

### Planting the seeds for green events

*“When I first heard of greening an event or conference, I thought that it meant calling in the local nursery to literally make it green. I soon found out that greening a conference does not simply mean planting a forest around the conference building or event venue.”*

Greening is a new phenomenon that is fast becoming **the** way for countries and cities to host an international event. In 2000, the Sydney Olympic Games in Australia became one of the first major events to be greened, where the key objective was to make the Games more environmentally friendly and energy-efficient. Following this, was the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, South Africa, where event organisers were determined to reduce, re-use and recycle as much waste as possible and implement interventions that would collectively diminish the environmental “footprint” of the event. This, incidentally, was where the term “greening events” was coined. Both the Sydney Olympics and the WSSD provided best practice examples from which lessons could be learned when greening future events.

ICLEI — Local Governments for Sustainability — became involved, when, recognising the need for local governments to host greener events, its members passed the “Athens Call for Greening Events – Sustainability principles for local hosts organising international events” in 2003, and subsequently organised the International Symposium on Greening Events in September 2004, hosted by the City of Barcelona, Spain. An important outcome of the symposium was the approval of the “**Greening Events Initiative**” which aims to set standards for greening events.



*Energy efficient transportation and recycling stations at the WSSD*

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**ICLEI**  
Local Governments  
for Sustainability



“The **Greening Events Initiative** is especially relevant to local governments. All events – small or major, international or local, sporting or cultural events – have one thing in common: a local community providing services and managing the environmental, social and financial impacts. The term “greening events” describes a range of activities that apply sustainability principles in the design, preparation and staging of events for which local governments act as organisers or local hosts. The term “greening events” is used for branding event organisation activities that address **social, health and economic concerns.**”

ICLEI Website ([www.iclei.org](http://www.iclei.org))

**Greening means making environmentally responsible decisions and turning them into actions.**

Over 9 000 international meetings are held globally each year and about 20% of these are on a significant scale, involving over 1 000 participants.

Therefore, as you can image, when large numbers of people gather for an event, the host city, country or area experiences a great increase in demand for natural resources, such as water and energy, and additional stress is placed on the environment and on local communities, with respect to waste and pollution, for example.

Some of these impacts are positive, usually translated into economic benefits. However, these benefits are often accompanied by negative environmental and social impacts. This is where event greening comes in as it has the potential to reduce the negative impacts that the event has on the host region. In other words, event greening contributes to the maintenance of a healthy environment capable of meeting resource demands in the future.

The vision of a green event is to reduce the consumption of natural resources, avoid damage to the local and global environment, protect biodiversity and human health, reduce waste to a minimum, avoid any negative impacts on local inhabitants and take ecological, social and economic aspects into account for future-oriented city development, as well offer sustainable development options to the local people, their environment and economy. This last point is an essential part of the greening legacy and it highlights that there should be no negative impacts on local inhabitants. In brief, an event can be considered "green" if it is organised, managed and staged in line with sustainable development principles focusing, in particular, on social and environmental issues. Greening is an ongoing and continuous process and not just an isolated once-off activity.



*Promoting energy efficiency — a CFL light bulb*

It should also be acknowledged that greening is context-specific and that determining whether the main focus of greening is on waste reduction, energy saving or the environment, will depend on where the event is being held and what that area's priorities and needs are.

Then there are the benefits. Over and above reducing the negative impacts of an event on the host country, event hosting

and greening can be used as a medium for a host city to initiate sustainable development programmes that will have long-term local economic, social and environmental benefits. Greening an event also has direct financial cost savings for the various role players. This is mostly achieved by **reducing energy and water costs** (through reduction in use and efficient technology), **encouraging waste separation, purchasing local products** and **recycling** (which contributes to the development of local recyclers, and stimulates local economies). These gatherings also provide unique



*Art from recycled waste*

opportunities to raise awareness around sustainable development issues and thus encourage people to change their perceptions and behaviour and make responsible decisions that can reduce the negative impact on the environment and society.

The ICLEI World Congress 2006 to be held in Cape Town, South Africa from 27 February - 3 March 2006, is going to be a green event. This involves ensuring that the organisation and management of the Congress is planned and undertaken in such a way that it demonstrates environmental best practice, and makes a significant contribution to enabling sustainable development and local community benefits in Cape Town. The greening project will seek specifically to promote best practice that is also financially advantageous to local industries.

Event greening is a mechanism or tool that helps leave behind a positive legacy, creating awareness and urging people to be accountable for their actions. However, for the greening of an event to leave such a legacy, for biodiversity to be maintained, for poverty to be alleviated, it is important that event greening be seen as a long-term process, entailing the co-operation of all sectors and industries, with a common vision of social, environmental and economic sustainability.

*"So ... knowing now that event greening is not about colour scheme or how many plants there are in the building, the next time I am at a green conference or an event, I'll be the one heading for that recycling bin with the knowledge that even I can make a difference."*

## Green Hotels - checking in to a new way

*Selected hotels in Cape Town, the host city for the ICLEI World Congress 2006, will be pioneering the way for the local hospitality and tourism sector.*

These hotels, which have been selected to host ICLEI Congress participants, will be implementing the Cleaner Production (CP) programme run by the ICLEI Local Organising Committee. The programme is part of the larger event greening initiative, which aims to ensure that the Congress is organised, managed and implemented in line with sustainability principles, so as to decrease the negative impacts that the event may have on the City of Cape Town, its inhabitants and its environment.

This programme is a first for the City of Cape Town and follows the example of the Provincial Government of the Western Cape that is in the process of completing a similar cleaner production initiative focusing on smaller hotels in the Western Cape. So far, this project has proven to be successful, and has provided good examples of cost savings. The adoption of cleaner production technologies in these hotels has encouraged discussion around environmental policies and management strategies and improved the 'green' profiles of these hotels which, in the near future, could become a strong attraction for consumers and a powerful marketing tool. The City of Cape Town is working closely with the Western Cape Provincial Government whose programme offers lessons to be learned and provides good best practice examples.

Certain event greening principles have already been identified for the ICLEI Congress (See article on page 4 on Greening Principles) and an event greening strategy has been developed. The Cleaner Production programme will provide the hotels with the competitive edge and a head start in an industry where demonstrating sustainable environmental performance is fast becoming an important benchmark. Cost savings is a major benefit to be gained through the implementation of Cleaner Production technology and is obviously an appealing incentive for businesses to make the changes.

The changes that are required include interventions in the important areas of water conservation, energy efficiency and waste reduction. Incidentally, these three areas are often the focus of attention when it comes to event greening. Globally, water, energy and waste issues are fast becoming major problems. For example, the City of Cape Town currently operates six landfill sites but four of them have reached capacity and will close down within the next few years. With

current waste volumes amounting to 2.1 million tons being generated annually in Cape Town alone, the remaining two local landfill sites will not operate for more than a total of six years. As a response to these figures, reduction, reuse and recycling of waste needs to be urgently encouraged. Then there is water. Water in South Africa is precious and during the last year, Cape Town experienced severe water shortages, resulting in strict water restrictions being imposed on local residents and a rise in the cost of water. Conserving water can be as simple as remembering to turn off taps properly or it can involve installing dual-flush toilets, low flow showerheads and the recycling of *grey water*.

As far as energy is concerned, alternatives need to be investigated. With fossil fuels being diminished and becoming more and more expensive, as well as their negative contribution to pollution and to global climate change through the emission of *greenhouse gases*, we are facing a serious crisis. This does not mean that we all need to switch immediately to solar or wind power and electric cars. Although that would be the ideal, it is not necessarily an option for most people. Instead, incorporating greener energy into one's home or business can be a much simpler process and mostly entails making small changes that can make big differences – both to your bills and to your environment. Some examples of what can be done include *retrofitting* energy-efficient light bulbs (low energy bulbs that last longer and use less electricity); insulating hot water pipes and geysers (to prevent heat loss) and adjusting air conditioner and geyser settings to control the temperature and thereby use less energy.

The above options for water, energy and waste changes are some of the interventions that will be implemented in the Cape Town ICLEI hotels and certificates will be awarded to those hotels that meet the recommendations and "greening" criteria set out by the City of Cape Town.

Part of leaving a positive legacy entails the demonstration of best practice that contributes to heightened public awareness of the meaning and significance of sustainable development. Behaviour modification through education, awareness and capacity building is an important and essential component when it comes to taking positive action to conserve resources and make long-term sustainable decisions. South Africa – its citizens and businesses – is learning from its international counterparts, many of whom have adopted and embraced Cleaner Production technologies and principles for many years and who provide the proof that cleaner production is a route worth pursuing.

### GLOSSARY

**Retrofitting** – The amendment of buildings and fittings to make it more sustainable. This includes replacing normal light bulbs with CFL light bulbs, or using low flow taps that manage water use more efficiently.

**Grey water** – Any water that has already been used and has the potential for reuse without treatment.

**Greenhouse gases** – Greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), are produced when any fossil fuel (such as that used in an aircraft or car) is burnt. Greenhouse gases contribute to increased global warming which has a negative impact on the environment and on our lives.

## Greening Principles - laying the foundation for a greener conference

*Hundreds, sometimes thousands of people may attend any single international event. A lot of preparation and organisation is required in order to ensure that the event runs smoothly and that everything goes according to plan.*

Many of the 9 000 or so international events that are held annually address issues relating to business management, sustainable development and sustainability, however, only recently has a trend started to emerge that encourages event organisers to incorporate these aspects of sustainability directly into the event and in so doing create a 'green' event. There is, however, one problem that arises.

Although event organisers may strive to go about greening, they often have no guidelines or principles to follow or to assist them with the process. There is therefore a need to introduce and incorporate sustainability principles into the arena of event planning to ensure that a minimum standard is set for what is acceptable, both in terms of actions as well as the environmental and social impacts, and for what is expected when organising a green event.

At the International Greening Events Symposium (19-21 September 2004) held in Barcelona, Spain, it was said that event greening / greening events is "not only about avoiding problems – it is also about using opportunities. Greening an event always requires innovative ideas and approaches, new solutions and challenges to people's minds and behaviour" ([www.iclei.org](http://www.iclei.org)). Events offer opportunities to learn new things, as well as to learn from past experiences, both leading to the promotion and creation of a more sustainable future. Greening Principles also need to encourage learning and support behaviour change.

The Local Organising Committee of the ICLEI World Congress 2006 decided that it has to be a "green event", so the team compiled a set of principles to guide the greening process. Principles were chosen because they are accessible to everyone, voluntarily adopted and easy to communicate and understand. The definition of a principle in this context would be an "acceptable norm of conduct". It is hoped that through the greening process and its principles, negative environmental and social impacts will be minimised, that there will be increased awareness regarding the importance of sustainable development in Cape Town and that a positive legacy will be left behind. The project and principles will seek specifically to promote best practice that is also financially advantageous to local industries.

The principles that have been chosen, however, also need to reflect the process of sustainable development and thus include key phrases such as environmental best practice, social and economic development, education and awareness, monitoring and evaluation and leaving a positive legacy, with the overarching principle for the event being sustainability. An essential feature is that all these principles are incorporated into the planning, operation, management and maintenance of events and are not just seen as an "add on", but rather as an integral part of the event process.

### THE PRINCIPLES

#### Sustainable Procurement

To ensure that the products and services used during the event have minimal impact on the environment – i.e. suppliers of products and services used need to demonstrate that they have been produced / supplied in an environmentally friendly way. It also promotes the local sourcing of goods and services – i.e. ensuring that local people are involved in the process by maximising the utilisation of local goods and services, ultimately leading to local job creation.

#### Waste Reduction (Reduce, Reuse and Recycle)

A key element of event greening and organisation is to promote awareness and change behaviour around all aspects of waste management. This involves interventions to **minimise waste generation** in the planning, operation, management and maintenance of events, and includes **waste prevention, waste reduction, waste reuse, and recycling**. A further aspect is minimising the environmental and health impacts by **reducing toxicity**, and ensuring environmentally sound treatment and disposal of remaining waste.

#### Water Reduction

Interventions to promote awareness and behaviour change around **water use and management**, including water demand management and water efficiency technologies should be a key aspect of event greening. Water usage in all aspects of planning, operation, management and maintenance of events should be minimised and monitored.

#### Energy Efficiency

Promote awareness of energy efficiency in order to change the way people use energy. Promote energy saving technologies, management systems and behaviour, in all aspects of planning, operation, management and maintenance of events. Promote the use of **renewable energy** where possible.

#### Air Pollution Reduction

Strive to minimise air pollution, production and impact through limiting **motorised transport** (including aeroplanes) and using **renewable energy**.

#### Biodiversity Conservation

Ensure the event's **impact** on biodiversity (the natural environment) is minimised. Make delegates aware of the **importance** and value of biodiversity in ecosystem functioning, as well as its contribution to human health and wellbeing. Highlight local biodiversity hotspots. Highlight biodiversity conservation measures both onsite and within the host region.

#### Poverty Alleviation

Ensure the event contributes to poverty alleviation within the host region. Provide short-term and permanent job creation through the event greening activities (e.g. training in waste separation, tour guides, translators, use of local suppliers of goods and services etc). Alleviate poverty through legacy projects.

#### Participation and Communication

Encourage the public, delegates, service providers and industries involved in the event, to actively **participate** in the greening process. Industry staff and conference participants should be **informed** of what has been done to green the event and where possible **trained** in relevant aspects of greening. The broader public needs to be **aware** of greening plans around the event in order to raise awareness and facilitate behaviour change beyond those directly participating in the event.

#### Monitoring & Evaluation

Ensure that information is gathered on the **impacts of event greening interventions**. This is essential for learning, promotion of the model and awareness raising activities. This principle should however be an integral part of the process and should not only be part of the final evaluation.

#### Leaving a positive greening legacy

Ensure that both the short and the long-term impacts of decisions and actions are positive. Implement activities that lead to sustainability. Raise public awareness and encourage behaviour change as a result of intervention implemented throughout the event.

The principles on the previous page lay the foundation for event greening and help focus the actions and decision-making processes of event organisers. At the same time, these guidelines educate event participants and the general public around issues relating to sustainable development and how they, as individuals, can contribute to making not only the conference, but their homes and businesses more socially- and environmentally friendly.

## ICLEI World Congress Interventions - THINK GLOBAL, ACT LOCAL

*So we understand **what** event greening is, but what we want to know now is **how** one goes about greening an event?*

Event greening is a process and all the elements involved in this process need to illustrate sustainability and have long-term benefits along the triple bottom line – i.e. socially, environmentally and economically. In other words, what this means when it comes to actually greening an event, is that all the areas identified for priority intervention should ideally not be once-off attempts just to green a conference, but should have economic, social and environmental benefits that translate directly back into the city and its communities.

There are many contexts in which greening occurs and each of these areas of intervention needs to be thoroughly assessed. The three main focus areas are waste avoidance and minimisation, water conservation, and energy efficiency. However, issues such as transport, procurement, cleaner technologies, climate change, and education and training also play very important and significant roles in the process of event greening.

Each of these areas of intervention has practical activities to help achieve the greening goal. Recycling waste or using recycled paper, installing multi-flush toilets, retrofitting energy efficient technologies, encouraging the use of public transport, promoting the use of local products and increasing public awareness around greening issues are just a few examples of how to go about the greening process. These changes, some simple and others more complicated to implement, all have far-reaching effects that extend beyond the conference building or hotel and into the local and global community.

Interventions, therefore, do not only take into account the impacts of the conference on the local or national environment, but acknowledge the impacts caused on a global scale. Climate change is a good example. A large amount of environmental damage occurs when people travel to and from events and conferences. This is mainly caused by CO<sub>2</sub> emissions produced when any fossil fuel is burnt and these greenhouse gases then contribute to global warming.

One of the interventions required by ICLEI is that a compensation payment be made by delegates to the ICLEI Climate Legacy Initiative to offset the carbon emissions released during long-distance travel. The funding generated will then be used to finance or promote a Cleaner Development Mechanism (CO<sub>2</sub> reduction) project. The project identified in Cape Town for the ICLEI World Congress 2006 will be the Kuyasa Housing Project where 2300 low-income houses are being retrofitted with solar water heaters, CFL light bulbs and ceilings for insulation.

While looking at the bigger picture, it is important to remember that the main aim of all these interventions is to create an event that is more socially and environmentally friendly, both during the event and after. Greening is an ongoing process and interventions, with their associated actions or implications, need to be future-focused in order ensure that a positive and beneficial legacy is left behind.

*By thinking global and acting local, positive change can be achieved, both on a practical level as well as through the changing of people's long-term behaviour and perceptions.*

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