



# TSITSA PROJECT

## Tsitsa Project Newsletter

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### Overview

The first case of Covid19 in South Africa was confirmed early March 2020 and on the 26<sup>th</sup> March 2020 the country was on lockdown. The lockdown came with restrictions on certain personal liberties in particular movement of people and gatherings. This had significant implications on how the Tsitsa Project continues to do its work to meet its objectives and goals.

### Working under Covid19: Activities and Progress

The Tsitsa Project like many institutions closed its doors to adhere to Lockdown regulations and to stop the spread of Covid19. This did not mean that the work of the project had to stop. The Project team had to find ways of working from their homes using the available technology to communicate, work together, hold online meetings, attend online conferences/webinars, and publish reports and other research material.

### Quarter 1 report

Significant progress has been despite the challenges posed by the Covid19 pandemic and working remotely. The Quarter 1 Reflection Report is the first Tsitsa Project report of its kind<sup>1</sup> and the first report to formally present indicator data. The data was collected between 2019 and early 2020. The process of data collection had to be paused as a result of the outbreak of Covid19. Nevertheless, the available data does provide some good insights on local women's capability, ecosystems health and the prevailing land conditions in the catchment area.

<sup>1</sup> This is a first Tsitsa Project quarterly report. Previously, the report was done annually and was called a Meta-Reflection report. The intention of a quarterly report is to allow for a more timely response and adaptation, especially in these uncertain times.

### Women Capability Index data

Participatory methods were used to elicit local values and perceptions of well-being and ill-being using Focussed Discussion Groups (FDGs) attended by 67 women. Interviews were also conducted on 50 randomly selected women from Lower Sinxaku, Elangeni, Lower Tsitsana and Hlankomo traditional administrative areas to check and expand on the discussion that emerged from the FDGs (Conde-Aller, 2020).



Five key indicators were identified by women to determine their capability and financial security was highlighted as the main indicator for women's capability in the catchment.

- Financial security:** Has to do with financial independence, sustainability and local employment.
- Physical health:** included being free from illness, access to primary health, food security, hygiene and physical strength.
- Inner well-being:** Included spirituality, relaxation, and education and being free from oppression.
- Functional household:** Includes children's access to education, man power, farming practices and access to basic services.
- Community relation/wellbeing:** Includes communal cohesion, safety, women's groups and social inclusion.

### Biophysical data

The TP seeks to enable and support sustainable landscape management, sustainable livelihoods and the development of polycentric, participatory governance in the Tsitsa River catchment area.

This is in line with Sustainable Development Goal 15, which aspires for the protection, restoration and promotion of sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems. The aim is to combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, droughts and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world by 2030. This will be monitored through the proportion of land that is degraded over total land area. Sub-Indicators are trends in land cover, land productivity and carbon stocks. The Biophysical Monitoring Group used the international standards to determine the condition of the catchment in relation to SDG 15. Trends.Earth is a product of the Land Degradation Monitoring Project which uses global data sources to assess land degradation at several scales. See Huchzermeyer et al. (2020).

*Aggregation of SDG 15.3.1 sub-indicators by Trends.Earth*

	Area (sq km)	Total land area (%)
<b>Total land area</b>	2016.5	100.00
<b>Land area improved</b>	272.5	13.51
<b>Land area stable</b>	1 022.0	50.68
<b>Land area degraded</b>	722.1	35.81
<b>Land area with no data</b>	0.0	0.00



The degradation is closely linked to the loss of grasslands as well as the low productivity in parts of the grasslands. By targeting these two aspects the land in catchments T35 A-E can be improved.

### HR matters

New Knowledge Management and Mediation capability:

Wandile Paulose Mvulane joined the Tsitsa Project in April 2020 in a Knowledge and Learning Support role. He is from Johannesburg, but currently working remotely from Flagstaff, Eastern Cape. Before joining the TP, he was an intern in the City of Johannesburg,



Environment Infrastructure Service Department Climate Change unit doing general administration, assisting in stakeholder engagement, climate change data collection and analysis and for the development of the Climate Action Plan. Wandile's research aims to foster climate change adaptation, sustainable development and ways in which we can create inclusive, just and resilient communities. Beside work, he loves hiking and taking photos of landscapes and people.

### Events

The Tsitsa Project held two successful online events in the first quarter which were attended by a range of stakeholders.

#### *Enhanced Restoration Plan*

Working collaboratively is the significant component of doing things in a Tsitsa way. On the 26-27<sup>th</sup> May 2020 the Tsitsa Project held an Enhanced Integrated Planning workshop. All the TP Communities of Practice (CoPs) submitted and presented their plans for the next three years.

VoxVote.com was used in the workshop to capture real time reflections. Several themes came out of the reflection process. For the way forward, it was highlighted that champions are need to drive the EIP process, use the available capacity and resources, and that collaboration and integration are a key feature of the EIP process.



### *Reflect and Reconnect*

This event was held online via Zoom. It was attended by 53 participants representing a wide range of TP stakeholders including catchment residents (citizen monitors, technicians, liaison officers, etc.), implementers, DEFF (regional and national office representatives), researchers and students (from RU and other partner universities). The purpose was two-fold:

1. **Reflect:** For us to reflect together on the activities and lessons learnt in the first part of the year. This was based on the TP Quarterly Reflection Report for Quarter 1 produced by the PMERL team. The meeting was intended as an opportunity for us to share key insights from the report with the project team, and to work together to formulate actions going forward; based on these reflections (i.e. to close the feedback loops in our strategic adaptive management of the project).
2. **Reconnect:** For us to catch up with one another, check in with one another and acknowledge the well-being challenges we have all been facing during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is especially in light of all the 'disconnection' which has been brought about by lockdown regulations.

In ensuring that all the participants attending the event can understand the discussions, the event was conducted in two languages (English and IsiXhosa). The event went well considering its ambitious nature and the potential challenges (online meeting in two languages, including new people from rural areas of the catchment, reconnect *and* reflect, playing a video, etc). The technology all worked pretty well and the efforts of LIMA staff in preparing the monitors to use Zoom were fantastic.

## Adapting to Covid19

The covid19 pandemic has required us to do things a little differently. Adapting our material to be online compatible has been a key move that we have adopted as it gives effect to lockdown regulations that aim to curb the spread of Covid19.



### Training of the Trainers Course

Capacity Development Coordinator, Matthew Weaver has devoted most of his time this quarter coordinating the development of an NQF Level 5 accredited Course entitled: Facilitating Social Learning and Stakeholder Engagement in Natural Resource Management Contexts: Introductory Course (also referred to as the 'Training of Trainers' course).

The purpose of the course is to inform and strengthen the practice of current and future community and adult educators, trainers and facilitators in NRM contexts with introductory level theory and expanded facilitation, teaching, engagement and basic intervention design methodologies. The course will be delivered online, over four Modules between October 2020 and April 2021 (some aspects of the course will run beyond April 2021, e.g. evaluation and graduation). The course has been successfully accredited by Rhodes University Institutional Planning Unit.

The course has received a significant number of applicants, and teaching and learning is expected to start in October 2020.

### Staying in touch with people from the catchment

Due to the lockdown, work in the catchment had been halted under level3-5 as per government regulation. To keep in touch with residents in the catchment our Catchment Coordinator, Nosi Mtati developed a set of questions to probe the wellbeing of the TP Citizen Monitors, Community Liaising Officers and Citizen Technicians under Covid19 using WhatsApp. The team responded in WhatsApp videos (please see <https://youtu.be/P-qvB2lNWIs>) providing details on what they do to keep safe and what challenges they face due



to the pandemic. The Catchment Coordinator also had communication with local traditional leadership to get a sense of how the community was doing under lockdown. The community had difficulties as a result of job losses and escalating food prices.

Generally, there was a sense of positivity and the feeling that the Tsitsa Project has made great progress despite the challenges presented by the Covid19 pandemic.

## Publications

A Relational Approach to Landscape Stewardship: Towards a New Perspective for Multi-Actor Collaboration (Cockburn et al. 2020)  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/land9070224>

This paper was written by members of the Tsitsa Project in collaboration with Living Lands, an organisation facilitating landscape stewardship in the Langkloof and Baviaanskloof region. This paper draws on organisational learning theory to better understand the challenges of collaboration for landscape stewardship.

In the era of global environmental change, limited resources and inequality, there is a need to find ways to manage natural resources in a manner that is inclusive and just. One of the ways of doing this, it is through landscape stewardship.

The authors of this paper draw from natural resource management, biodiversity conservation, ecological restoration and sustainability literature to unpack landscape stewardship. Landscape stewardship is a human-nature relationship that is based on responsible use of natural resources and care. Landscape stewardship is based on the idea of social-ecological systems, and it is also concerned with how humans are interconnected with nature. The concept of relationality is used to capture the multiple human-nature relationships contained in landscape stewardship.

This paper contributes a novel perspective on multi-actor collaboration for landscape stewardship through developing a relational approach, both conceptually and empirically. To achieve this, the authors used the Gardening tools metaphor from Anne Edward's work on organisational learning. The Gardening tool metaphor illustrates that to effectively achieve reforms in policy and practice actors need to operate as gardeners in a concerted effort.

Using two Eastern Cape case studies (The Tsitsa Project and Langkloof Region) the authors extended the Gardening tools metaphor to analyse the boundary-crossing work of multi-actor collaboration in landscape stewardship. They extended the definitions of, common knowledge and, relational expertise and agency, applying them to the context of landscape stewardship. In both case studies it was found that history and context are important. In the Langkloof Region case study, it was highlighted that the history of discrimination from the colonial and apartheid eras had significantly shaped the inequality in terms of power and access to resources. Similarly, the legacy of colonialism and apartheid was found to have influenced the context of the Tsitsa catchment. These contexts have made it difficult and challenging to work on boundary-cross work. For the Tsitsa Project the authors found that relational expertise became evident, as researcher started to engage with other actors such as traditional leaders and local residents. This paved way for the development of common knowledge and relational agency. Researchers, local residents and traditional leaders started to understand each other's profession and motives and found ways to work together.

In light of the findings the authors proposed three social-relational practices which could support more effective and meaningful multi-actor collaboration.

- *Belonging while differing:* A shared sense of belonging should be the foundation of building relational agency. Actors should feel they belong despite their differences.
- *Growing together by interacting regularly and building common knowledge:* It is important for actors to work together in small groups to do relational work and to learn to work with each other to develop relational agency which ultimately can be transformed into common knowledge.
- *Learning and adapting together with humility and empathy:* The actors engaged in collaborations need to walk in each other's shoes despite their differences, and need to build new knowledge about their landscapes and adapt their management practices accordingly.

# A relational approach to landscape stewardship:

towards a new perspective for multi-actor collaboration

1



## Landscape stewardship

- Embedded in social-ecological systems
- Relationality is key
- Multi-actor collaboration is a key relational process

2

## Gardening tools

used for analysis

1. Relational expertise
2. Common knowledge
3. Relational agency

Applied in two South African cases: Tsitsa River catchment and Langkloof region

3

## Findings

- History and context matter
- Boundary-crossing work is challenging
- Importance of working in smaller pockets

4

## Key social-relational practices proposed to support collaboration

- Belonging while differing
- Growing by interacting regularly and building common knowledge
- Learning and adapting together with humility and empathy

Graphic by Ancia Cornelius



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