



IN PROFILE: CLIMATE CHANGE CONSORTIUM: AN INNOVATIVE MODEL FOR MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS

Cameron Brisbane – Built Environment Support Group

The Built Environment Support Group (BESG) is an example of how multi-stakeholder partnerships allow shared responsibility across sectors in society and promote responsiveness to opportunities for development. All actors have a role to play in finding dynamic solutions to the challenges faced by society and, through partnerships and pooling of resources and expertise, actors can take shared responsibility and respond collaboratively.

NATIONAL TREASURY DEFINES a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) as a 'contract between a public sector institution/municipality and a private party, in which the private party assumes substantial financial, technical and operational risk in the design, financing, building and operation of a project'.¹ PPPs have been applied successfully in a number of contexts, including toll-road concessions, correctional services facilities, water services and tourism.

National Treasury has established a PPP Unit to promote these partnerships, as a means of enhancing public sector service delivery. However, locating such an enabling framework within Treasury is problematic. Its scope and focus are restricted by the fiscal regime that includes the Public Finance Management Act (No.1 of 1999 as amended by Act 29 of 1999), the Municipal Finance Management Act (No. 56 of 2003) and, to a lesser extent, the Preferential Public Procurement Framework Act (No. 5 of 2000). The notion of 'partnerships' is also limited, as they are informed purely by government's strategic plans and priorities, with significant project risk ('financial, design, technical and operational risks') being transferred to the private sector.

The private sector and some civil society groupings fully understand the power of partnerships in enhancing their individual capabilities to achieve greater impact. This usually manifests in the form of

a consortium, where each party plays a distinct role and contributes towards a common objective that they could not achieve on their own. While the partners may not all contribute equally, all parties appreciate that being a winning team requires recognising and respecting the value that each brings to the table. State entities need to move closer to this model of 'working partnerships', as a beneficial tool for effective governance and service delivery.

One example of good practice in partnerships has emerged in the heart of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), in the uMgungundlovu District Municipality (uMDM), which includes seven local municipalities. In 2010 uMDM and BESG entered into a strategic partnership, to promote public participation in the district. One of the collaborations established by uMDM (in 2011) was the broad-based Environmental Management Forum. The Forum involved government, parastatal, academic, and civil society stakeholders, all recognised as experts in their own fields and contributors to an inclusionary approach to environmental sustainability. Over the next two years, the Forum produced a Strategic Environmental Assessment of challenges facing the district, and a Strategic Environmental Management Plan that responds to those challenges. The Forum's broad membership meant that the plans were comprehensive, multi-sectoral, well-defined

and refined. It also created a fertile ground for stakeholders to build relationships.

One particular area of concern that emerged from the assessment was the impact of climate change on vulnerable peri-urban and rural communities. These communities face severe and unpredictable cycles of storm damage and drought, food insecurity, property damage, and isolation from essential services when roads and bridges are washed away. Instead of the reactive approach of dealing with immediate crises and stresses through disaster management services, a more proactive approach is needed. Arriving with blankets and food parcels after a storm is not an effective response, especially if a bridge or access road has washed away and cut off a community. A more proactive approach is needed to alert vulnerable communities to the likely onset of severe weather, giving them time to prepare for its approach, and thereby minimising the loss and/or damage that may ensue.

The uMDM and its Environmental Management Forum were strategically well placed when the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) issued a call for projects to bid for a slice of funding from the United Nations Adaptation Fund. After accepting the concept plan, SANBI worked with uMDM and several Forum members to develop a joint plan of action and a detailed two-year business plan. In October 2014, the project, 'Building Resilience in the Greater uMngeni Catchment' secured one of 16 global awards and a grant of US\$8-million over five years from the Adaptation Fund.

SANBI is the national implementing entity and uMDM the local implementing entity. Each of the sub-implementing entities has a distinct contribution to make, based on their areas of individual expertise.

The project brings together SANBI, the Department of Environmental Affairs, uMDM Disaster Management, Umgeni Water, the University of KZN Faculty of Agriculture, KZN Working on Fire, BESG and WESSA, to roll out a comprehensive strategy for climate change adaptation in three pilot project areas. SANBI is the national implementing entity and uMDM the local implementing entity. Each of the sub-implementing entities has a distinct contribution to make, based on their areas of individual expertise. Interventions will focus on establishing early warning systems in areas of high vulnerability, rehabilitating wetlands, promoting climate-smart techniques for small-scale farmers and crop replacement programmes, and 'climate proofing' human settlements. Most of these interventions are beyond the mandate and capabilities of local municipalities.

On 20 February 2015, the project was officially launched in the presence of the Minister of Environmental Affairs, Edna Molewa. The Building Resilience in the Greater uMngeni Catchment project shows how proactive responses and shared responsibility through partnerships can bring forth sustainable development.

NOTES

¹ www.ppp.gov.za -- the website of the National Treasury PPP Unit.