



m&e case study

Upper Breede Collaborative Extension Group: Supporting local cooperative governance

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The Upper Breede Collaborative Extension Group has demonstrated the potential of co-operative governance between diverse organizations operating in a common area. Working together they have:

- **Improved communication and streamlined planning between departments. This has resulted in more effective alien clearing.**
- **Established defensible and well known biodiversity priorities to assist in evaluating developments.**
- **Increased their impact with both funders and landowners.**

One of the cornerstones of the C.A.P.E. Strategy is to strengthen institutions responsible for conservation. The Upper Breede Collaborative Extension Group provides an excellent example of what can be achieved through effective local co-operative governance. This local partnership includes a wide variety of organizations, including national and provincial government departments, local government, Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and farming bodies.

By working together under the umbrella of this extension group, members have been able to:

- coordinate the local activities of diverse departments
- include conservation priorities in planning
- make successful joint applications for support.

This important initiative has been strengthened by funding through the C.A.P.E. partnership for a CapeNature extension officer who supports the extension group. Fine-scale planning work through the C.A.P.E. partnership has also provided fine-scale information on biodiversity priorities for the area.

A PILOT PROJECT INITIATES COLLABORATION

The Upper Breede River Valley area extends from Rawsonville in the South to Tulbagh in the North, a distance of about 90km. This is a high value wine farming area, which also produces fruit, dairy products and grain. The area also includes exceptionally rich biodiversity. Previously there was a high level of conflict between applications to clear additional land for farming and the need to conserve the region's biodiversity. The agricultural and conservation departments agreed that it would be better to undertake collaborative planning rather than to deal with each time-consuming and controversial application individually. A pilot project was therefore undertaken by LandCare in the Slanghoek Valley to the West of the region. The objective of this pilot was to undertake fine-scale "area wide planning" in order to identify conservation priority areas and optimize agricultural planning. A participative approach was used which allowed both individual and community needs to be addressed while taking into consideration important features of the natural environment.

This project, funded by a Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund small grant, was undertaken collaboratively by the LandCare unit of the Department of Agriculture, CapeNature and the Biodiversity and Wine Initiative. The project ran from 2004 to 2005 and highlighted the need to provide additional capacity for extension in this important area. In 2006 C.A.P.E. responded by providing funding for an additional extension post for the broader Upper Breede River Valley.

In 2006 the Upper Breede Collaborative Extension Group (UBCEG) was established in recognition of the need for a body to provide cooperative governance in the rural areas of the region (existing interdepartmental forums focused on urban issues). The objective was to broaden the interdepartmental communication which had been so successful in the pilot study. Garth Mortimer of CapeNature was appointed as secretary and Rudolf Roscher of LandCare as chair. They were housed by the newly established Breedekloof Wine and Tourism Section 21 company.

BROADER MEMBERSHIP INCREASES IMPACT

The objectives of the UBCEG are defined as building capacity and providing mutual support for overlapping responsibilities. These are achieved through:

- information sharing
- joint strategic planning



- collaborative extension work
- training.

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Clear accountability for action is allocated at each meeting and is monitored by an evaluation framework which forms part of the minutes. This has resulted in clarification of each member's contribution and improved progress.

The membership of the UBCEG has now expanded considerably, making this a very powerful forum. By early 2009 members included:

- The National Departments of Water Affairs (Working for Water), Agriculture, Environmental Affairs and Tourism and the South African National Biodiversity Institute
- The Provincial Departments of Agriculture (LandCare), Environment Affairs, Development and Planning and its conservation agency, CapeNature
- Municipalities, represented by the Cape Winelands District Municipality and the local municipalities of Witzenberg and Breedevalley
- Landowners, represented by Breedekloof Wine and Tourism and Agri Western Cape
- NGOs, represented by the Biodiversity and Wine Initiative.

Partners joining later saw participation as a way of tapping into an effective local communication process. In addition, many representatives of the UBCEG are very experienced and exposure to their discussion provides an excellent learning opportunity for new members.

Improved communication

This broad membership base has significantly improved communication between organizations operating within the area. This has facilitated collaborative planning and effective allocation of resources. Co-ordination of invasive alien plant control has been significantly enhanced by this inter-institutional collaboration.

Fine-scale biodiversity information provided through the C.A.P.E. programme has been distributed by the UBCEG. All members participated in the generation of this map, and are able to defend the rationale for the protection of biodiversity priority areas. This fine-scale information has been used to direct the focus of extension work, and to inform development planning in the region.

The UBCEG provides a forum where different departments, responsible for reviewing development applications, can discuss them within the context of conservation priorities. As a result there is far greater accountability regarding conservation in the application review process. The review process is currently very slow, but it is hoped that the interdepartmental communication, facilitated by the UBCEG, will help streamline both new approvals and the assessment of existing illegal developments.

The UBCEG has also been involved in several very effective farmers' days. It is also involved in youth outreach programmes. The extension officers facilitate communication between UBCEG and local farmers.

Increased influence

The increased coordination between organizations has made possible the formulation of a list of priorities for action which have broad regional support. When presented to potential funders these agreed priorities are far more likely to receive approval. For example, as part of its Integrated Development Plan, the District Municipality has approved funding for a number of projects proposed by the UBCEG including junior LandCare camps, environmental conferences, accredited adult training and the clearing of invasive alien plants. Funds have also been secured from the Working for Water Programme for post-fire clearing in the Waaihoek mountain area. Pioneer Foods and the Table Mountain Fund have agreed to support the stewardship programme through funding a team which will undertake alien clearing and fire control.

When negotiating with individual land-owners the extension officers have found that having the backing of the UBCEG provides significant additional leverage. The awareness that they represent a broad range of departments is a powerful factor in motivating cooperation.

Farmers have seen significant improvements in service delivery, for example, aliens have been cleared in biodiversity priority areas. The UBCEG has also facilitated surveys of endangered plants by CREW (Custodians of Rare and Endangered Wildflowers). This has increased landowner awareness of the international importance of the local biodiversity.

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Challenges and the way forward

One of the key challenges is that only two of the organizations involved in the UBCEG have extension staff dedicated to this region. Other than these key role-players, dedicated local capacity is limited, and most of the people attending meetings tend to operate at a strategic planning level rather than at an operational level. This has resulted in very good planning and the generation of many projects, but there is a lack of resources for implementation.

The next challenge will be to find local organizations with capacity to implement approved projects. Existing partners include the Scouts and the Tulbagh Catchment Management Agency. Although these are greatly dedicated, additional capacity is required to manage the service providers undertaking the additional projects.

The broad membership base of the UBCEG gives its resolutions weight and has facilitated action. This group has certainly demonstrated the tremendous potential for locally focused co-operative governance between different organizations sharing a common goal.