



Olifants River Catchment  
Civil Society Organisation

*Position statement*

2018



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## Background to the CSO Position Statement

During 2015, 2016 & 2017 approximately 150 representatives of Civil Society Organisations in the Olifants Catchment have been working together to seek a better outcome for the water and land of the Olifants catchment. This platform for dialogue and seeking localised solutions to challenges has resulted in the development of a position statement based on a collective vision.

The position statement presented here is a work in process and aims to include the views of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in respect of issues relevant to public interest. These issues are drawn from the vision for change that has been developed over the course of 2 years of consultations with CSOs during the CSO Indabas , part of the CSO Support Initiative which was funded by USAID. The Olifants Catchment area stretches from Delmas in Gauteng, through Mpumalanga and Limpopo Provinces before entering Mozambique. Although this position draws on inputs from CSOs on the South African side in the Olifants catchment, the aim is to include organisations operative in Mozambique as well. The organisations that are part of this initiative are from the Upper, Middle and Lower Catchment and have their focus on community, environmental, compliance, youth development, food security, climate change and pollution issues. [www.ourolifants.org.za](http://www.ourolifants.org.za)

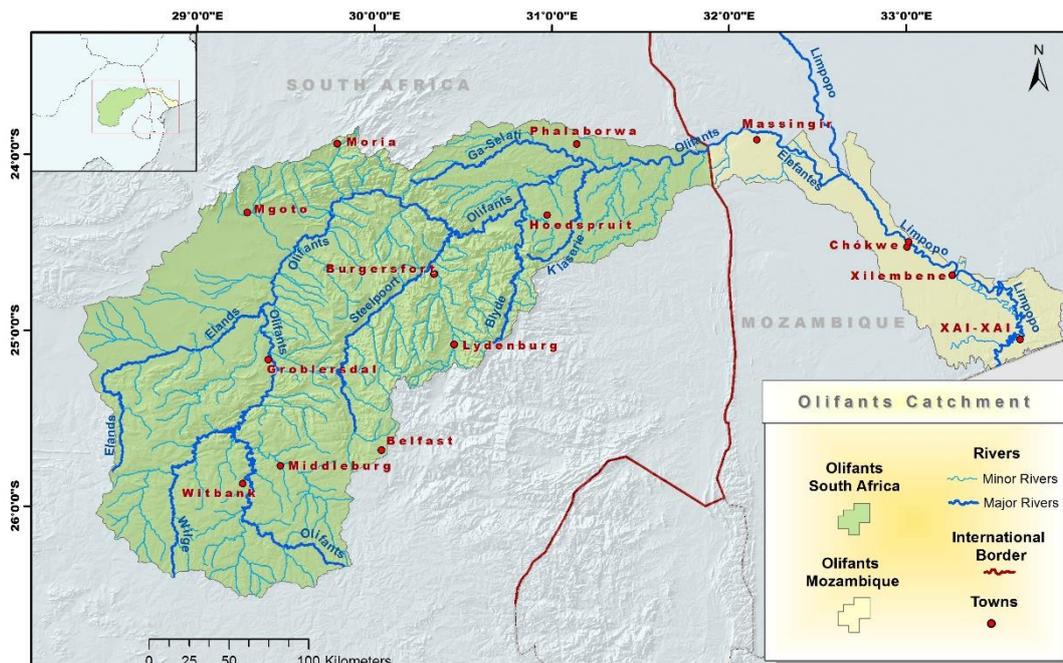


Figure 1 The Olifants catchment including both sections from South Africa and Mozambique

## Why a position statement?

What do we aim to achieve by developing a position statement?

- Collective action
- A unified, united stance to demonstrate that there is diversity in our position
- To show an integrated position
- To have broad evidence collection
- To enable systemic thinking and problem solving
- To demonstrate the potential to build cases and take action on violations.

The Position Statement was developed at the CSO Indabas in 2017 and involved working with participants from the Upper, Middle and Lower Catchments. People constituting organisations put forward their positions against the vision statement they had previously created of how they'd like the catchment to be and what would help. We assembled and integrated all of this data into a single position statement that was inclusive for the whole catchment; we did not use averages or the most common points and tried to include everyone's position. What is missing from the Position Statement is just as important as what is in it, for a number of reasons: it could be lack of capacity; lack of familiarity; that the issue is not an urgent one; that its too new for people to have developed competence around. Climate Change Adaptation is largely absent, which illustrates awareness around it, but as awareness and conversation develops, so do CSOs ideas, concerns and action plans.



# Signatories to the Olifants Civil Society Organisation Position Statement

*We as South African Civil Society in the Olifants River Catchment hereby state our position on a number of issues of public interest to residents of the Olifants Catchment. We regard this as an operational document and pledge to use it as we take our work forward...*

## Upper Catchment

1. Action Voices
2. Afrika Leadership Development Institute
3. Baitsutsi Agri Project
4. CULISA
5. Doornkop CPA
6. Environmental Monitoring Group
7. Mpumalanga Water Caucus
8. Ephraim Mogale Umbrella
9. GroundWork
10. Highveld Environmental Justice Network
11. Ihawu Lemvelo
12. Khulumani Support Group
13. Legal Resources Centre
14. Middelburg Environmental Justice Network
15. Unemployed United Front
16. Middelburg Activists Foundation
17. Mining Affected Communities United in Action
18. Moutse Youth Development
19. Outrageous Courage Youth
20. Oxpeckers Environmental Journalism
21. South African Green Revolutionary Council
22. South African Water Caucus
23. Traditional Healers Association
24. Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance
25. Victory Fellowship Centre Greater Middelburg

## Middle Catchment

1. Affected Communities Justice Network
2. Bokone Bamaanakane Community Development Trust
3. Sekhukhune Environmental Justice Network
4. COME-ACT
5. Ditwebeleng Community Forum
6. Freedom of Expression Institute
7. groundWork
8. Itumeleng Youth
9. Makgopa Community Forum
10. Malengine Corruption Watch
11. Malengine Environmental Justice Network
12. Swazi Development Trust



13. Limpopo Water Caucus
14. Mining and Environmental Justice Community Network of SA
15. Monametse Foundation
16. Morapaneng Community Development Forum
17. Moroke Community Forum
18. Morwa Motshana Foundation
19. Moshira Community Development Forum
20. Motolong Community Forum
21. Mpumalanga Water Caucus
22. Sekhukhune Combined Mining Affected Communities
23. SA Green Revolutionary Council
24. MACUA

#### Lower Catchment

1. AWARD
2. Acornhoek Leadership Forum
3. Bathlanbine Foundation
4. Conservation SA
5. Environmental Monitoring Group
6. Gender CC – Women for Climate Justice
7. Global March for Elephants and Rhinos
8. Green Anglicans
9. Hluvukani United Youth Development
10. Hoedspruit Training Trust
11. Izizwe Zonke Co-op
12. Kruger 2 Canyons
13. Limpopo Water Caucus
14. Mahubahuba a Bokone
15. Manini Civic Association
16. Maorabjang CPA
17. Moletele CPA
18. Mpumalanga Water Caucus
19. Seeds of Light
20. South African Wildlife College
21. Tsogang Water and Sanitation
22. Young Water Professionals
23. Zingela Ulwazi Trust



# 1. The position statement

We, the Civil Society Organisations resident and operative in the Olifants Catchment, believe the following points represent our position and are a basis upon which we seek to represent public interest. Under each point we provide a principle from which we develop our position. Each position statement is a work in progress and will be developed over time with the inputs from various CSOs:

## 1.1. Working together

### Introduction:

We believe that CSOs can achieve more if they stand together in a unified manner in order to represent issues of common interest. But what does it mean to work together? Collective action is about working on shared goals and acknowledging our context as our shared home: that we live in a system and our activities have impact across the system. It is our collective responsibility to look after that system and make sure that it can support us now and in the future. For example, what happens in the Upper Catchment (eMalahleni) affects the Lower Catchment (Mozambique).

**Principle:** Civil Society represents citizen rights, is able to work in partnership with government and the private sector and supports a significant percentage of service delivery. As watchdogs, civil society can also assist government by bringing rights violations into focus.

When we work together we are able to draw on each others strengths both in terms of taking action and evaluating the best available information, which is sometimes difficult to achieve if you operate on your own.

### Our position is that:

- **Work together for justice:** We need to be able to work together to overcome the injustices we are facing as societies.
- **Capacity building is critical:** Our communities need to be capacitated to address fundamental issues such as health, climate change adaptation, food security, human rights violations, economic and ecological issues. By working together we can help each other develop a better understanding of things that can affect us.
- **Participation in decision making is crucial:** All interested and affected parties have the right to be involved in decisions that are likely to affect them now and in the future. By working together we can collectively decide on how and whether we will be affected. For far too long communities have been involved too late in developments whether corporate, municipal or government, to the detriment of these communities. We seek to work together with industry and government from project inception to ensure compliance with law and licencing conditions and that promises are kept, particularly in the mining sector.
- **Municipalities must work with us:** Our position with regard to municipalities is that since they represent us they must WORK WITH US in respect of both service delivery AND ensuring a safe and healthy environment in which we live. Therefore we demand that we are involved in the planning stages of any local project or activity.
- **Strategic collaboration:** Where public-private partnerships (PPP) can be established between government, communities and business there is commitment to do so collaboratively. Collaboration with strategically aligned entities will avoid duplication and ensure effective impacts.
- **Communities are not only stakeholders, but also RIGHTS holders:** We ask that government and industry be willing to work WITH US and collaborate.



- **Involve CSOs in Disaster Management planning:** CSOs end up having to manage and respond to many disasters. We need concerted involvement of CSOs in developing local plans.

**Need to know:** The law through the constitution entitles the public to be involved in decisions that are likely to affect them through a series of rights. The most important are the right to a healthy environment, adequate food and water, to shelter, safety and security and access to information.

You also need to know that there are proper procedures that need to be followed when developers want to initiate a particular activity, whether on private land or in the community. The law that governs these procedures is called Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (PAJA). For example, when you write a formal complaint you have a right to administrative justice/action – your communications must be acknowledged / investigated within a specified space of time and you have the right to comment on any developments.

## 1.2. Managing Waste

**Introduction:** The Olifants Catchment is an important economic hub for South Africa in terms of the extraction of coal for electricity production, water for developing towns and cities, mining of a variety of important minerals, specifically platinum and other heavy metals, and large scale food production through irrigation schemes. However as these activities expand there are the negative side effects of waste production. One of the most important challenges facing the Olifants Catchment is the growing waste issue in the forms of air pollution from electricity production and water contamination from domestic and industry. Overuse of agricultural chemicals and pesticides and solid and hazardous waste coming from number of sources are also creating grave issues. These sources are extremely diverse and very difficult to manage because they include industry, mining, sewage works, domestic, food processing, agriculture, etc. creating a toxic environment. We need decisive action and much more than just recycling.

**Principle:** There needs to be a plan to manage waste in any system. When it is produced it should be dealt with immediately and by the source of that pollution. The cost of managing that waste should not be externalised to other people but should be carried by the producer of that pollution. This is known as the **Polluter Pays Principle**: waste needs to be dealt with at the source in order to be cost effective and to contain its harmful effects.

**Our position is that:**

- **We commit to work together** : as civil society organisations to manage waste to protect our water sources and ecosystems
- **The Polluter Pays Principle should be enforced**, particularly with regard to disposable nappies.
- **Prioritise recyclable products:** We demand that priority be given to the production of recyclable products through incentives and tax breaks. Where this is not the case the costs for disposal or destruction be carried by the producer.
- **Legislate for recyclables:** We demand that legislation be implemented that only recyclable products are produced and sold in South Africa.
- **Accountability for waste producers:** All companies producing non-recyclable waste need to have a waste control program ensuring that all waste is collected and if not they must be held liable and fined. e.g. disposable nappies, plastics, artificial hair.
- **Rural integration:** Rural communities and informal settlements MUST be integrated in municipal Waste Management Programs.



- **Waste management should be a source of job creation.** “Waste Pickers” must be integrated into municipal Waste Management Plans.
- **Competence in waste management:** Environmental Officers in municipalities need to be competent in all forms of waste management and these need to be written into the key performance indicators of such staff to ensure safe environments and healthy populations.
- Municipalities, communities and business should examine “best practices” around the world.
- Municipal recycling programs should be easily available and be highly functional.
- **Utilise by-laws:** Municipalities have to monitor communities and make waste management rules through by-laws.
- **Popular awareness campaign programs addressing the most important waste management issues** in that community (nappies, water pollution, hazardous waste, etc.) using media platforms such as radio stations, TV, door-to-door campaigns, workshops, events should be rolled out.
- **Municipalities, communities and the private sector must collaborate** in reporting and responding to waste hot spots and incidences.

#### **Need to know:**

The Municipal Systems Act says that it is the competence of the municipality to collect and manage waste in order to respect the constitutional right that states that everyone has the right – (a) to an environment that is not harmful to their health or wellbeing and (b) to have the environment protected for the benefit of present and future generations.

NEMA has subsections dealing with air pollution, waste management, hazardous waste management, sewage, etc. Sectors such as industry and mining needs to comply with different provisions under each of the different pieces of legislation. This should be expressed in an integrated waste management plan which should be available for anyone to access and read.

EIAs: in the waste management planning process invariably an EIA needs to be conducted. This is an opportunity for communities to assess how they will be affected by one or other waste disposal activity. It is critical that communities get involved at this stage in order to reduce exposure to harmful substances further into the future. This applies to waste dumps, mine dumps, sewage discharge, etc.

## 1.3. Access to clean water

**Introduction:** Water quality is a monumental issue in the Olifants Catchment by virtue of the activities that take place in the catchment. These historically have had devastating impacts on our water resources. The major culprits are commercial agriculture, mining, industry and municipal waste water disposal. But what do we mean by clean water? This is defined by the particular use for which that water is planned, for example the standards for drinking water quality are very high and have to be met under the SANS241 standard. Water for industry and irrigation needs to comply with different requirements in order to meet standards such as Global Gap, etc. It is imperative where drinking water is supplied that the SANS241 standards are adhered to through rigorous water quality monitoring programs. It is an obligation for municipalities to supply water for drinking under these standards. Where communities are exposed to poor quality or contaminated water they have legal grounds to address this as a violation of their rights.

**Principle:** Water for human consumption has the first priority in any catchment. Any activities that threaten or undermine the provision of potable water need to be very strictly regulated. Where there is a likelihood of drinking water being contaminated the regulator needs to show that no authorisation will be granted unless drinking quality water can be restored or guaranteed. This applies specifically to the mining sector and industry. Also, activities that are likely to contaminate any water source cannot be authorised without adequate attention to mitigation plans.



Our position is that:

- **South Africa is a water-scarce country:** we cannot afford to discharge waste carelessly into any resource.
- **Clean water must be provided by local municipalities :** Providing clean water is a complex issue and municipalities need to assist vulnerable people in ensuring that contaminated water is not for sale to vulnerable communities, especially the aged and the infirm. It is essential that the middleman profiteering from vulnerability is cut out.
- **We should be able to access drinking quality water from our taps** without having to augment supplies with purchased water.
- **Communities should plan to harvest rainwater** and have water storage tanks with the assistance of local government.
- **Equality in access to water is essential. :** Prioritise fair water distribution that will ensure that the right to healthy, clean water is realized by all citizens. Equity in the provision of water to all is critical –clean water is not just for the wealthy.
- **All communities in rural, urban areas and informal settlements must be taken into account in water budget allocations and distribution:** Cross subsidisation and incentivisation schemes need to be investigated and implemented.
- **The practice of treating rivers as waste transport systems should be condemned.** Activities that pollute sources of drinking water need to be dealt with in the most severe manner.
- **Protect our groundwater** – unregulated borehole drilling and overuse of groundwater leaves communities vulnerable and places livelihoods and ecosystems at risk.

**Need to know:** The Constitution states in Chapter 2, 27.1 that (1) Everyone has the right to have access to ... (b) sufficient food and water. This is given meaning through what is called the Basic Human Needs Reserve which is generally accepted as the volume of 25 litres per person per day. This amount should be planned and provided for by any water service authority or service provider (water board or municipality). This amount of water should also be provided free (free basic water).

**National Standards.** The South African National Standard (SANS)241 provides details of drinking water quality.

It is important to distinguish between who provides the infrastructure (pipes and taps) and who provides the actual water. This is often a complex collection of service level agreements/contracts between local municipalities, district municipalities, water boards and the department of Water and Sanitation. Sometimes private water providers are also involved.

Polluted water doesn't necessarily originate from where communities stay, it can come from somewhere else. When we try to identify the source of pollution we often need evidence and reliable information in order to get to the bottom of the problem.

## 1.4. Care for our natural resources



**Introduction:** What is a natural resource and which ones are of value to different groups? Resources valuable for us are the ones that keep us alive, provide us with a livelihood and ensure the health of the ecosystem that we live in. About 42% of the land in the Olifants Catchment is officially classified as endangered or vulnerable.

**Principle:** The best people to manage natural resources are the ones that use them.

We need to respect intergenerational rights, which means that future generations have the right to natural resources that are not degraded or damaged.

Natural resources such as water are for the common good which means that no private individuals can own or control them for their own personal benefit.

Renewable resources need to be treated with the utmost caution as economies built on such resources are not sustainable (coal and other mineral resources).

**Our position is that:**

- **Re-use and recycling programs** of bottles, cans and plastics must urgently be implemented.
- **Raise awareness:** Programs like awareness campaigns in schools and community meetings must be developed. We need to raise awareness amongst communities and schools through environmental education in the curriculum.
- **Protect natural resources:** We need to ensure our natural resources are taken into consideration.
- **Communities should be the first to use natural resources:** before industry or government.
- **Coal and climate change:** We need to understand the politics of coal and how it contributes to climate change.
- **Stop exploiting the natural world purely for profit!:** Government must invest more in protection of the natural world and stop the wanton exploitation of our world for profit.
- **Nature has a right to exist:** Government should immediately change its position that the environment only exists as a set of resources to be exploited for financial gain; we need to protect it and respect its right to exist. The ethos of “if it pays it stays” is illogical and unacceptable.
- **We need demonstrations of sustainable use of resources:** with stakeholders, e.g. sand mining business and Tribal Authorities
- **Transparency in use of provincial and national parks** – any profit made should be for the benefit of that park. The public should not be barred from using nature reserves because parks authorities are engaging in profit making activities. Public participation processes should be adhered to in decision making.

**Need to know:**

The Bill of Rights (Ch. 2, 24) states that: Everyone has the right ...(b) to have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations, through reasonable legislative and other measures that – (i) prevent pollution and ecological degradation; (ii) promote conservation; and (iii) secure ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development.

Rights & responsibilities: although we have rights we also have responsibilities, CSOs have an important role to play in terms of ensuring that rights are not being violated but responsibilities are being fulfilled. We need to know how to perform our tasks in both of these in terms of responsibility and monitoring



NEMA is an important source of guidance for any organisations involved in caring for natural resources. It provides for whistleblowing, procedures for access to resources such as EIAs, etc.

Environmental management principles: It is important to be familiar with principles that are concerned with protecting the environment, such as Polluter Pays Principle, Duty to Care, Intergenerational Rights, etc. as these will help us understand what action can be taken.

## 1.5. Improving our skills and ability to do things

**Intro:** Knowledge is the facts, information and skills acquired through experience and education. Skill is expertise, the ability to do something well. Competence is the ability to combine knowledge with a skill within a space of time. We need knowledge of how to apply skills.

**Principle:** The more skills that are collectively held by a community the more competent that community will become at managing its natural resources and engaging in effective action. It is therefore important to build up as many environmental skills as possible and also to share the skills with the community. It is important to know who within the community can provide what assistance and to seek opportunities whereby those people can work collaboratively on issues that affecting that community. This is a social process that requires facilitation and organisation. Without taking the time to do so it will not happen.

Start with the simplest or the easiest things first, leaving the more difficult ones to tackle when we have enough skill.

Skills are developed through practice.

Sometimes it is not necessary to have the skills; they are available through the internet or other available resources – take the time to find out. It is worthwhile to spend time exploring what is available in your local communities and international sources.

- **Capacity building should be a priority in CSOs.**
- **Government should enable free access to Internet.**
- **Capacity development of CSOs:** youth should be priorities for CSI, BBBEEE etc. including assisting us to network and engage with big corporates in an effective way.
- **Free internet should be made available in rural communities:** rural communities are compromised with poor and expensive communications, access to information and engaging in opportunities due to the exorbitant cost of data and the reality of poverty.

**Need to know:** What kind of skills are really important for CSOs? What are the basic skills that can help your CSO perform its function? e.g. if you perform a watchdog function you will need to know how to collect evidence that can potentially be used in a court of law. You do need to know how to communicate your grievances, position and standpoint in an effective and clear manner. If you can't then do seek assistance from someone who can.

Critical thinking skills are very important when people are not being transparent, are trying to conceal the truth or mislead communities through being vague and uncertain. Critical thinking is the power of curiosity; organizing the information we encounter; the ability to interrogate what people are telling us; how to read and use data; how to understand and apply our rights are important.



## 1.6. Getting Young people involved

**Introduction:** The total population for the Olifants River Catchment is estimated to be about 4.2million people, about 70% of whom live in rural areas. More than half of those people are under 15 years of age. Only around 21% of the total population is employed. About 900 000 people receive some kind of social grant from the South African government.

**Principle:** As the youth are the future, they need to be factored into any plans or proposed developments for the Olifants Catchment. This is specifically important where issues such as climate change, water and resource degradation are likely to feature in the future of the catchment. With the extremely high rate of unemployment in the catchment, livelihood possibilities urgently need to be explored and implemented.

### Our position is:

- Young people should be developed as Environmental Monitors.
- Environmental Education should be included in the school curriculum.
- Young people should be educated about agriculture and food production.
- Young people should be mobilized by developing after school programs involving teachers and parents.
- The history of what we have to deal with in South Africa should be taught in all schools so that we all know where we come from and how this country was established.
- It is important to educate young minds about environmental injustices.
- Young people must campaign for clean water.
- We must work together to provide expanded opportunities in scarce skills and promote food safety and nutritional security.
- **Municipalities must support youth programs:** enterprise development along the Olifants River to alleviate poverty and create jobs that allocate funds for the youth, for example, to start fish farming projects.
- **Youth leadership** must be established in communities with equal say in issues e.g. rights and climate change issues.
- **Youth should be exposed to and educated about environmental issues** and their impact on the environment and wetlands.
- **Youth should participate in responsible citizenship** by becoming involved in running of communities – formal and informal, e.g. youth councils, workshops and conferences. Not schools driven, rather youth groups, scouts, church etc.
- **Conservation projects should prioritize youth.**

### Need to know:

Nearly half the people living in the Olifants Catchment are under 15 years old, which means the number of people dependent on the Olifants system will double within the next decade which means we will have to be more careful how we use our resources and how we deal with water and food scarcity. Age profile of the Catchment is such that we need to develop programs of self-reliance and self employment as a matter of



urgency. Community based entrepreneurial programs are a priority with focus on local food production, local waste management, local water treatment and local health programs and small-scale manufacturing.

Understanding opportunities: the catchment has limited and finite resources. It is therefore critical that young people understand what opportunities are provided by the available resources before embarking on any ambitious plans.

Civil society has expressed that the Olifants Catchment is too dependent on too few mining operations. It is therefore recommended by these groups that dependency on mining is reduced in the coming generations.

## 1.7. Making sure we remain healthy

**Introduction:** The Olifants River faces overwhelming challenges affecting human health due to pollution from industry, agriculture, domestic and mismanaged waste. Contaminated water, water shortages, air and land pollution as well as unemployment and poverty all contribute to vulnerability in communities and increase dependency, rather than building resilience and encouraging self sufficiency.

**Principle:** We are only as healthy as the environment that surrounds us. The first principle therefore is that we should maintain our healthy environment at all costs. Any activities that reduce the health of the environment will be sooner or later experienced as a loss of health by us. Often, the poor and the vulnerable are the first to experience the negative effects of an unhealthy environment. We should therefore pay attention to the fact that the first warning signs of problems in the catchment are going to come from vulnerable communities.

The human rights to life, health and wellbeing can only be met under a healthy environment therefore violations of human rights can often legally be linked to violations of environmental protection principles.

### Our position is:

- People must be able to eat healthy food.
- Give people health education.
- Health services must be accessible.
- Services which are beneficial to the community yet cause health risks should be strategically placed to minimize or eliminate risks, e.g. sewerage, mines & others.
- Municipal environmental budgets should take into account the health of communities.
- **Pesticides and herbicides : Dangerous chemicals are being overused:** Crop spraying and overuse of pesticides and herbicides in agriculture have health impacts for communities, ecosystems and our water supply. We need to change our practices to support healthy humans and ecosystems, and not contaminate and damage them.

### Need to know:

The production of food is often an issue of allocation of land. Where land is allocated to higher profit activities, food production potential is often lost, leaving local residents with poor nutrition and even starvation. Although the second largest irrigation scheme in South Africa is located in the catchment, this food is not consumed within the catchment – most of it is destined for high profit export, much of it is not staple food.

Virtual water: high volumes of water are used to produce food for export – this water is then trapped in the production of goods that are marketed outside of the catchment. This essentially means that we are exporting our water at very low cost.

Air pollution: some of the most polluted air in the world occurs around eMalahleni, according to a Greenpeace study. It is difficult to track the sources of air pollution but one of the greatest contributors is the burning of low grade coal in the production of electricity by Eskom.



The Bill of Rights states that (27.1) Everyone has the right to have access to (a) health care services, including reproductive health care; (b) sufficient food and water...

## 1.8. Making a living in our catchment

**Intro:** Unemployment in the Olifants Catchment is approximately 79%, pointing to overwhelming poverty and heavy dependence on social grants. CSOs are concerned at how dependent communities are on mining considering the environmental devastation resulting from extraction and how few mines honour their agreements with communities after initiating dependencies. Communities' vulnerability is increased as degraded environments do not support initiatives of self sustenance and increase uncertainty of the future.

**Principle:** The catchment is our home and the only time we can make a living from it is if it is in a healthy condition. When one part of the catchment is in an unhealthy state it will affect all of our abilities to make a living from the catchment sooner or later.

### Our position is:

- **It is time to create work, not jobs:** we must re-shape our economy. This requires a culture of investment in people and jobs as part of livelihoods programs. In rural communities these are dependent on natural resources. We cannot afford to have these degraded.
- **Self reliance makes for empowered communities:** Independence and self-employment should be encouraged and supported.
- **Enterprise development is essential :** Encourage a culture of entrepreneurship in as far as there are no long term damaging effects on the resources we rely on.
- **Municipalities should use resources wisely:** Municipal workers should not be eligible for overtime; municipalities should convert overtime paid to workers into new jobs. We as CSOs are concerned that resources are being wastefully applied, depriving other people of meaningful work opportunities.
- **Change the way we work:** The official workday should be for a maximum of 6 hours a day to allow others to work and to attend to families.
- **Protect our environment:** We need to make sure we are making a living in our catchment by protecting it from destruction caused by us and big corporates.
- **Home food gardens are essential:** We need to be supported to develop food gardens in our own homes so that financial resources are available for other essential items and services.
- **Fresh produce can support local enterprise:** Agriculture provides basic income as well as food and so makes life possible without spending much. We would also like to export our products to overseas and SADC regions.
- **Provide training in permaculture:** The permaculture system reduces the cost of doing agriculture.
- **Explore tourism:** Work from local tourism, including recreational activities e.g. river rafting, should be explored as a priority as these are not necessarily environmentally degrading.
- **Clean rivers are critical:** Fishing is always a good source of protein and revenue however polluted rivers make this lucrative opportunity dangerous and impossible.
- We support livestock farming that is conducted in an environmentally friendly way.
- **Environmental Education is a priority:** the youth are our future.



- **Making use of locally available resources is a priority in rural areas:** such as thatched grass harvesting and indigenous fruits harvesting. Activities that undermine these are a threat to our communities and a loss of these demands compensation.

**Need to know:** Section 24 of SA Constitution states that : Everyone has the right (a) to an environment that is not harmful to their health or wellbeing; and (b) to have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations, through reasonable legislative and other measures that – (i) prevent pollution and ecological degradation (ii) promote conservation; and (iii) secure ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development.

People have a right to a healthy environment; it is the basis on which their lives rest, rural people more so. Rural communities in Limpopo are extremely reliant on that principle being respected and defended by the rule of law.

## 1.9. Reduce dependency on mining

**Introduction:** Communities are suffering as a result of mining in their areas. Where industry and mines assert that mines create jobs and put food on tables, we argue that agriculture puts food on tables, and mining destroys agricultural land and water, affecting communities' ability to grow their own food. Ineffectual regulatory bodies and broken promises made by mines mean that mines are breaking the law and damaging communities by not honouring SLPs, as well as irreversibly destroying environments when EIAs are not adhered to.

**Principle:** Mining can benefit communities but only if properly regulated and communities adequately benefited. When engaging in environmentally damaging activities they need to be in zones far from communities; all efforts must be made to ensure contamination is contained – water, dust, wind, noise, blasting, toxins, etc.

- **Jobs in mining are not sustainable:** jobs in sustainable agriculture are.
- **Alternatives to energy production systems must be explored:** Because coal mining creates so many negative impacts for communities we must opt for renewable energy.
- **Communities were historically food self sufficient :** We must re-educate the masses about viable and sustainable food security programs. Mining however has created false economies and dependencies which has not encouraged people to be self sufficient.
- **Reduce and prohibit mining in areas of natural importance.**
- **Current mining operations must assist in resolving mining legacy issues:** such as water contamination, toxic environments, unrehabilitated land, vulnerable and dependent communities, etc.
- **Access to land:** We must have access to land to grow food therefore land allocations need to be of a reasonable size in both commercial, communal and RDP housing settings.
- **We must encourage renewable resources:** so that we can have a safe and clean environment for the next generations.
- **Mining destroys our water :** therefore a zero discharge policy is supported
- **Mining destroys our air:** therefore mines should be far from communities and emissions need to be regulated.



- **Healthy ecosystems support jobs/work:** If the ecosystem is healthy we can learn to produce goods out the raw materials that are available around us.
- **Mines cause conflict:** Our communities fight each other when there is dependency on mining.
- **We don't trust everyone:** Awareness campaigns on this dependency can help us.
- **A diverse economy is a healthy one:** Encourage youth to study or take careers other than mining. We can mobilise youth and teach them the importance of farming/harvest.
- **We are committed to being watchdogs:** without monitoring and enforce compliance we will become vulnerable to mining related degradation or damage.
- **We demand that mines must honour long-term commitments:** trust funds for communities to develop themselves are a basic minimum requirement.

**Need to know:** Mining affected communities are not only stakeholders but RIGHTS holders; they are interested and affected parties and are protected under domestic and international law to participate in decision making across the natural resource governance decision chain, especially one that affects them.

Mining and Environmental legislation requires community participation, consultation and beneficiation programs through SLPs and EIAs.

## 1.10. Enough food for everyone in the catchment

**Intro:** The South African Food Sovereignty Campaign states that 53% of South Africans do not have enough food; it is estimated that 14 million people go to bed hungry each night. With chronic unemployment, their environment polluted and water unavailable or contaminated, communities' abilities to grow their own food are severely compromised. In addition, GMO seed stock creates dependencies on corporations for food supply, which is contrary to resilience building principles.

**Principle:** The Olifants Catchment is a highly productive system and there is no need for inhabitants to starve. Access to food production mechanisms, a healthy environment and distribution mechanisms are the basis of providing everyone with enough food.

### Our position is:

- **Access to healthy land is access to food:** We must have enough land and water allocation for food production and sustainable food gardens.
- **Our seeds are our food production heritage :** We need to ensure that we do not develop dependencies on plant varieties that require costly pesticides, herbicides, and artificial fertilisers. We must have access to heirloom, non-GMO seeds to grow our own food and keep seed banks.
- **Producing food goes hand in hand with storing food:** We need opportunities for communities or collectives to store food together or we need safe and healthy storage options for produced food for the dry months. These products can also be sold.
- **Food not only for consumption:** What we cannot consume during the growing season we should be able to process for sale.
- **Food not only for export:** It is imperative that we produce not only for export.



- **You can't grow food with contaminated water:** Clean water for our food gardens must be made available. Those contaminating our water should be held to account.
- **Rural communities need free basic water plus production water:** Municipalities need to calculate water service provisioning on the basis of water for domestic use as well as basic production.
- **The right to know:** Engage children under 15 years old to know about food security.
- **Healthy, nutritious food is a basic human right:** Climate change contributes to food insecurity. People need to know how to grow resilient varieties of crops that adapt to changing climate conditions. Half the population in the catchment is under 15 years old, hungry children can't learn and have healthy development. They suffer from malnutrition.

**Need to know:** The Bill of Rights states that everyone has the right to have access to sufficient food and water. We need to add to this clause in the constitution that it must include access to **healthy and nutritious** food and clean water for this to be meaningful.

## 1.11. INVOLVEMENT IN CATCHMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**Introduction:** It is clear that those tasked with the responsibility of regulating industry and ensuring compliance are either unwilling, understaffed or incapable of ensuring accountability in the Olifants Catchment. In a watchdog role, Civil Society is perfectly positioned to work with regulators and accountability agencies, for the good of all.

**Principle:** Accountability is a fundamental component of participatory local democracy.

Our position is:

- **Someone has to speak for the catchment.** CSOs have an important role in making sure the catchment remains in a healthy condition.
- **The best people to report things are people on the ground:** we therefore all commit to monitor and report activities that have a negative effect on our catchment.
- **We demand responses and accountability when we report things:** responsible entities, custodians, regulators all need to account to the public on matters of catchment interest in a meaningful and accessible manner.
- **The public has a right to know:** adequate and suitable platforms need to be made available by government and corporate structures in order to interact and account with the public

**Need to know:** In the constitution government structures are obliged to be open, transparent and provide answers to the public from parliament through to local government structures. The PAIA is a legal instrument the public can use to access any administrative decisions or information held by a government structure.

## 1.12. Support honesty and transparency

**Intro:** In the current climate of corruption revealed, it is imperative that honesty and transparency prevail so that systems can be repaired and resources shared equitably. A healthy society cannot be built on dishonest and untransparent activities where decisions are taken in secret and matters are hidden from the public view, often causing for suspicion. Civil Society is often a victim to dishonest and untransparent activities.

**Principle:** Honesty is a moral character facet that means being ethical and straightforward in conduct and not lying, cheating or stealing. Transparency entails openness and accountability. All transactions are open for public scrutiny and every decision made by an individual is accountable to the public. This is especially so where people stand to be affected by decisions.



#### Our position is:

- **Rural communities are vulnerable:** CSOs often represent communities and voices who are not confident and not being heard.
- **The environment can't talk:** CSOs often represent or defend the environment and the natural resources within it.
- **Unity is strength:** We will give each other support when tackling community issues such as environmental issues.
- **Democracy is built on honesty:** Where communities are affected by a decision they have a right to be involved in the decision.
- **The right to know:** There must be transparency and compliance when issuing contracts/funds and selection processes.
- **Public participation is a basic requirement:** Meaningful involvement of community in public participation processes is demanded.

**Need to know:** Chapter 9 of the Constitution states that the Public Protector must be accessible to all persons and communities. The Promotion of Administrative Justice Act is a legal source of the demand for participation in administrative processes.

## 1.13. Ensuring good service delivery

**Intro:** Communities in the Olifants Catchment are severely affected by poor or non-existent service delivery which constitutes an infringement of our human rights. Many people do not have access to clean drinking water and sanitation services are some of the weakest in South Africa. This has a knock on effect for peoples' health as well as their ability to perform at school and lead healthy productive lives. Poor service delivery is the basis for a miserable existence especially in highly populated areas.

**Principle:** Ensuring good service delivery is more than just good governance; it is the basis for a meaningful, productive and healthy life. In South Africa there is not a shortage of funds or resources to ensure that this basic commitment of the SA constitution is met.

- **Equity in service delivery is the point:** All villages and wards, irrespective of whether rural or urban, must be treated equally.
- **Fairness in budget allocation:** Municipalities need to ensure that there is a fair allocation and distribution of annual budget to all residents.
- **Service delivery and clean environment go hand in hand:** One of the key aims of service delivery should be to ensure that the environment remains healthy and clean. Therefore, solid waste dumpsites, effluent discharges, etc. all need to strive for a clean municipality.
- **Problem waste products!** : The crisis around disposable nappies must be meaningfully addressed and resolved. Hazardous substances such as used disposable nappies present a huge problem for communities where there is no service delivery.



- **By laws can help:** Municipalities have a responsibility to ensure there are good by laws to support a clean and safe environment.
- **Balance between urban and rural projects.** We want to see a balance between urban and rural projects listed in IDPs.

**Need to know:** The most important document for understanding service delivery and community development is the IDP. It is equally important to be able to understand the budgets associated with IDP and we are obligated to participate in the IDP development process if we want our projects to be taken seriously.

## 1.14. Supporting good leadership

**Intro:** Robust and accountable leadership is imperative in our local and regional areas to ensure accountability, transparency and law abiding behaviour by all corporate, municipal and community members. It is unacceptable that leaders profit from deals whilst communities remain without benefit.

**Principle:** Those who are elected leaders are expected to execute their duties as leaders in an honourable, ethical and respectable manner with a clear sense of direction.

### Our position:

- **Good leaders get our support:** Bad leaders don't. We seek to encourage and support our leaders.
- **Bad leadership will be addressed:** We are committed to supporting those who provide us with good and honourable leadership. However where leadership is bad we will endeavour to remove these people as they ultimately represent damage to our community and our surroundings.
- **Good leaders represent us and act on our behalf:** We demand that our leaders consult with us and carry our points of view forward and into sound decision making opportunities. We do not expect leaders to use the opportunity for self enrichment and beneficiation.
- **Leading the way:** We appreciate that the past has put many communities in difficult and impoverished positions. We therefore accept that our leaders have a very challenging task to perform and therefore need much by way of support and encouragement.

**Need to know:** Good role models are an important source of how good leaders should be. It is therefore important that in our communities we seek good role models and promote ethical behaviour.

Signed by: (this document will be emailed to all of these CSOs – only those who confirm their agreement with the contents and/or contribute to the edit will be included in this list)



### Acknowledgements

This Position Statement was drafted with the close collaboration of CSOs operative in the Olifants Catchment. These organisations have collectively developed a vision and from this vision developed this collection of Position Statements on matters that affect them and those they represent. This work was co-ordinated by the Association for Water and Rural Development under the CSO Support Initiative which was funded by the RESILIM O grant from USAID: Southern Africa.

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