**NEWS ARTICLE**

Zutari committed to improve urban water resilience for African cities

**Zutari supports the Water Action Agenda and UN 2023 Water Conference**

**23 March 2023:** The Water Action Agenda, to be launched at the [UN 2023 Water Conference](https://www.unwater.org/news/un-2023-water-conference) from 22 to 24 March, places the spotlight on water as a critical part of meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), says **Dr. James Cullis**, Sustainability Expertise Leader at [Zutari](http://www.zutari.com).

The UN Water Conference is the first UN conference on water in over 40 years and comes at a crucial time with several cities around the world facing the prospect of day zero and realising the critical importance of developing holistic and sustainable urban water solutions and climate-resilient infrastructure.

As one of Africa’s leading consulting engineering and infrastructure advisory firms, Zutari is a supporting partner of the World Resources Institute’s (WRI’s) African Cities Water Adaptation Platform (ACWA Platform) and ACWA Fund to be launched at the UN 2023 Water Conference.

At the same time, and closer to home, the Western Cape Government and the City of Cape Town hosted a Water and Sanitation Innovation Indaba on 22 and 23 March. On the first day of the indaba, [Premier Alan Winde officially launched the 15-year Integrated Drought and Water Response Plan](https://www.gov.za/speeches/joint-media-release-22-mar-2023-0000) for the Western Cape, developed with the assistance of a team of specialists led by the Zutari Water Resources group.

“This speaks to our commitment to the principles of urban water resilience in Africa and how we are looking to apply our expertise to co-create an engineered impact,” comments Dr. Cullis.

At the Western Cape Water Indaba, [Anya Eilers from the Zutari Water Resources team joined the Premier of the Western Cape and the Executive Mayor of Cape Town in highlighting the critical importance of learning lessons from the Day Zero Crisis and developing tools to help improve urban water resilience for the towns and municipalities of the Western Cape.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v1zYy810QQ0)

“The objective of this study was to develop a set of tools that could assist the municipalities of the Western Cape with identifying opportunities for improved urban water resilience in the long-term,” says Eilers. **Mohamed Gulamhussein** from the Zutari Water Treatment team also represented the Water Institute of Southern Africa at the Indaba as the Western Cape [Young Water Professionals](https://ywpza.org/) lead.

A focus on the importance of urban water resilience at World Water Day on 22 March comes at a time when the sluice gates of the Vaal Dam in Gauteng have been opened to release excess water, while at the same time, Johannesburg is struggling with water supply issues.

“The concept of resilience shows that it is not only a water problem but is part of a wider energy crisis, including the inability to pump or treat water or manage our sewage systems. The impact of the energy crisis also contributes directly to the water crisis,” argues Dr. Cullis.

While South Africa is technically a dry country, it is currently experiencing a wet phase in certain catchments that represents an ideal opportunity to deal with institutional challenges. “It is only when a crisis like this happens that it triggers some reaction. We cannot entirely blame climate change for the current challenges, as it is a failure on an institutional level,” points out Dr. Cullis.

While the Vaal Dam is overflowing, other parts of the country continue to face drought. As part of the African Urban Water Resilience initiative, Zutari is working with the WRI to develop a water resilience plan and identify potential resilience opportunities for Nelson Mandela Bay and the City of Johannesburg, which are targeted for the ACWA Fund. Zutari is also working with the Department of Water and Sanitation to update the reconciliation study for the southern regions of South Africa, including the Algoa and Western Cape Water Supply systems.

While urban water resilience has a key focus on finding sustainable solutions to the growing challenge of urban water security in Africa, it is just as important to consider opportunities to improve resilience to increasing flooding risks. The recent experiences in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape highlight how important it is to ensure critical infrastructure is protected against an increase in flooding risk due to climate change and catchment degradation.

With flooding still a topical issue, the Zutari team is engaged with ongoing work around the flooding issues in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape. “We are looking at how to access funding from the Global Climate Fund to implement ecological infrastructure solutions to address increasing flood risk in places like the Eastern Cape and parts of Mpumalanga and Limpopo,” reveals Dr. Cullis.

**Pull quote**

“Urban water resilience requires holistic solutions as it is not a problem isolated to the water sector, but is actually part of a wider urban planning, climate, water-energy and institutional crisis facing South Africa and several other cities internationally, but particularly in Africa.” – **Dr. James Cullis**, Sustainability Expertise Leader, Zutari

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**Notes to the Editor**To download hi-res images for this news article, please visit <http://media.ngage.co.za> and click the Zutari link to view the company’s press office.

**About Zutari**

As an engineering and advisory firm, we believe infrastructure has unparalleled potential to create enduring impact. Never more relevant, this potential can be realised only if we plan, design, deliver and manage infrastructure in ways that maximise its value. Our work in water, transport, energy, resources, and built-environment infrastructure does just this – helping to nurture thriving communities, growing economies, and healthy environments.

At Zutari we understand that radical impact doesn’t just happen; it requires more of us to connect differently, work smarter, and stay rooted.

**We connect differently**. Our broad collective of in-house experts connects across traditional disciplines to provide integrated results. We collaborate with clients, partners, and end-users, leaning into diverse perspectives to create superior solutions - together.

**We work smarter**. Our people lead the industry. We draw from deep technical skills, accrued over decades, and embrace the transformative power of digital technology to find simpler, better, and more innovative ways to deliver value.

**We stay rooted**. Few can rival our local capacity and understanding. Building on solid foundations, now 90 years in the making, we are trusted to shape locally relevant solutions through our extensive footprint in Africa and the Middle East.

At Zutari our people connect differently, work smarter, and stay rooted. Working in this way, we reliably deliver impact through infrastructure, making the world a better place – one project at a time.

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