



The road to a successful land reform and biodiversity stewardship programme (BSP) in South Africa: Case study of Mabaso Community Protected Environment

– Ayanda Cele

Traditionally, “protected area” expansion in South Africa has been restricted to state-owned land. In the process, abundant biodiversity has been left unattended. Recently, the introduction of the Biodiversity Stewardship Programme (BSP) has included land outside state-owned land, such as privately owned land and communal land regained through the land reform process. The aim of the study was to demonstrate that land reform and biodiversity stewardship projects can meaningfully contribute to protected area expansion and also improve the socioeconomic status of the country if done correctly.

This study looked at a rural community (Mabaso community in northern KwaZulu-Natal) which is part of the BSP and is regarded as one of the leading communities in the country in terms of natural resource management. The methods used for the study included focused question discussions with Mabaso community members that sit in the monthly advisory forum (AF) and general community members, as well as veld condition assessments. The results showed that with proper management, species composition in flat plains can easily improve and match the benchmark of the bioresource even in rural communities. Therefore, this paper suggests that the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR) needs to provide more resources including mentorship on each project after settlement.

Investigation of the cause of the decline of *Jankus kraussii* (ncema grass) in a wetland ecosystem in iSimangaliso Wetland Park area, St Lucia, Mtubatuba, KwaZulu-Natal – Thembeke Prudence Gama

Ncema grass is harvested and used by the communities in and around the iSimangaliso Wetland to make mats and other items which are sold to tourists. This provides household income and enables families to send their children to school. Through this study, the communities have been made aware of the importance of the Ncema grass, not just for their economic use, but as part of a healthy wetland ecosystem. They are aware of the health challenges that will be faced should this grass no longer be available, since it is important in filtering storm water excess and reducing sediment and pollutants entering water bodies. The communities now know how they must cut the grass and protect it, since it provides lifetime benefits for them and their loved ones.

