

Coastal Restoration, Access and Employment in Kommetjie, South Africa
Mid-Term Report for Robin Rigby Trust
Submitted by Anuradha Rao, 25 March 2009

General Information and Collaboration

My primary partner in this project is the Kommetjie Environmental Awareness Group (KEAG). This collaboration is working well; I have positive working relations with them. The project fits well with KEAG's initiatives. They have good connections and relations with local poor communities, and a good reputation for combining environmental work with job creation. They also have a pool of under- or unemployed people who have worked for them in the past, from which I have been able to find people to work on this project. Members of the Kommetjie Residents' and Ratepayers' Association (KRRRA) are enthusiastically observing our work, providing support and sourcing in-kind donations. KRRRA has asked me to contribute to their April newsletter. The Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA) is also providing support.

Overall Progress and Activities to Date

The project is progressing well, with change on the ground already visible. My colleagues at KEAG and I have determined in which physical areas to focus our efforts, how this project can piggyback on and support existing KEAG efforts, and who we can hire and train from nearby disadvantaged communities.

Removal of invasive alien plant species

Alien invasive plants take over local landscapes, reduce biodiversity, out-compete indigenous plants, are fast-burning and exacerbate wildfires, and grow very quickly, providing hiding places for criminals.

We hired a local small-scale entrepreneur, Ms. Frances Moni, from the historically Black township of Masiphumelele to clear alien trees from a coastal wetland known as Skilpadsvlei. Her small company, Masizame (meaning "Let Us Try" in the Xhosa language), specializes in large-scale alien removal. She has a low level of education and struggles financially, as she only tends to get contracts from people who she knows already, including KEAG.



We brought in a freshwater ecologist to do a needs assessment at Skilpadsvlei. Her assessment was that, now that the aliens have been removed, the wetland is quite healthy and should be left alone to revegetate itself. She identified it as a rare "dune slack wetland", a temporary wetland which forms between coastal dunes. She will conduct a biodiversity assessment in the winter months when the area fills with water.



KEAG's Popper Squad: Nõhandile Mlinganiso, Zuko Nogqala, Ntombela Dyubhete and Nancy Phanginxwa (supervisor)

I purchased a Tree Popper for KEAG, which is a tool that untrained people can use to pull out moderate-sized alien plants by the root (otherwise it requires cutting and herbicide application to prevent regrowth). We have also hired 4 people (who I've named KEAG's Popper Squad) from Masiphumelele to clear alien plants from the intersection of Kommetjie Road and Kommetjie Boulevard, a prominent sandy area along the main road into the community. This team of

four has also begun to remove alien trees along the downstream area of a local river called the Bokramspruit, which flows into the ocean at Kommetjie.

Planting of indigenous vegetation

The Popper Squad has dug several beds in preparation for the garden at Kommetjie Boulevard, which they have named Isiqalo Project (isiqalo means “the beginning” in Xhosa). Planting will begin mid-April, closer to rainy season. The City of Cape Town has offered to donate trees. A local landscaper will suggest which plants will grow the best in the sandy area with the least maintenance required.

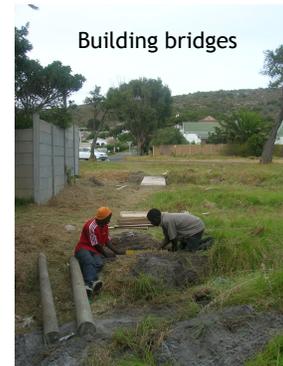


Dune stabilization

We will stabilize the dunes at Skilpadsvlei where we have removed the large alien trees. Pending funding from the City, we are also hoping to stabilize sand dunes at Witsands, a local beach used by many different communities. This is a large project that, in part, aims at preventing garbage from entering the ocean from a dump that had been located many years ago on the beach. My role in this project would be to provide relevant environmental education to the workers and supervise the work.

Pathway creation

Local businesses and the City have donated materials for creating bridges and pathways at Kommetjie Boulevard. These pathways will allow people to enjoy the area even in rainy season without having to walk on the road. We are in the process of creating these pathways. We also hope to upgrade a pathway at Skilpadsvlei.



Training for local people

I have hired Judy Gwala, the receptionist at KEAG, to assist me as a translator and co-facilitator, much to her delight. She is currently under-employed, as KEAG, like many non-profit organizations, is dependent on project funding. She enjoys and is good at translation, and is keen to learn more about environmental issues and training techniques by working with me. Her assistance has been invaluable. I supplement her salary by paying her by the hour for the time she spends working on this project.

In addition to hiring Frances from Masizame, we have provided Frances with one-on-one training in business methods. Specifically, we showed her how to calculate and present a quote to customers (she had been undercharging), how to prepare an invoice and how to keep an attendance register for her staff. We also provided her with some basic materials including business cards and stationery.

We also provided training on alien invasive plants and the importance of indigenous plants to the Popper Squad. We plan to enable them to participate in an upcoming river ecology workshop coordinated by WESSA.

Additional activities

We are creating interpretive signboards to raise awareness about the important coastal habitats where we are working. I have designed an interpretive board for Skilpadsvlei that will describe its ecological importance and describe our restoration activities. Based on a suggestion from the KRRRA, we are also creating a mobile sign to be placed wherever KEAG's employees are working on an environmental restoration project. This way, passers-by will appreciate the work that is being done. An article I have written about the project will appear in the False Bay Echo, a local newspaper.

My presence has also been useful for a number of unexpected purposes. I have provided assistance with KEAG's craft-from-waste program, provided computer support, edited educational documents and helped to write funding proposals for other projects. I am also providing mediation services.

Challenges

On-the-ground project activities, particularly hiring and equipment purchase, were delayed until March due to delayed arrival of funds from Canada. I had paid for everything out of my personal savings up to that point, which was not an ideal situation. Now, work is going full-steam ahead.

Financial Report to Date

Expenses so far are generally as expected. After beginning work on the ground, it was necessary to make some minor modifications to the budget, following an assessment of which materials are already available versus which are needed.

Total spent to date (approximate):

Labour	Materials	Transport	Food	Training	Liaison	Communication	My costs	Admin	Total to date
\$640	\$330	\$100	\$45	\$4	\$40	\$30	\$3000	\$55	\$4244

