

MPAH

case study series

MAPUTALAND—PONDOLAND—ALBANY HOTSPOT



Local government and civil society

Partnering for biodiversity management and service delivery

Active and ongoing partnerships between local government and environmental civil society organisations provide unique opportunities to work towards common objectives. For local government, working with civil society organisations on projects relating to biodiversity management and ecological infrastructure can improve service delivery in terms of health, disaster risk reduction, climate change, job creation and much more. For civil society organisations, working with local government provides support and acknowledgement of the important work they do at a local level. By finding ways to work together on the management and conservation of biodiversity and ecological infrastructure, there can be mutual benefits for both local government and civil society.

Civil society organisations

Numerous types of civil society organisations are working towards biodiversity conservation and sustainable natural resource use in South Africa. Civil society organisations include local, national and international environmental non-governmental organisations, with an interest in biodiversity conservation and social development. They also include community based organisations that are focussed on sustainable land management and community upliftment. Sometimes, private companies work with these civil society organisations to solve societal issues or create economic opportunities.

How can civil society organisations work with local government?

There are a number of ways in which civil society organisations can work with local government in support of biodiversity conservation and service delivery:

- **Capacity development:** limited capacity is often a barrier to integrating biodiversity and ecosystem considerations into municipal developmental planning. Civil society organisations can often contribute to government capacity building.
- **Acting as service providers:** civil society organisations hold significant expertise for some municipal government functions, such as biodiversity planning, climate change resilience, waste management, community liaison and more. Civil society organisations can sometimes act directly as service providers to government.
- **Entrepreneurship and job creation:** partnerships between civil society organisations and municipal government can be valuable in creating the conditions necessary for encouraging jobs in ecotourism, natural resource management or sustainable resource use, as well as promoting small businesses and entrepreneurship.
- **Encouraging active citizenry:** civil society organisations can be good at supporting active citizenry through co-ordination and bringing people together. Public representation is required under the Municipal Systems Act, and civil society organisations can be supportive in reaching all the relevant stakeholders and constituents. Involvement of civil society organisations can help to increase credibility, accountability and transparency.



Some examples of innovative partnerships:

Partnerships can help reduce crime and increase use of urban open spaces



In Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality, the Baakens Valley Community Partnership has helped to reduce criminal activity in urban open spaces, and make the city's green belts a safe and healthy recreational option for its people. In doing so, the municipality has drawn on the capacity within civil society organisations to assist in municipal reserve management. The revitalisation of urban nature reserves has also attracted large events and sporting events, which have helped to boost the economy of the region. At the same time, the Baakens Valley Community Partnership, led by the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA), has achieved its goals of conservation of the urban havens for threatened biodiversity.

Local government mandate

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa enshrines certain environmental rights within the Bill of Rights, which stipulates that everyone has the 'right to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being; and to have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations'.

The Municipal Systems Act (Act 32 of 2000) directly tasks municipalities with promoting social and economic development, quality of life, and a safe and healthy environment. Municipalities are therefore the primary provider of basic services to communities, and are responsible for housing, water, food, sanitation, waste management and health care.

Local government are also tasked with many of the activities outlined in the National Development Plan. The National Development Plan introduces Vision 2030, which aims to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030 by uniting South Africans.

Partnerships can help to improve climate change resilience at a local level



Municipalities have a mandate to report on climate change adaptation plans. Alfred Nzo District Municipality has been working with Conservation South Africa to include climate change adaptation into its Integrated Development Plan (IDP). Initial discussions between the partners highlighted the contribution that ecosystem-based adaptation could have in improving the municipality's response to the negative impact of climate change. Conservation South Africa has now been appointed as a service provider to develop a complete climate change strategy for the district. Through the partnership, Alfred Nzo District Municipality has become a leading municipality in climate change resilience.

Municipal Integrated Development Plan (IDP)

All municipalities are required to develop an Integrated Development Plan, which is the principal planning instrument that guides and informs all planning and developments in a municipality. Environmental sustainability is an integral part of the process of developing municipal IDPs, which must include all relevant biodiversity plans, as well as invasive species monitoring, evaluation and control plans.

Each municipal IDP is supported by a Spatial Development Framework (SDF), which maps the spatial representations of desired patterns of land-use, directions of growth, urban edges, special development areas and conservation worthy areas. Environmental and spatial planning legislation gives guidance on the supporting environmental layers that must be incorporated into the SDF, thus providing an excellent opportunity for environmental mainstreaming into development planning.

Integrating the projects of civil society organisations directly into municipal IDPs can help to ensure that they are contributing to service delivery, whilst achieving common objectives of biodiversity conservation and improved human wellbeing.



Partnerships can help restore ecological infrastructure for improved water service delivery



The uMngeni River, a major water source, is increasingly unable to supply the water demand of eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality and other surrounding municipalities. In addition, deteriorating water quality is an escalating expense for municipalities. This prompted the development of the uMngeni Ecological Infrastructure Partnership, a partnership between a number of civil society organisations and municipalities aimed at improving catchment management. By restoring the ecological infrastructure of the catchment, the partnership aims to improve both quantity and quality of water available to municipalities. In doing so, the partnership addresses both biodiversity conservation of the catchment and improved water service delivery downstream.

Ecological infrastructure

Ecological infrastructure refers to naturally functioning ecosystems that deliver valuable services to people, such as fresh water, climate regulation, soil formation and disaster risk reduction. It is the nature-based equivalent of built or hard infrastructure, and is just as important for providing services and underpinning socio-economic development.

Local governments are often highly dependent on the services provided by biodiversity and ecological infrastructure. They are also directly responsible for the provision of services to communities, including a safe, healthy living environment, as well as social and economic development. The integration between biodiversity, sustainable development and human communities is most relevant at the scale of local government.

Case studies from the Maputaland–Pondoland–Albany Hotspot

In 2010, the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) initiated a 5-year investment in the Maputaland–Pondoland–Albany Hotspot (MPAH) that was focussed on supporting civil society in applying innovative approaches to conservation in under-capacitated Key Biodiversity Areas. Through this investment, it became apparent that significant mutual benefits that could arise when civil society organisations and municipal government developed good working relationships. A set of four case

studies has been developed that describe some of the CEPF-funded project experiences. In these cases, civil society and local government have worked together to manage biodiversity and ecosystems, while also contributing to rural development, job creation and social wellbeing:

- Climate change response in Alfred Nzo District Municipality
- Urban conservation in Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality
- uMngeni Ecological Infrastructure Partnership
- Greater uMngeni Biosphere Reserve

Biodiversity and ecological infrastructure support service delivery

Some of the ways in which biodiversity and ecological infrastructure can support municipal service delivery include:

Water and sanitation	Poorly maintained ecosystems can result in less and poorer quality water downstream. Effective biodiversity management can improve the water supply .	
	Healthy ecological infrastructure in wetlands and catchments can help to improve water quality and reduce expensive water purification.	
	Soil protection provided by vegetation can reduce erosion and decrease the rate of siltation of rivers and dams, lengthening the life of built infrastructure.	
Waste management	Ecosystems such as wetlands can support engineered solutions to manage effluent through filtration, breakdown of pollutants and elimination of pathogens.	
Safety and security	Proper management can reduce crime within urban open spaces .	
Disaster risk reduction	Ecosystems can buffer against natural disasters , by preventing or reducing damage from extreme weather events or natural hazards including floods, storms, fires, etc.	
	Healthy ecosystems are likely to improve the climate change resilience of urban and rural areas.	
Health	Biodiverse ecosystems provide a source for medicinal plants , which may be used in traditional medicines or the pharmaceutical industry.	
	Trees and green spaces lower the temperature in cities and play an important role in regulating air quality by removing carbon dioxide and other pollutants from the atmosphere.	
	Natural areas provide for healthy recreational options for the human population.	 
Agriculture	Food for human consumption is sourced from managed agro-ecosystems, marine and freshwater systems, forests and urban horticulture. Ecosystems provide the conditions for growing food and grazing livestock.	
	Soil fertility is essential for plant growth and agriculture and well-functioning ecosystems supply soil with nutrients required to support plant growth.	
	Insects pollinate plants , which is essential for the development of fruits, vegetables and seeds.	
	Ecosystems act as natural pest control through the activities of predators and parasites.	
Economic development	Natural areas play an important role for many kinds of tourism , which can provide considerable economic benefits, poverty alleviation and job creation.	
	Ecosystems provide a great diversity of products and materials for construction and trade.	

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