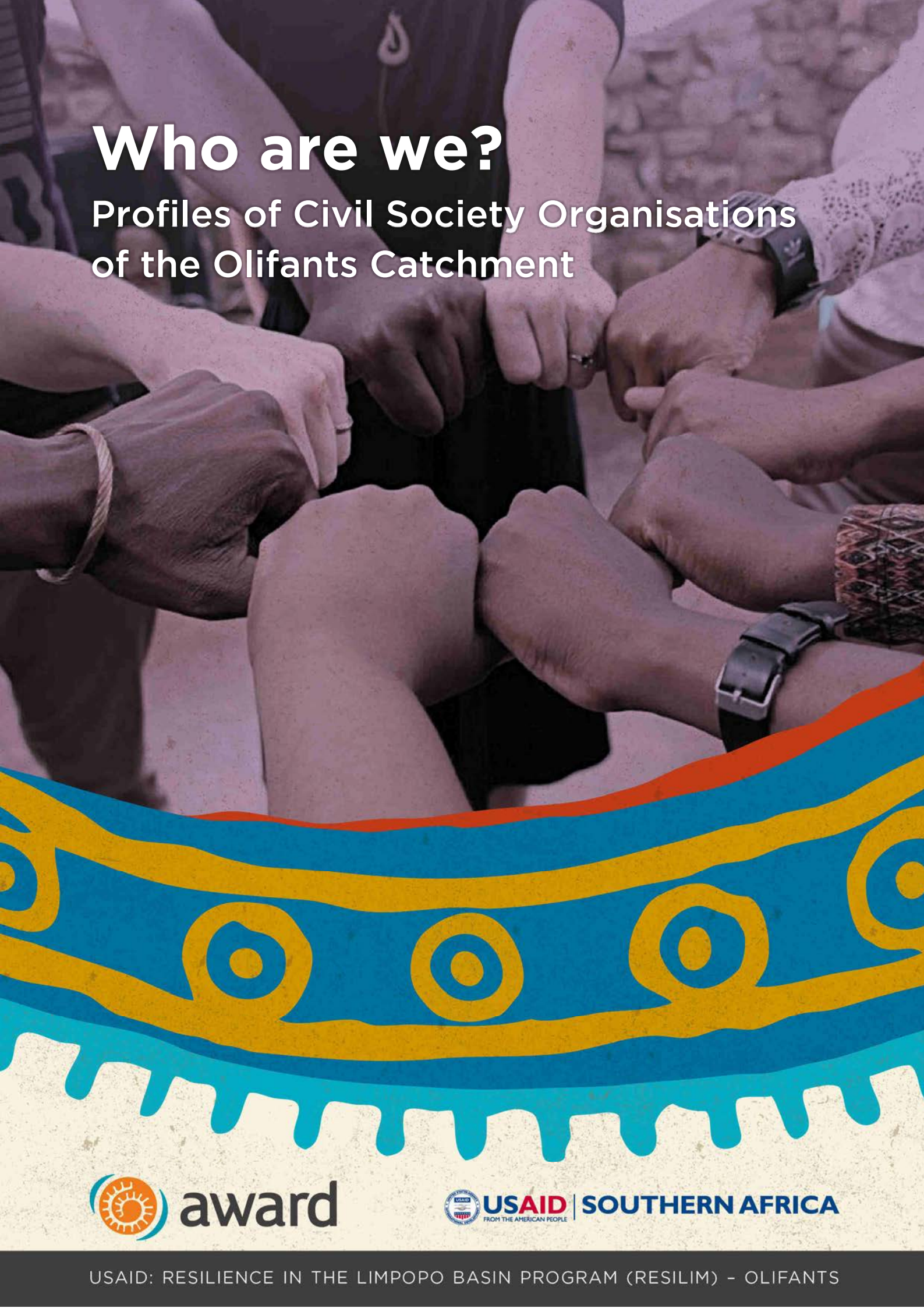


Who are we?

Profiles of Civil Society Organisations
of the Olifants Catchment





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Table of Contents

Civil Society Support Initiative	2
Introduction	2
Background to the CSO SI approach.....	2
December Ndlovhu	5
Matthews Hlabane	6
Colleen Jolobe	8
Katlego Malesa	8
Lorraine Kakaza	9
Tshepo Sibya.....	10
Mathapelo Thobejane [left].....	11
Brian Mdungazi	12
Marisane Malepe [centre]	13
Nomcebo Makhubelo	13
Rudolph Sambo	14
Bafana Hlatswayo.....	15
Bridget Corrigan.....	15
Elvis Komane.....	16
Emily Tjale.....	17
Peter Msiza.....	18
Gilbert Moela	19
Eunice Mampa	20
Nkwakwa Komane	21
Reuben Madingwane.....	21
Moshabi Selowa	22
Boledi Susan Moraba	23
Shirami Shirinda.....	23
Tokelo Mahlakoane	24
Tshepho Sibiya :.....	25
Clifford Mohuba	26
Mmabatho Monyela	26
Caswell Pokwane.....	27
Desiree Wright	28
Wendy Fraser	28
Peach Raveshana	28
Leannette Sithole	28
Daphne Makhublea	28
Aubrey Makata	29
Zanele Msibi	29
Lorraine Kakaza	29
Nomcebo Makhubelo & Thomas Mnguni.....	30



Civil Society Support Initiative

Introduction

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) represent many vulnerable people and often have to deal with vulnerabilities as people experience them on the ground. The Civil Society Organisation Support Initiative (CSOSI) involves a network of approximately 110 Civil Society Organisations located in the north eastern part of South Africa (Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces). The network is co-ordinated by The Association for Water and Rural Development (AWARD) and aims to strengthen and mobilise these civil society organisations by building resilience through training, communications and an enabling networking. The Civil Society Support Initiative is a project under RESILIM-O funded by USAID Southern Africa.

The Civil Society Support Initiative (CSO SI) commenced in early 2015 with a research period in preparation for engagement with a broad spectrum of stakeholders crossing three provinces in the Olifants River catchment. These included NGOs, Community Based Organisations, non-profit organisations, church and religious groups, grassroots activists, Communal Property Associations (CPAs) and citizen organisations. This research showed a large portion of CSOs to be reactive rather than proactive, dealing with a range of issues including corporate non-compliance with regulations leading to environmental and social crises; hostile and ineffectual municipalities; environmental degradation, abuse and over-use of natural resources, including water; waste management failure; health, housing, poverty, and unemployment challenges. Despite the enabling legislative framework for water reform in South Africa introduced in 1998, most rivers in this catchment continue to degrade in both quality and quantity. Indeed, the Olifants River ceased flowing for the first time in history in 2005, prompting widespread concern. Many poor and vulnerable communities relying directly on the river for water and livelihoods come under increasing pressure yet industry and mines continue, even under low flows, to discharge toxic effluent into the system.

During this phase we developed a database to list and classify stakeholders for a series of CSO Indabas to be run across three provinces as part of RESILIM O. This resource presents a selection of profiles of environmental activities taken from the CSO SI database. In it we hope to provide some insights into the people, their contexts and the way they are overcoming the challenges of working as a Civil Society Organisation in the Olifants River Catchment.

Background to the CSO SI approach

AWARD works with a Learning Network approach through its Resilience Learning Networks (RLNs) where social learning is the basis for collaborative implementation of jointly formulated innovations. In the CSO SI we aimed to set up and empower a Learning Network of organisations through the Indabas program with augmentary special skills training provided under the Water Clinics and Changing Practice course. More can be read about this approach in CSO SI documentation produced by the RESILIM O project

Most of the CSOs in the learning network are residents of the Olifants River Catchment a major tributary of the Limpopo River system. In 2016 and 2017 we held 18 CSO Indabas in the Olifants River Catchment spreading across three main clusters: Upper, Middle, and Lower Catchments. Over 150 CSOs attended these Indabas during that period.



CSOs of the Upper Olifants catchment



CSOs of the Middle Olifants catchment.



CSOs of the Lower Olifants catchment

Who are the CSOs & their members?

... Let's meet some of them...

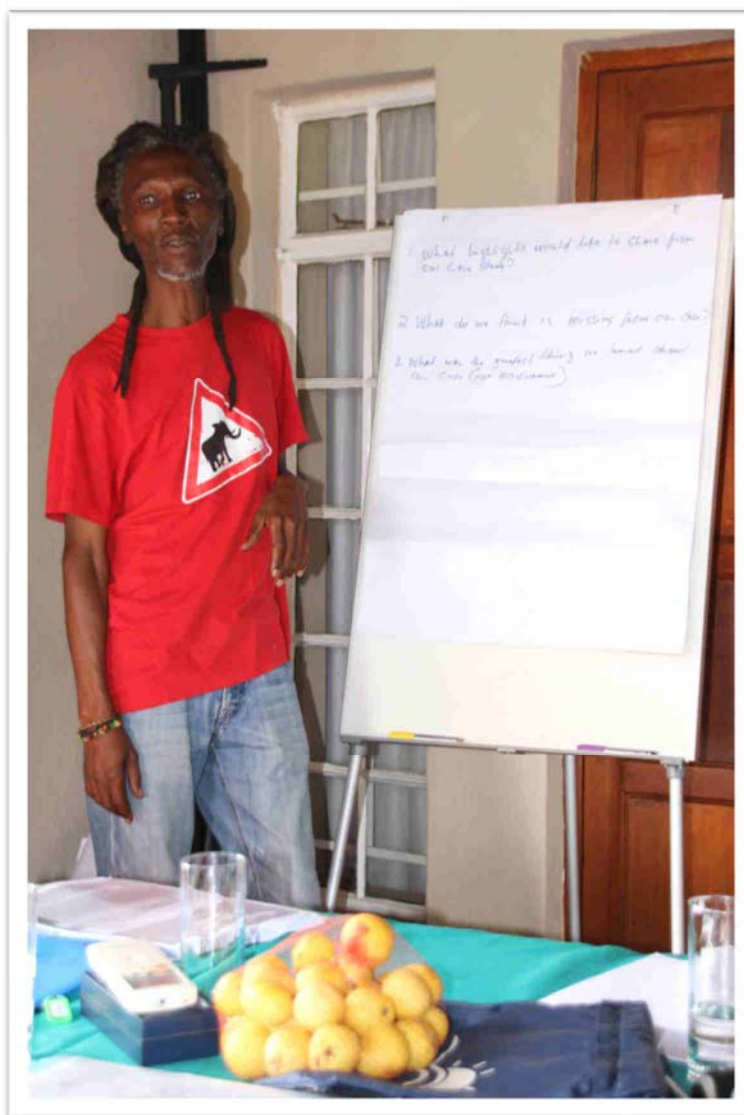


December Ndlovhu

Mpumalanga Water Caucus / Environmental Monitoring Group

December Ndlovhu is based in Bushbuckridge and works for the Environmental Monitoring Group. He is a member of Mpumalanga Water Caucus. His organisation works on issues of water and climate change, specifically on Large Scale Monoculture Plantations. They are against further expansion of large scale industrial timber plantations in their area. They also work with traditional health practitioners and Adopt-a-River programme which is a monitoring programme run by the Department of Water Affairs.

The Organisation plans to submit a Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA) request to Department of Water and Sanitation about the status of the 2000/2001 Cabinet decision relating to the Lowveld State Forestry Plantation. They will also be submitting comments on policy relating to Social Labour Plans (SLP).





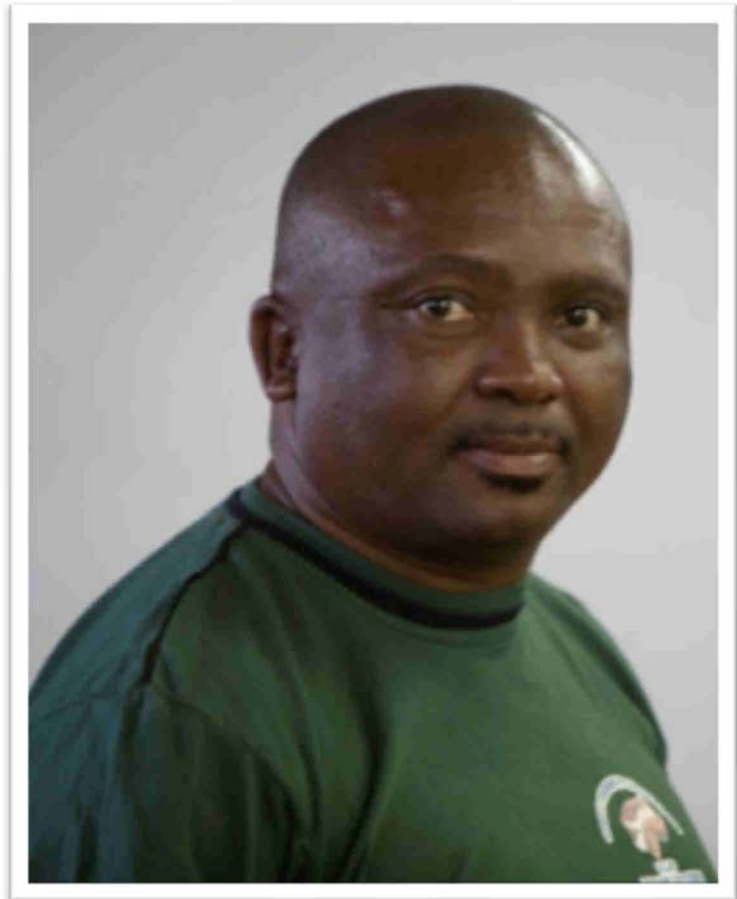
Matthews Hlabane

South African Green Revolutionary Council

Matthews Hlabane is the Director of the South African Green Revolutionary Council (SAGRC). He is also part of Mining Affected Communities United in Action (MACUA) and One Million Climate Jobs (OMCJ). Their organisational core focus is on creating awareness of environmental justice in relation to environmental impacts caused by mining activities in Mpumalanga Province, specifically in Carolina, Witbank, Ermelo, up to Nkomazi area. They also work in Limpopo Province at Makopane, Motse and Lephalala. They focus on creating awareness on issues that relate to water and soil quality, destruction of water systems, wetlands, atmospheric pollution and its impacts on human health.

One of the challenges faced by their community is human settlements. People live close to coal mines and discarded dams which affect their health negatively because of the pollution. The community does not have access to clean drinking water. They use contaminated water from the Brugspruit in their households. They also lack basic services such as recreation facilities which leads to the youth to swimming in the evaporation ponds which are highly acidic.

Matthews said attending the CSO Indabas has assisted his organisation with broadening their network as they get to learn from people coming from other regions.





Through these Indabas they are able to share the importance of ecosystems, because people have survived for many years with the help of the ecosystem providing them with a positive healthy life.

They now know that all activities affect one river which is the Olifants, hence the importance working together and initiating programmes that will seek to save the Olifants River Catchment.

By saving the Olifants, his organisation knows that it is also saving lives not only in Mpumalanga Province but other provinces that depend on the Olifants like Gauteng, Limpopo and Gaza in Mozambique.

Their plan is to grow as an organisation, to be a movement which is membership based and accountable to communities. They are currently involved in processes of recruiting new members to enable them to have branches in communities and work directly with affected people at grassroots level. In that way, when they run campaigns they will be driven by the communities themselves and therefore shaping the future of their organisation.

They have realised that working as an organisation as a single entity, none of the stakeholders listen because they regard them as a small organisation that is not accountable to anyone and has no mandate, but if they have members they will form the backbone of the organisation in taking campaigns forward.



There are a lot of similar challenges we are faced with in communities; the Indabas give us a platform to share our challenges and come up with a collective way of solving them.

Colleen Jolobe *[front left]*

Action Voices



We are working in Witbank on community monitoring, stream and mine auditing regarding pollution. Thus far, we have done research regarding the history of a mine which has been established and we evaluate whether there is involvement of local government in all their mining processes.



Katlego Malesa

Mining Affected Communities in Action



We are looking at issues of water pollution, air pollution and climate change. We are also experiencing house cracks in our community due to mine blasting, which we also try to address.



Lorraine Kakaza

Action Voices

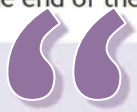
Lorraine Kakaza works for Action Voices as a Community Monitor in Carolina and eMalahleni in Mpumalanga Province. Her role involves writing environmental articles on different categories of pollution, specifically air. She also writes about water issues, unemployment rates based on mining industries and migrant workers.

Apart from being entrusted with voicing their challenges through writing, Lorraine does reports, environmental alerts, mobilises and creates awareness for communities on direct and indirect issues that have detrimental impacts to communities.

She has broadened her horizons by travelling internationally to share their South African stories. Her organisation has managed to launch two books namely “We are Activists” and “Women living next to the mine”, describing experiences of such impacts from Ermelo, Witbank and Carolina. She has built strong networks and has been effectively empowered through the Civil Society Organisations Indabas.



“I used to work with Mpumalanga Youth Against Climate change but, now I’m working as an environmental monitor with Bench Marks Foundation. We at Bench Marks Foundation focus on air and water quality and we are also raise awareness about the environment. We believe that the air that we are breathing is dirty because of the power stations and mines around us because they pollute and at the end of the day they don’t want to pay. We found that communities are the ones who suffer more



My trip to Hawaii is about the private sector, like, the polluters, what is happening around the environment specifically looking at mining. So, I’m going to represent South Africa and communities around South Africa looking at the negative impacts of platinum and gold mining and try to come with solutions.

because they just came to take profit and people who are staying around are not included but excluded. During our awareness campaigns we target women because we believe that women are the ones who carry the burden especially when men have to leave for urban areas to look for a job.

So, we found that the mine will come and they will be relocated and they don’t have choice and they have to do what the mines are telling them. They don’t know their rights, so, us we are telling them their rights and also guide them if they want to open a case. We are having issues of water in my community and I have started doing investigation in 2014 and also write different newsletters based on water”.



Tshepo Sibya

[standing between Kedibone Ntobeng, & Christina Mothupi]

Itumeleng Youth Group

Itumeleng Youth Group (IYG) from Mampuru was established to ensure that there is environmental stability and also act as an information centre.

Tshepo is the chairperson and he says the motivation behind their establishment was due to the high statistics of dropouts in schools.

Because of the lack of institutions of higher learning our youth does not see the importance of education; they drop out at secondary level and get involved in illegal activities such as drugs.

IYG has become the knowledge hub for youth in Mampuru community, bridging the gap and providing them with, among other things, computer skills and also training on how to be environmental monitors.

As a chairperson, Tshepo's role involves overseeing everything that is done within the projects to ensure that it meets its intended objectives.



Because of the lack of institutions of higher learning our youth does not see the importance of education; they drop out at secondary level and get involved in illegal activities such as drugs.

IYG have been involved in door to door awareness and cleaning campaigns, as well as volunteering to be clerks in their nearby local school which does not have administration and human resources staff. The CSO Indabas have really assisted their organisation in terms of networking and understanding issues related to climate change.



Mathapelo Thobejane [left] *Sekhukhune Environmental Justice Network [SEJN]*



Mathapelo Thobejane is from Ditoebeleng Village in Magakala under Tubatse Local Municipality. She is the Chairperson of Sekhukhune Environmental Justice Network (SEJN). Their organisational mandate is to create awareness around environmental issues that are negatively affecting communities, specifically on issues pertaining to mining, climate change, waste management and river monitoring. They engage polluters in terms of the Water Management Act compliance.

The rivers they have identified as being affected are Motse, Mokgothane, Moopeste, and Maatadi. Mmathapelo is also entrusted with the responsibility of information gathering through workshops and to do follow ups.

SEJN not only raises awareness but also seeks funding for specific projects by attending the Civil Society Organisation Indabas and other events. Mmathapelo got exposure and fruitful learning exchanges at the Indabas from other organisations who are all experiencing similar problems as theirs but differ in context. She is hopeful that she will receive more training, especially on water testing because some of their organisation's projects are on hold due to the lack of capacity to carry out water testing duties.



Brian Mdungazi

Gender CC



Brian Mdungazi from GenderCC South Africa is based in Tzaneen. Gender CC focuses on women's empowerment through training, giving women skills to create sustainable food security and embedding climate change adaptation in the training.

“Our organisation's aim is to uplift grassroots women in communities who are in a vulnerable state and are faced with poverty due to unemployment. We teach these women the importance of using renewable energy as one of the ways of adapting to climate change. We provide them with training on how to build biogas digesters from start to finish, which they use for cooking. They

also build the biogas digesters to sell and become economically empowered,” said Brian.

As a way of increasing climate change adaptation in communities, Gender CC trains community women and encourages them to get involved in organic gardening operations.

“Many of these women have small gardens within their homesteads which they have never used before and now they have started producing vegetables for their families and also for sale within their communities,” he said.

These women have also started production of herbs and this has shown a great economic boost. The herbs they are producing are rosemary and moringa which they also use for the production of body ointments which they sell to the communities.

“The main challenge they are faced with is water for irrigation. But as GenderCC we have come up with a strategy of training how to harvest rain water to use for irrigation, and also the importance of using “grey water” for irrigation,” Brian said.

“ We would like to broaden our scope of knowledge and create more networks. This is why I attended this Indaba today.

Marisane Malepe [centre]

Affected Communities Justice Network



The mines produce a hydrogenous base which is deposited into our rivers, so we want to address issues like this. We also want to make a plan for hydrocarbon management. We are also looking at the issues of mining exploration. We are looking at the issues of water pollution and air pollution from mines.



Nomcebo Makhubelo

Highveld Environmental Justice Network [HEJN]



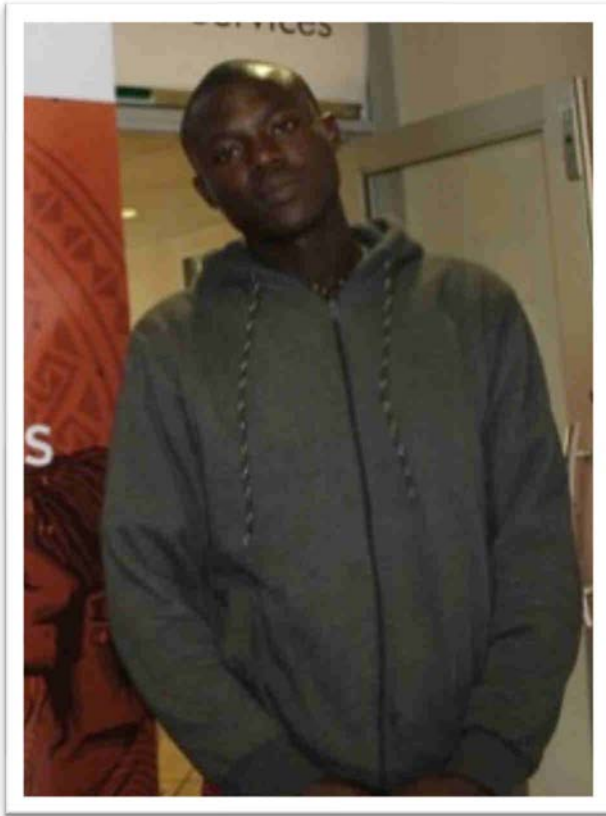
We are basically “The Organization of Organizations” because we have about 14 other organizations affiliated under our organization.

We mobilize people, educate them about their rights and how the mines and industries are affecting their lands and we also build capacity through the communities that we work with and lobby them in terms of how can they engage with government.



Rudolph Sambo

Ihawu Lemvelo



We are exposed to these mining companies, power stations and other plants and these are strong inside, so that's the thing that we try to do so that people can be aware and add some sort of actions so that we can have a way forward.

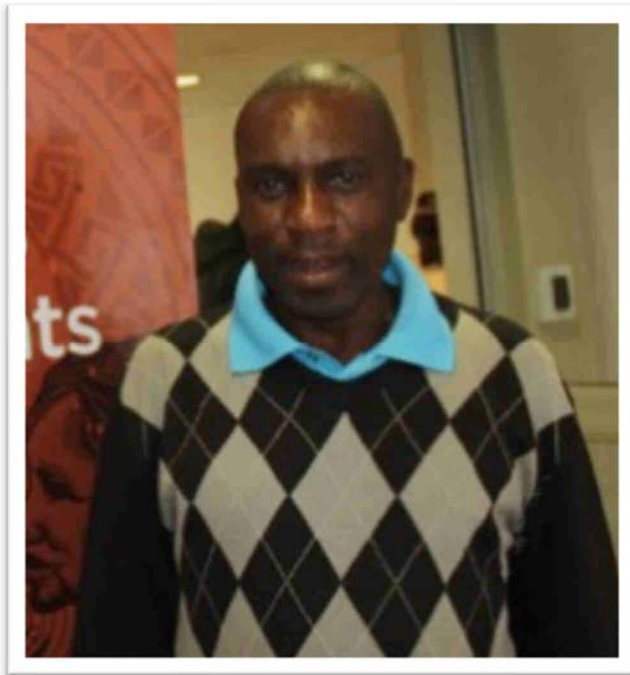
I'm expecting to gain more information at the CSO Indaba and also to learn how to take care of our environment.



We are creating awareness in terms of the environmental impacts that we are facing as community, not just us as the community but the community all over the continent.

Bafana Hlatswayo

Middleburg Environmental Justice Network



The work that we are focusing on is the question of water and mining, advocacy and awareness of the public. Since we have attended the first Indaba, we are looking forward to solidarity. We must bring solidarity so that we can push our campaign forward.

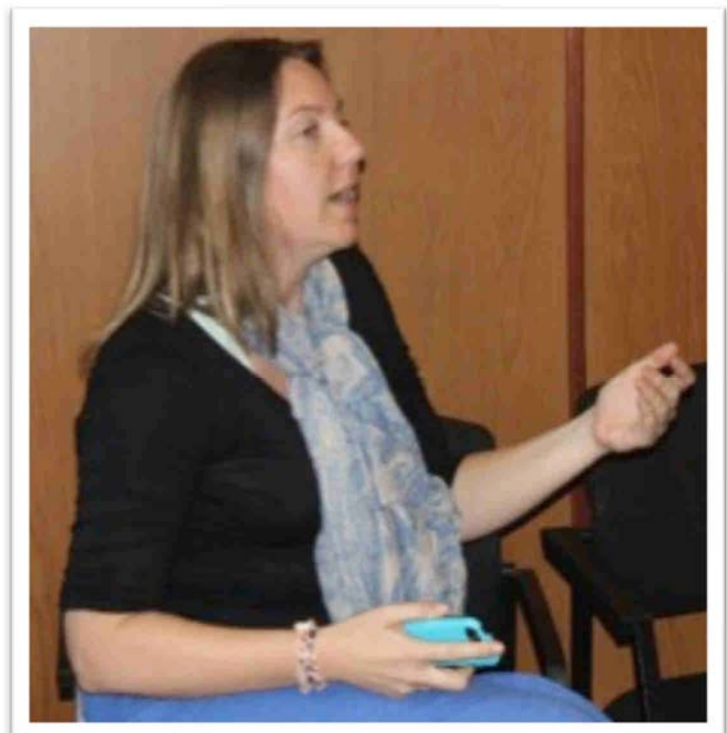
T

Bridget Corrigan

Endangered Wildlife Trust



I have general interest in the Olifants system, and we are interested to partner with organisations that are active as we are an implementation organisation.





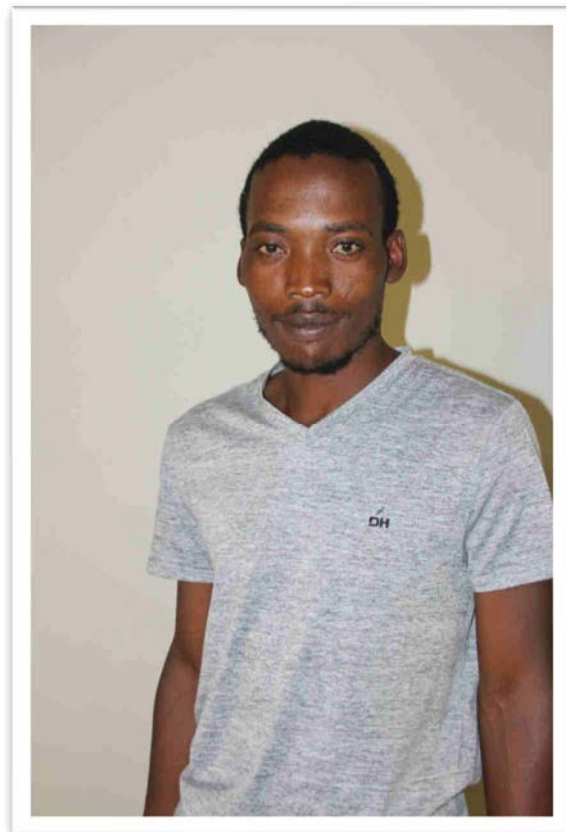
Elvis Komane

Culisa



We focus on social challenges. We try to unite, to communicate and run awareness campaigns. We do that through workshops where people start to identify the challenges that we are facing and try to work on how can we find common solutions.

We are based in eMalahleni, in an informal settlement called Santa Village. The issue we are working on is the National Air Quality Data Supply. We are one of the organisations that was chosen 2 years ago to work on the African Media Indaba, we were then collaborating with the DPSA (Development Planning SA) and working with National Treasury guided by Open Up. We also had to design a project for the National Dept. of Environment. Today we have the final version of the article dealing with air quality data supply that will spread down on the ground. Our partners have acknowledged our case study, it has received some international acknowledgement, so we'll be guiding SA first and some countries having air quality challenges. The outcome we would like to see : when we started the case study we had one company, but then the case has gone to a level where it deals with all corporate bodies, all mining companies, and we want to see full compliance from the different polluters.





Emily Tjale

Land Access Movement of South Africa (LAMOSA)



We are looking at the issue of land, such that people get a place to stay which they will own by themselves. We are also looking at the issue of inheritance, that if as a woman, when my husband dies - things must come to me. We are looking at the laws in our country, we go around teaching people about how the laws work and also tell them to write their suggestions to submit to parliament. Again, we help the volunteers who are involved in AIDS campaigns, care-givers and so on in terms of working together with the government. We are also looking at the issues of Climate Change as to how can we adapt to such and also come with better ways to address the causes.



Here at the Indabas I want to see us as organizations working together and see how best we can help each other on the different challenges that we are facing and strengthen the solidarity support. Secondly, we must learn and teach each other, give out our opinions and also to know and understand our rights and the laws.

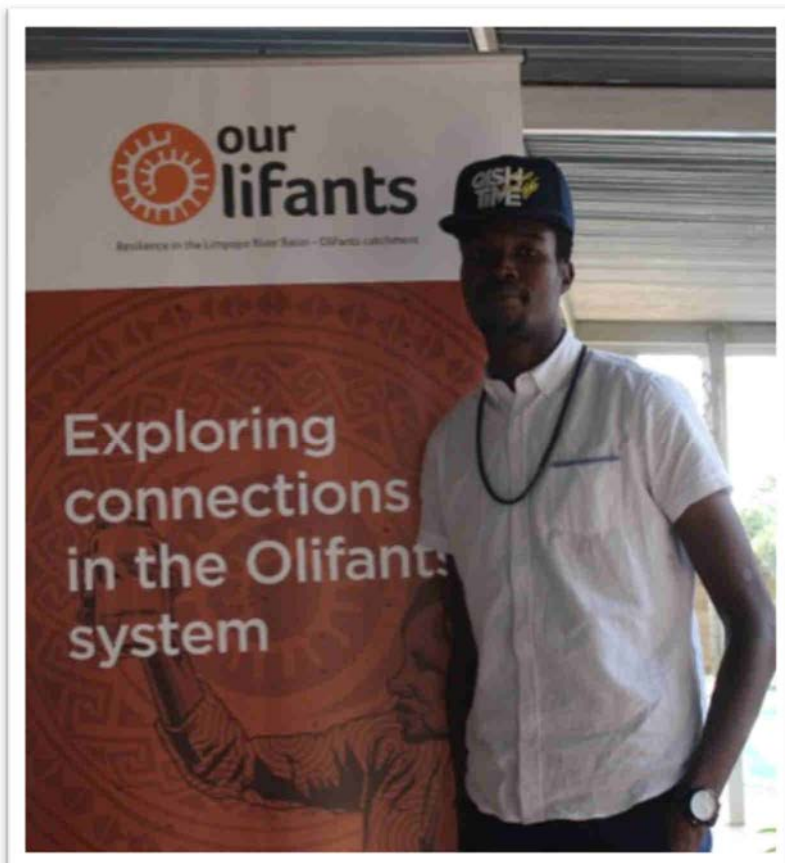


Peter Msiza

Baitsusi Agri Project



We want to have more youth involved in the agricultural sector. We try to create jobs for youth and other people in our community who don't have qualifications to go and further their studies.



“The other thing is that we are looking at creating food security in our community because there are a lot of families and children who are suffering at their homes, but if we can tackle these kind of issues to create more opportunities and create more food gardening in our community, that's where people can work and provide for their families.

At the CSO Indaba I am looking forward to learn how to network with other organizations, to work together with one vision to achieve and develop communities and civil society.”

Gilbert Moela

Limpopo Water Caucus

Basically, we are dealing with mine related issues and water issues in Limpopo as a whole. We just recently formed a committee and are creating a database of communities affected by mining in Limpopo. We also need to develop a framework and invite municipalities and water service providers to the Water Caucus meetings to develop a framework on escalating issues based on the Water Caucus meetings.

I am interested in the participatory principles in the environmental sector. In my area we have mines proposing to extend their underground shafts into our area, but they have already developed a scoping report, most of the people in that report are not from the area or our village. The DMR said they will look into the matter, but even today I am still waiting for their response. The outcome I would like to see: I would like mining companies to engage with the communities on issues related to the EIA process.



At the CSO Indabas we need to learn about how climate change is affecting our communities and who and what is causing climate change.

Eunice Mampa

Ga-Mampa Community Development Trust



What we are doing is that we want the people to know more about the danger of mines because the mines have done many things which are affecting us including a lot of dust and noise.

“What I do is collect information and take back to my community so that they can also be aware of what is happening.

I go around doing research at places like clinics to check how many people are HIV positive, diagnosed with TB because many people who have been working at the mines are affected by TB due to the dust from the mine.

The chrome mine in our area is active day and night, there is a lot of dust. When you approach our community you will see dust. It goes like this every day. The dust is from general operations, including blasting, and perhaps when they are cleaning the chrome. The dust is affecting us too much - it is affecting our health. We have not taken any action yet, but what we want to do is to be part of meetings with the mine so that we can tell them to reduce their dust because it is affecting us.”





Nkwakwa Komane & Reuben Madingwane

Bakone Ba Manakane Community Development Trust (BBCDT)

The organization was formed after mining was introduced in the community to focus on the mining issues that will affect the community.



We are also engaging with municipalities and other government departments on behalf of the community for service delivery in the community.

Moshabi Selowa

Freedom of Expression Network (FXN)



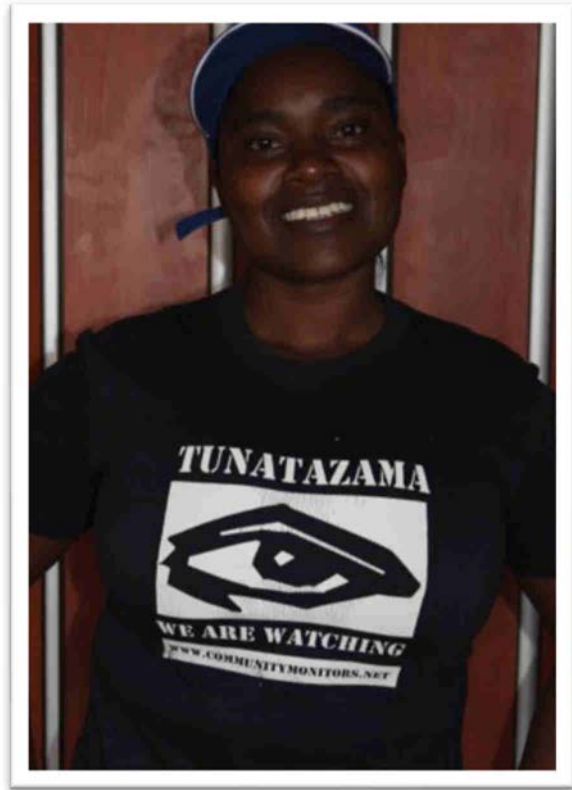
We collect information, especially in these kinds of gatherings and take it to the community to give them updates on the issues that are taking place with regard to the environment. We also visit communities and check if they understand the information that we have given them and check if there is any information that they still need.



At the CSO Indaba we want to learn much about rivers and how we can possibly avoid this issue of water contamination by the mines.

Boledi Susan Moraba

Community Monitors Network



#MiningMustFall

Shirami Shirinda

Legal Resource Centre



I am here to share experience about Civil Society Organisations on human rights issues.



Tokelo Mahlakoane

Mining Affected Communities Justice Network

We are focused on river pollution. At our village, we do not have water. Our river, the Motse, is polluted by a local Mine. What we have already done : we reported this to our counsellor, and I wrote an email to Dept. of Water and Sanitation, National and Provincial. On 7 November, someone from the provincial DWS came to my village and took a statement. He said he will open a case against the mine. On the 14th another one came and took samples - we are still waiting for the results. Our counsellor took the matter to the local municipality and they responded that they don't provide water, only the Sekhukhune District Municipality can provide water. What I want to see: in the short term I want the municipality to deliver water to the village. In the long term I want to the mine to drill a borehole so that the entire community can have water.



In addition, we want to be a part of mining meetings so that we can share these ideas and how we can do things.

With regards to the river, there is a canal that discharges chemicals into the river. We want the mine to sort out that canal and find another place to discharge those chemicals, so that our river can be safe, because we depend on that river, we drink, we bathe, we irrigate our gardens with that river. If they can reduce that, even our ancestors can be safe.



Tshepho Sibiya : Ithumeleng Youth Project



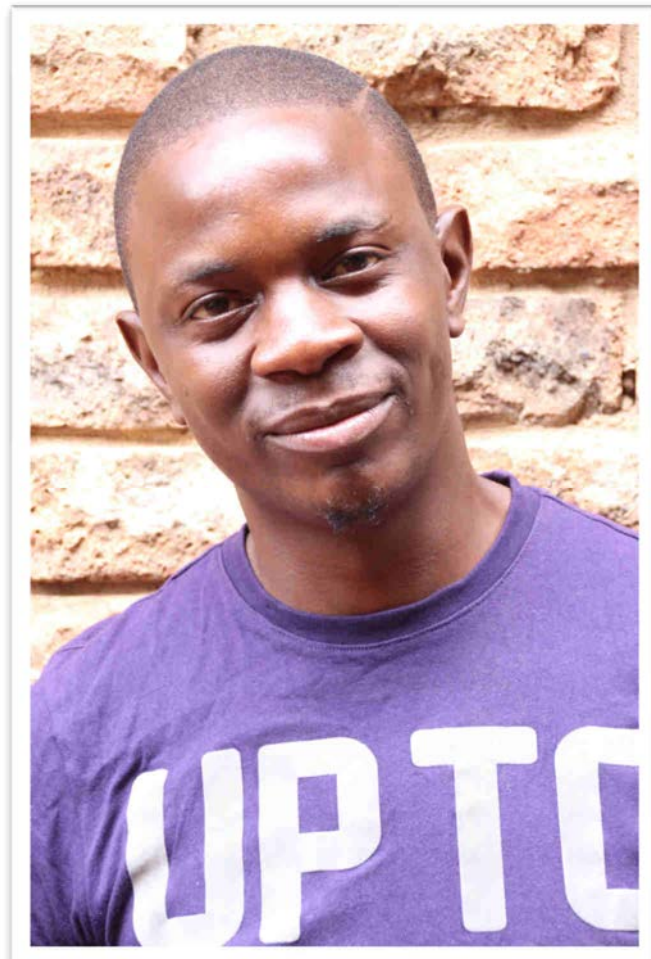
The issue we are working on is waste - domestic, business, waste as a whole, including disposable nappies. Where we come from, and a lot of rural areas, we don't have a dumping site.

“We are based in Steelpoort in a village called Ga-Mampuru, next to Lolo Mountain and Tubatse River.

Most of the time we rely on the river for water to drink. As we don't have a dumping site most people dump their waste in the river, they don't care whether its hazardous waste or whatever they have they dump it, wherever they see fit. Just imagine if someone has dumped rat poison in the river and someone drinks that water.

As an organisation we are looking at waste collection, and why the municipality doesn't do it from our villages. The action we have taken is we want to the mine to help us with waste collection, but the problem is that even if the mine helps us, where are they going to dump it? Then we found out our municipality does not have a licenced dumping site. The last one was in Praktiseer and it was not licenced, so they were trying to find a licence. We tried to engage with the municipality during Changing Practice,

but what they told us, when we went there with the issues around disposable nappies, which are a huge issue in our area, what they have found in our river is that there is a lot of E coli, which is caused by sewage, but we don't have sewage treatment on Tubatse River. The outcome we want to see is waste being collected in our area”.





Clifford Mohuba

Malengine Corruption Watch



Our issue is the access road which is being contaminated with mining waste.

We are based in Malengine, Monametse, Atok. It is very dusty and there is no doubt that there are health risks, such as respiratory ailments and eye problems, due to the chemicals that are in the dust. Dust prevention and effective dust control should be implemented for surrounding communities. Action we've already taken : we've been working with Benchmarks Foundation on it; we sent some emails to Bokoni Platinum Mine to set up meetings, but they never responded to our emails since they are in care and maintenance. The outcome we would like to see is to see the road being tarred.

Mmabatho Monyela

Sekhukhune Combined Women Affected Mining Communities

“We wrote to the municipality to inform them of the water shortage, but we have not yet had any response due to municipal strikes that have been going on for some time (around the VBS corruption scandal). The water shortage crisis in our community is because the borehole is too small. The mine in our area is Twickenham #2 shaft at Makgopa village. The action we have taken is that we wrote to Greater Tubatse Municipality. Outcomes: we would like the mine to extend the dam to be big so that we can get water”.



The issues - recently we have been dealing with water crisis in the community.



Caswell Pokwane

Doornkop CPA



The issue - we want to take climate change adaptation and mitigation into the municipal IDP, so that when we propose projects they are aligned to what we want as a community.

We are a community in Middelburg, Steve Tshwete Municipality, we believe in implementing green principles, that can be climate change adaptation and mitigation. We always have a problem with municipalities to take our programs and projects. Number 2: in Middelburg we have a lot of mining and industrial companies - we want them to play a role in investing in communities where we are doing green initiatives. Currently we are doing a community plan, some initiative at national, provincial, district levels, now it goes to communities. We are the first one that is going to be piloted by Dept. of Rural Development). We are pushing the idea of eco village, so that when we talk about water it is aligned to smart, green initiative, also waste. We rely on borehole water, but you will see in our village a lot of disposable nappies going up and down where the boreholes are. There is no dump to take the waste to, if you approach the municipality they will say it is not a priority, the priority is to build houses, but that also affects our health, as a community. Outcome I would like: How to force the local municipality to play a role in our local environmental issues.



Desiree Wright & Wendy Fraser

Hlokomela

Seeds of Light



Peach Raveshana, Leanette Sithole & Daphne Makhublea

A Spring of Hope

Beretta School

Permaculture Training Centre



Aubrey Makata

Community Initiative for Social Enhancement



Learning from other partners and finding solutions, the change in temperature due to climate change was an eye opener.

Zanele Msibi & Lorraine Kakaza

One Million Climate Jobs

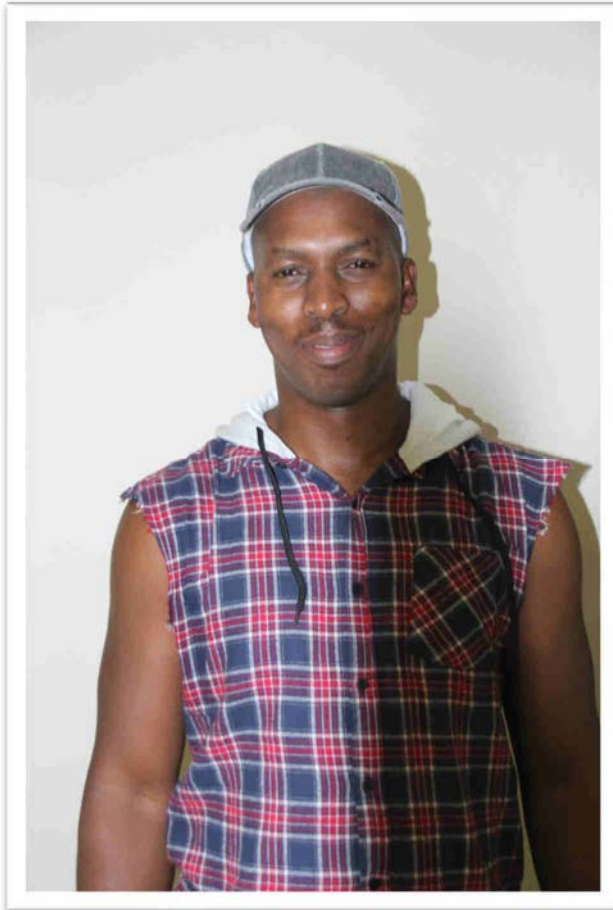
Action voices



Nomcebo Makhubelo & Thomas Mnguni

HEJN

GroundWork



Thomas Mnguni of GroundWork said:
Environmental justice is about the system -
e.g. how the economy is designed and is
creating all sorts of problems. What happens
in the Upper affects the whole system. What
is the system you are dealing with?
Catchments do not have to do with
administrative systems - natural systems are

for example a catchment. We ask you to think systemically. If you do not take action you will become irrelevant. Action has to be focused on a local level.

Its important to understand how to interact with rivers and a catchment; at some point most rural people use water from the rivers, if we say we get tap water because we're in Middelburg we should ask: where does it come from? How does it connect to the whole system? Polokwane is not in the catchment but is using our water - from Olifants Neck - taking water out of the catchment to develop another city.

Its frustrating - you can see people doing things, but its haphazard - part of our our support, from Groundwork, is to make sure people understand they need to manage an organization, to build strength around how you report, plan. In the past 2 years - we have seen people plan more. Now how do you get funding? Do we have the capacity to appreciate what we have and manage it properly?



award

The Association for Water and Rural Development

AWARD is a non-profit organisation specialising in participatory, research-based project implementation. Their work addresses issues of sustainability, inequity and poverty by building natural-resource management competence and supporting sustainable livelihoods. One of their current projects, supported by USAID, focuses on the Olifants River and the way in which people living in South Africa and Mozambique depend on the Olifants and its contributing waterways. It aims to improve water security and resource management in support of the healthy ecosystems to sustain livelihoods and resilient economic development in the catchment.

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About USAID: RESILIM-O

USAID: RESILIM-O focuses on the Olifants River Basin and the way in which people living in South Africa and Mozambique depend on the Olifants and its contributing waterways. It aims to improve water security and resource management in support of the healthy ecosystems that support livelihoods and resilient economic development in the catchment. The 5-year programme, involving the South African and Mozambican portions of the Olifants catchment, is being implemented by the Association for Water and Rural Development (AWARD) and is funded by USAID Southern Africa.

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