

EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY AND DECISION MAKING FOR CONSERVATION AGREEMENT PROJECTS AS AN ECOSYSTEM - BASED ADAPTATION (EBA)

2021

CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS FOR RANGELAND RESTORATION IN
NAMAQUALAND: A CASE STUDY



INTRODUCTION

Did you know that nature can help communities adapt to the effects of a changing climate? When rivers and wetlands are healthy, they can store water for longer during periods of drought and buffer the effects of floods. Rangelands are better able to provide fodder for livestock during extended dry periods if they have been rested and maintained. Using nature to help people adapt to climate change is called Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA). Box 1 presents South Africa's vision for EbA.

Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) is an approach that uses nature to help people adapt to climate shocks such as droughts, and floods. The National Climate Change Response Strategy recognises the potential of EbA to help communities adapt to climate change. South Africa's vision is to use EbA to transition to an economy that is able to withstand climate shocks, and secure the livelihoods of vulnerable people. For this vision to be realised, effective coordination, learning and communication is needed between people, to document successes that can inform policy and decision making which will unlock funding to implement EbA.

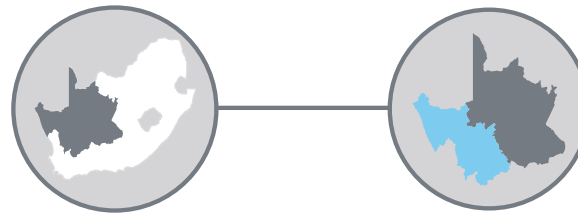
Box 1. South Africa's vision for EbA



THE PROBLEM

Rangelands and wetlands in Namaqualand, Northern Cape Province, South Africa, are important to people who rely on livestock farming for their livelihoods, but they are threatened by inappropriate land management practices. Limited economic opportunities and worsening poverty place further stress on rangelands and wetlands as people become increasingly dependent on them. In addition, warmer temperatures, unpredictable rainfall and more frequent and intense storms are expected to affect the health of rangelands. Most of the farmers are aware of changes in their environment, especially those caused by more frequent and longer droughts, but often farmers require support to understand how their actions affect the condition/health of their environment and what they can do to adapt to a changing climate.

Focus Area: Wetlands in Namaqualand the Northern Cape



NORTHERN CAPE

NAMAKWA



Steinkopf

NAMAKWA

Leliefontein

THE SOLUTION

Conservation South Africa (CSA) implemented the Biodiversity and Red Meat Initiative (BRI) and the Meat Naturally Initiative (MNI) in Namaqualand. The initiatives were designed to improve the sustainability of agricultural practices and enhance people's ability to cope with climate shocks such as drought and floods. With support from funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Earth Fund and SWITCH Africa Green Grant, CSA connected with communal farmers in the Leliefontein Commonage (192 000 hectares), and Steinkopf Commonage (329 000 hectares). Both of these areas urgently require resources, according to the EbA priority areas map developed for the Namakwa District Municipality's Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment.



Steinkopf
Commonage
329 000 ha



Leliefontein
Commonage
192 000 ha



CSA engaged in Conservation Agreements (CAs) through a voluntary and participatory process to support communal farmers to protect nature in return for incentives. Conservation actions and incentives were identified together with farmers based on what they could do to improve their farming, and what they would need to support them.



It was agreed that planned grazing was needed to rest rangelands, restore wetlands, and conserve biodiversity.

Farmers needed support through livestock medicines for vaccination and dosing against parasites, introduction of more suitable breeds (such as the indigenous meatmaster sheep, and speckled goats), better access to markets, and training.

During the agreement, CSA and participating farmers (called stewards), exchanged ideas, learnt from each other, and brought people together to value nature as a means to generate benefits for both people and nature. In order to collect data and assess the impact of the stewardship programme, socio-economic surveys were conducted in 2017, 2018,¹ and 2020.² Questions focused on demographics, perceptions of livelihood, rangeland and livestock impacts as a result of the CAs, as well as aspects that required further support. Successes and challenges faced by stewards were also documented during workshops, which provided a space for valuable engagement between stewards and CSA. In 2017, feedback was received from 59% of the stewards. Of the stewards who had CAs by the end of 2018, 52% provided feedback in 2018, and 44% in 2020.

1. After two years of implementation of the CAs

2. Two years after the CAs ended

3. When participating stewards were asked how they knew that their rangelands were in better condition they gave one or more of the following responses: livestock condition; more grazing available; the veld is greener; growth of plants improved; and/or more flowers.

4. In 2017, semi-indigenous lambs were sold after 6 months, whereas commercial lambs were sold after 8 months.

5. In 2017, semi-indigenous lambs were sold at R32.00 per kilogram, whereas commercial lambs were sold at R29.00 per kilogram.

The results of the surveys and the workshops create a clearer understanding of why and how the stewardship programme is working to derive multiple benefits for both nature and people. This will enable the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and other enabling organisations, policy makers and government stakeholders to promote CAs as a tool for EbA by informing policy and unlocking funding.

RESULTS AND SUCCESSES

Most stewards who provided feedback during the surveys and workshops, noted an observable improvement in the condition of rangeland⁴ because they planned their grazing and kept their livestock numbers below the recommended threshold. Their livestock were free of internal and external parasites. Grazing became greener and more abundant. Livestock became healthier and heavier. The more resilient breeds reached market ready weights earlier. Stewards had better market access to sell their livestock at better prices, (particularly the more resilient breeds⁵), and generated an

income which catered for their families. They saved money on livestock medicine, so they had money to put away for emergencies or spend on other expenses. Box 2 presents feedback from one of the female stewards, Katrina Schwartz.

Katrina Schwartz is a passionate farmer with an affinity for nature conservation. Katrina has praised the benefits she has felt as a result of the stewardship programme, including gaining valuable knowledge in sustainable livestock grazing, conservation and farming as a business. "After CSA my life became better because my livestock became healthier and I gained more profit from livestock sales." She is proud of the relationships she has developed with other stewards who she has learnt other skills from. Katrina also acknowledges the vast potential of the programme to empower the youth and reduce unemployment.

Box 2. Feedback from one of the female stewards, Katrina Schwartz.



Katrina Schwartz

The Steinkopf Bulletrap Cooperative was formed to help farmers (including those that are not stewards) set up their own local governance and organisation structures which supported the work of CSA, even after the CAs had ended. The cooperative brought farmers together to better manage their livestock, and learn from each other and learn through training. Training empowered farmers and stewards to become better skilled, and more knowledgeable on livestock management, three-tier monitoring, and erosion management. Importantly, they became more aware of what they can do to increase their resilience to climate shocks such as droughts. Box 3 presents the view of steward Brian Mitchell, on the impact of the recent drought in combination with COVID-19.

"The restrictions of lockdown, combined with the effects of the recent drought, led to a situation where many farmers could not perform additional work to supplement their grants and small livestock farming and this led to a loss of income. Animals weakened by drought, lost lambs or died during lambing," says Brian. "For the CA farmers, who were able to dose and inoculate their animals and administer the vitamins included in the benefits package, the situation was better, as livestock could raise their lambs and ensure the availability of food and money to support their households. Without it, many more people would suffer hardships during this time."

Box 3. The impact of the recent drought, combined with COVID-19 restrictions of lockdown, in the words of steward Brian Mitchell.

CALL TO ACTION

Replication

Stewardship can be replicated in other communities who rely on commonages for natural resource use.

Duration

Stewardship programmes should be implemented for at least 3 to 5 years to be successful.

Inclusion

Stewardship should include women, youth and vulnerable members of communities.

Co-ordination

Co-ordination is needed at the landscape level to ensure different programmes that work with farmers and conservation objectives are aligned to deliver a integrated EbA responses.⁶

Prioritisation

Policy makers should prioritise EbA funding for stewardship programmes in areas where people depend directly on nature for their livelihoods.

6. For example, working with the Northern Cape Department of Environment and Nature Conservation, whose goal is to conserve and protect nature for present and future generations by integrating sustainable use with livelihood development.

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Acronyms

BRI	Biodiversity and Red Meat Initiative	GEF	Global Environment Facility
CA	Conservation Agreement	MNI	Meat Naturally Initiative
CSA	Conservation South Africa	UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
EbA	Ecosystem-based Adaptation		