisis. During a crisis the many senior people who are closely involved in crafting society’s response to the situation learn a great deal about the operation of the system. But it is one of the defining characteristics of large complex systems that no single individual has a complete overview of the system as a whole. The knowledge gained even by each of these key societal actors during the crisis is necessarily partial, subjective and fragmentary. After the crisis, this knowledge exists only in dispersed form among the people who were involved. What we are doing with this initiative is to firstly collect these various learnings so they don’t become forgotten when the crisis passes, using the tools of filmmaking to capture and document, and secondly to gather these in one place, in the film library.

But the essence of the project is in the subsequent phases, when we distil these disparate voices and observations into a coherent body of knowledge – delivering a set of hard-won learnings painfully gained by an urban system in recent distress, succinctly encapsulated, clearly articulated and available for dissemination, learning and application globally. The result is a richer, fuller understanding of the large complex system than could be offered by any of the individual participants.”

– Victor van Aswegen, *CineSouth Studios*, is available for interviews

To arrange to speak to any of the CTDRLI sponsors or participants please contact Alethea Patterson-Cordiglia on 021 448 9457 or [alethea@rothko.co.za](mailto:alethea@rothko.co.za)

## **SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGING**

#DayZero #CapeTownWaterCrisis #CityResilience #DroughtResponseFilmLibrary

The launch of the Cape Town Drought Response Learning Initiative & Film Library today is a world first: a transdisciplinary project that is helping CT reflect on, document & learn from the recent drought. #DayZero #CityResilience

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Beyond Day Zero: A world-first initiative launching today in Cape Town seeks to capture key learnings from the Cape Town water crisis and share these with the world. #CityResilience #DroughtResponseFilmLibrary

(209 characters)

The Cape Town Drought Response Learning Initiative is a collaboration between @ACDI\_UCT, Conversations that Count, CineSouth Studios & City of CT Resilience team Sponsored by: @100ResCities @Nedbank @OldMutualSA @ArupGroup @Aurecon @WOOLWORTHS\_SA

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#DroughtResponseFilmLibrary will be invaluable historical archive and a resource for a range of analysis for many years to come says Prof Mark New @ACDI\_UCT #DayZero #CityResilience

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One year on from the height of the 2017-2018 Cape Town water crisis the Cape Town Drought Response Learning Initiative & Film Library captures rich & vivid story of how the city survived #DayZero #CityResilience

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“By learning from the experience, we can put systems in place so that Cape Town and cities worldwide can build a water resilient future.” - Dana Omran, MD for Africa, @100ResCities

#DroughtResponseFilmLibrary #CityResilience

(232 characters)

“Water security cannot be the sole responsibility of local, provincial and national government” - Redeem Ngadze, Senior Client Coverage: Banker, @Nedbank

CIB. #DroughtResponseFilmLibrary #CityResilience #DayZero

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Cape Town Drought Response Learning Initiative applies tools of filmmaking to document lessons learned by key individuals involved in Cape Town water crisis, says Victor van Aswegen, CineSouth Studios #DroughtResponseFilmLibrary #CityResilience #DayZero

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Cape Town Drought Response Learning Initiative making a contribution to humanity’s quest for resilience in the face of increasing natural disturbance says Peter Willis, Conversations that Count #DroughtResponseFilmLibrary #CityResilience #DayZero

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“Cape Town lived through a dress rehearsal for what could have been a pretty grim drama” - Peter Willis, Conversations that Count. Learning from this will help water-challenged cities be better prepared in future #CityResilience #DayZero

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